

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

October 2007, Volume 18, Number 10



“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

In This Issue

- FAVS Connecticut Conference Is Rousing Success • Acton Lecture Series Explores Popular Wealth–Poverty Myths
- Acton Interns Continue Promotion of *Call of The Entrepreneur* • Samaritan Award Winner Announced

Profits are confirmation that the entrepreneur is doing what is economically right.

The mission of the Acton Institute is to promote a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.

President's Message

Dear Friends,

"I'm retiring from business so that I can give back to the community."

This is a common phrase that needs qualification. It implies the person in business has been taking from the community, and now, after years of profits, it is time to turn to other pursuits, charity in particular. I have no argument against philanthropy, charity, and volunteerism. Indeed, it is the wealthy business community that funds the large part of what is known as the "third sector." Everyone should give to the community in the sense of being generous to special causes, the poor, and others.

My problem is with the idea that somehow philanthropy is an action that is diametrically opposed to commercial activity. Merchants of all types are giving to the community. Indeed, in the market economy the only way to make a profit is to give of yourself entirely to the needs of others.

Entrepreneurs spend their lives discerning the needs of others and seeking to meet them in an economically viable way. Their profits provide riches, but only when what they are doing serves others in an efficient manner. Profits are confirmation that the entrepreneur is doing what is economically right. No one in a market economy can be forced to buy anything. You have to provide a product or a service that they prefer more than any other alternative use of their money.

So is this process a service to the community? Of course! There is something wrong with failing to see enterprise itself as a form of service. And yet it is remarkable to me how many people in business have never really thought of their work this way. It's as if they have bought into the anti-market propaganda that what they are doing is a form of parasitism. On the contrary, they are increasing society's store of wealth, and thereby providing the means to make our lives better. Should those who are successful in business give to charity? Yes. But in doing so, they are not "giving back." They are giving more and in a different way.

By contributing to the Acton Institute, you are giving in a special way—to help people understand such distinctions and cut through the objectionable confusions to the contrary.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Sirico".

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

ACTON INSTITUTE

161 Ottawa Avenue NW, Suite 301 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • www.acton.org

FAVS Connecticut Conference is Rousing Success

"Contemporary discussions of limited government often describe the separation between church and state," noted Dr. Jay W. Richards of the Acton Institute. Richards provided a lecture for the Free and Virtuous Society Conference titled "Limited Government and the Rule of Law." The church of course plays a substantial role in limiting the size and scope of government. Richards quoted from Romans 13:1-6, which establishes God as the highest power for the Christian. The duty of the state is to protect and provide for the rule of law. When states continue to overreach their original area of jurisdiction, their laws can become unjust. Richards notes, "Our entire view of God and humanity should influence how we view the role of the state in our lives." Being created in the image of God is essential to understanding human persons and their ability to create and cultivate without an overabundance of external hindrance. Richards also quoted Friedrich Hayek concerning economic principles, who noted, "command economies lead to chaos."

The Free and Virtuous Society Conference attracted

seminarians, other graduate students, and church leaders from across the country and internationally, attended by students from as far as Guatemala and Poland. Noted author George Gilder was present for a portion of the conference. Gilder greatly added to the discussion on the opening night. In addition, Fr. Roger Landry gave two addresses, titled "Distinctions and Definitions for a Free and Virtuous Society" and "Entrepreneurial Vocation." Fr. Landry has extensive education in bioethics and moral theology. He is the pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Acton's director of programs and education was another speaker at the conference and a member of the panel. Michael Miller's lectures were titled "Christian Anthropology, Freedom, and Virtue," "Virtue and Economic Thinking," and "Globalization." Miller said, "It's important to study economics because there is a lot of emphasis on social justice, and we need to get the thinking right on these issues." Acton's research fellow Anthony Bradley also provided enlightening and informative addresses for the conference participants.



Speaker Anthony Bradley



The Free and Virtuous Society Conference Participants

From Our Conference Participants

I have been invigorated and encouraged to dive deeper into the social and economic issues in my community. I have confidence in the sound and clear thinking that was presented to me at the conference.

—Christopher Brown
Regents College
Tamarac, Florida

I had some left-leaning fiscal political thinking. But after the conference, I have come to see that... having a heart for the poor must be matched by having a mind for the poor.

—Kimbell Kornu
Westminster Theological Seminary
Dallas, Texas

Acton Lecture Series Explores Popular Wealth—Poverty Myths

On August 25 in Grand Rapids, Dr. Jay W. Richards exposed common myths about poverty. Discussions about poverty and moral responsibility are on the rise in our society and culture, especially with the rise of Jim Wallis and his organization Sojourners. Richards declared to a packed crowd, "This gives us a huge opportunity, even if we disagree with some of the prominent thinkers, to add to the discussion." He added, "many well intentioned policies unfortunately go awry."

Richards said the piety myth "focuses on our good intentions rather than the unintended consequences of our actions." An example he provided was rent control, which causes major shortages in housing and affects the quality of housing. Moderately priced housing diminishes significantly in communities with rent control.

Another essential example cited by Richards was

between reality and reality, instead of reality versus the myth. He said "many factories get accused of being sweat-shops." He cited that sometimes the notion exists in the critics' head that if the "sweat-shop" was closed down that person would be provided with an education, and a fantastic college degree, which is closer to the truth here in America, but not necessarily true somewhere else. The truths of real situations and events are unhelpful if they are weighed against unrealizable ideals. Richards believes it is paramount to be able to recognize these myths in day to day life, as well as being able to respond to these myths.

Interns Continue Promotion of *Call of The Entrepreneur*

Before leaving to return to schools and careers, Acton interns provided additional valuable promotion for *The Call of The Entrepreneur* on the social networking website Facebook, as well as

ACTON News



Dr. Jay Richards

the "zero-sum game myth," which holds that wealth gained in one place always means that wealth was lost somewhere else. To illustrate this myth, Richards used the example of pie, saying that if somebody cuts for themselves a larger piece by proportion, somebody else of course loses out. Most economists and entrepreneurs however understand that wealth is created, and Richards used the example of sand and the explosion of the microchip. Natural resources are one example of material being harvested for production and consumption.

Richards also stressed the need for comparisons



Acton interns learning promotion

the YouTube website, mentioned in an earlier issue of *Acton Notes*. Over a period of days, several Acton interns joined multiple Facebook groups with economic or entrepreneurial focuses, and posted a short message about *The Call of The Entrepreneur* and a link to the trailer. On the Facebook website, over eighty members have joined the page, and many have posted comments of praise for screenings they attended. To see the video trailer, go to www.youtube.com and search using the terms "Acton" and "entrepreneur." Viewings of the posted trailer are well over fourteen thousand, and this number

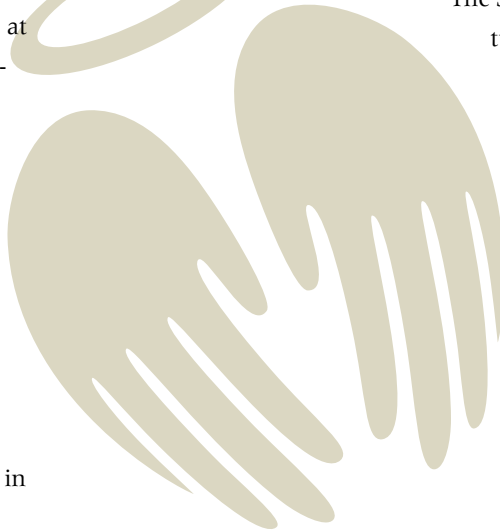
Samaritan Award Winner Announced

The Acton Institute has named the Samaritan Award winner for outstanding private, voluntary charitable service. The prestigious award has been given to the Arkansas Sheriffs' Youth Ranches, Inc. The Arkansas Sheriffs' Youth Ranches is a heavily privately funded organization that began thirty years ago when a group of Arkansas sheriffs saw the need to provide a home for children who, through no fault of their own, were left without a home. Often the youths were victims of horrific sexual and physical abuse. A ranch staff member named Suzi Williams noted, "our program is so small compared to the sin in the world." Another important characteristic of the ranch is a commitment for young people at the ranch to have a valuable connection with at least one adult. This connection provides a strong bond of love and a deep sense of worth, which is critical for lasting rehabilitation and growth.

Another outstanding aspect of the program is the belief of not abandoning those who participate in

their program because of an age-limit mandate. Participants are allowed to stay involved and seek guidance beyond their post-secondary education, until they're able to foster their own independence in life. The leaders and supporters of the ranch believe in the youth. Participants have the opportunity to care for animals and to be involved in production on the ranch. All of the profits and hard work in production directly benefit the kids morally and financially. Arkansas Sheriffs' Youth Ranches, Inc. was selected out of a candidate pool of over three hundred applicants. An inspiring and uplifting video detailing the ranch can be seen on their website, www.youthranches.com

The Samaritan Award winner is featured in a special issue of *World Magazine* titled "Second-chance ranch." Thirteen other charitable programs are also featured in the September double issue of *World Magazine*. In the article, it is noted that only 5 percent of the Ranches' operational support comes from government sources.



ACTON in the News

But her most sinister contention is that the government should take aggressive steps to assure that women do not make choices that lead them to live "lesser lives."

—Excerpted from Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse's article in *The Weekly Standard*

Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse

Title: Women at Work

Publisher: *The Weekly Standard*

Date: 8.20.2007

Ray Nothstine

Title: Poor suffer as ethanol policy causes food prices to climb

Publisher: *Detroit News*

Date: 8.21.2007

Dr. Jay Richards

Title: The Call of the Entrepreneur

Program: *The Sandy Rios Show*

Air Date: 8.31.2007

Reminder

Help Acton Promote Freedom and Virtue!

The Acton Institute depends on the generosity of supporters like you. If you have not donated to Acton, but enjoy *Acton Notes*, please consider helping us meet our goals! Your help makes possible our continuing mission to promote a free and virtuous society. You may choose to donate using the envelope provided, or you may visit <https://secure.lexi.net/acton> to make a secure donation online. We send our heartfelt thanks to those who have been so generous in the past with your strategic support as well as your prayers. You have a broad vision and a generous heart.



Dr. Richards lectures the audience at ALS on August 23



The ALS audience gathers afterwards

Acton and You

Sirico on Minimum Wage

Father Robert Sirico appeared on Mike McConnell's syndicated radio talk show on August 16 to discuss minimum wage increases. McConnell's radio show can be heard weekday from nine to noon EDT, and is the number one show in the Cincinnati area, his home market. Sirico noted "if the minimum wage is good, why not raise it to one hundred dollars an hour and not just ten dollars an hour? When you do that, a whole bunch of people can't be hired because their labor is not worth that, so the cost is passed onto

the consumer." Sirico also added, "this is also true to a smaller degree when you raise it by a couple dollars." Acton's president also pointed out how free markets are the most beneficial economic system for the poor as well as the rich in the world. The interview was a noteworthy promotion for the Acton Institute and its values. McConnell's popularity in the Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana region is widely known. McConnell is known for his straight forward approach in regards to attacking the tough issues of the day.



Acton Institute's Seventeenth Annual Dinner

Oct 24

JW Marriott, Grand Rapids, Michigan
For more information please call 800.345.2286

Featuring Dr. Mart Laar
Former Prime Minister of Estonia

"Laar belongs high in Europe's pantheon
of post-communist heroes..." -The Economist

ACTON Book Shoppe



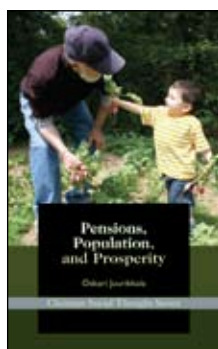
Myths Christians Believe about Wealth and Poverty

by Dr. Jay Richards

For Christians, compassion for the poor is a non-negotiable. Compassion alone, however, doesn't help the poor. In fact, many ideas that Christian leaders advocate really exacerbate the very problems they were intended to solve. So how do we insure that we not only mean well, but also do good? Jay Richards discusses the need to think economically about wealth and poverty in the Christian community.

CD Price \$10.00

CD&Book Price \$15.00



Pensions, Population, and Prosperity

by Oskari Juurikkala

In both developed and developing nations, old-age security is a concern of the utmost importance. Wealthy nations face ailing government pension systems, while less developed nations struggle to construct viable mechanisms for assisting the needy elderly. In this unique and provocative monograph, Oskari Juurikkala, fully cognizant of these differences and drawing on the wisdom of the Christian social tradition, argues that the solution for both groups of nations lies in the same direction—away from reliance on the state and toward strong families and other private networks.

Paperback 85 pages

Price \$6.00

**For our fastest service and a complete list of titles,
visit www.acton.org/bookshoppe.**

	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Myths Christians Believe about Wealth and Poverty (CD)	\$10.00		
Myths Christians Believe about Wealth and Poverty (CD) & (Book)	\$15.00		
Pensions, Population, and Prosperity	\$6.00		

Make checks payable to "Acton Institute." For orders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: for the first item, add US \$3.75 for shipping; plus US \$1.00 for each additional item. Overseas orders: US \$4.75 for the first item, plus US \$1.75 for each additional item.

Michigan residents add 6% sales tax _____

(see below for rates at left) Shipping _____

(enclose check or credit card information) Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Credit Card Number _____ Security Code _____

☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Am Ex Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

Call 616-454-3080 **Fax** 616-454-9454 **Mail** Acton Institute 161 Ottawa NW, Suite 301, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Oct 24	Acton Institute Seventeenth Annual Dinner Featuring keynote speaker Dr. Mart Laar	Grand Rapids, Michigan

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
Oct 4-6	World Universities Network Michael Miller to speak	Chicago, Illinois
Oct 25-28	Sixteenth Century Society Conference Jordan Ballor to submit writings	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Oct 31	Calihan Fellowships Academic Deadline	
Oct 31	Centesimus Annus Academic Fellowship Deadline	
Nov 1	Novak Award Nominations Deadline	

Acton Institute • 161 Ottawa Avenue NW, Suite 301 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA