

By John Dentinger

Individualist in the Oddest Place

When he recently took up genealogy, Larry D. Kump was thrilled to find he is a direct descendant of Patrick Henry. "That just tickled me to death, because I liked his feisty attitude," he says.

The last place you'd expect to find Henry's literal or spiritual descendant is at the head of a public workers' union. But Kump, executive director of the Indiana State Employees Association (ISEA), is no ordinary union boss.

For one thing, he runs a voluntary group and doesn't think workers should be forced to join the union in order to work for a unionized employer. "Sometimes employees need to be protected from the caprice of their own union, and an open shop is the best way to do that," he says. And Kump even evinces some sympathy for people who cross picket lines. "I have a problem when people face reprisals for choosing to come to work." (As public employees, ISEA members are forbidden by law to strike.)

He isn't a typical public-employee advocate, either. Most unions, especially those of government workers, fiercely oppose privatization. But Kump, a fan of science-fiction writer Keith Laumer's satires of bureaucracy, supports some efforts to shrink the state. "I don't think any services ought to be provided by the government just because they always have been."

The ISEA has proposed legislation that would require the state to demonstrate that a job is really necessary before replacing any employee who quits. The bill would also require cost-savings studies of any proposed privatization of government services.

But Kump wants government either to do a job itself or to get out of the business completely—not to hire private contractors. "The problem with contracting out is you don't want it, as with the Pentagon, to be underground political patronage, often tied in to 'contributions' to politicians."

A handful of career state employees formed the ISEA in 1953, Kump says, because "they were tired of scurrying to save their jobs every four years." The union has been fighting patronage ever since, but politicians still control about a third of state jobs. With the Indiana Libertarian Party, the ISEA has filed suit to overturn the system. The Republicans, who dominate the state, have tried to have the suit dismissed, to no avail.



Larry D. Kump: "Nobody knows what's wrong with government more than government employees."

The ISEA has also championed the rights of whistleblowers. "Nobody knows what's wrong with government more than government employees," says Kump. After a four-year fight, the legislature enacted an ISEA-backed law that protects the rights of state workers to belong to unions, to participate in political activity, and to report corruption without fear of reprisal. Now the ISEA is pushing to add criminal penalties for those who harass whistleblowers.

The ISEA receives whispered phone calls revealing political corruption. It cooperated with the press and FBI in investigating a scam in which state corrections department officials skimmed state funds and inmate benefits for personal use. Among other misdeeds, reports Kump, the department's commissioner used state funds to restore his already lavish state-provided home, even goldplating the bathroom faucets.

Kump didn't plan on a career as a union leader. As a student in Hagerstown, Maryland, he wanted to become an electronic engineer—until he hit calculus. "I sold my calculus textbook on the black market in high school to someone who'd done something obscene with his book."

In junior college, he edited the school paper and managed to offend the administration with his libertarian approach to students' rights. "They were so upset that they took away the scholarship which I was supposed to get as a perk for being editor,"

he recalls. After college, he spent a few months as chief aide to the Pennsylvania state senate's minority leader, then settled down for six years at a public workers' union in Maryland before moving to Indiana.

In Kump's eight years as executive director, the ISEA has grown from 2,900 members to 4,000—despite a 20 percent reduction in the total number of state workers. (Indiana is the state with the fewest public employees per capita.) The ISEA is now the state's largest public employees' union. But Kump has paid a steep personal price for his success.

Kump says that, after encouraging him to take the job, his wife decided she couldn't put up with the long hours he was working. About six months after he joined the ISEA, she left him. The same day, he was diagnosed with cancer.

"When she told me she was moving back east with our two kids, that upset me more than finding out that I had terminal cancer." An operation took care of the cancer, but his wife is still gone. They share the children. Kump, a Mormon, lists himself on his business card as "father of David & Sarah Kump," right under his ISEA title.

The union's success—often at the expense of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), an AFL-CIO affiliate—has also drawn unwanted attention from the AFL-CIO's archrivals, the Teamsters. Without his knowledge, Kump says, "One of our staff cut a deal on the side with the Teamsters to get the ISEA to affiliate with them. A Teamster representative came into my office and said 'We're going to get your membership anyway, so why don't you do it the easy way, and we'll give you a similar position—and save you the embarrassment of being run out of the state professionally.'"

The man told him one of the benefits of Teamster affiliation, says Kump: "You have trouble with anybody, you point him out to us, and we'll punch him in the nose." I thought he was kidding, but then I saw he was serious. I told him to do what he could and if they could take over, I'd get a job slinging hamburgers."

In a free market, Kump is confident that this brand of union leadership sells best.

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Imagine There's No...

By Stephen G. Barone

I was both unlucky and lucky to have procured my higher education during the late '60s and early '70s.

Unlucky, because I never took a course in economics—not micro, not macro; neither domestic nor international. To have registered for such a thing would have been considered just *too unchic*.

Thus there is a cavernous and empty place somewhere in the midst of my personal western hemisphere where are supposed to reside such things as my understanding of the rediscount rate, what is Say's Law, why bonds go down when everything else goes up, and why a market *downturn* and a market *recession* are somehow different.

Pity. Invite me to a party and leave me all alone with a stack of cocktail napkins, and at the end of the evening you'll have nothing but a pile of neatly wrapped olive pits.

Still, all is not woe. I am also lucky. By avoiding those very same classrooms and their professorial denizens, I emerged from the '60s relatively innocent of Keynesian non sequiturs. Investors and savers have never appeared any different to me.

My best friends will tell you: My unidimensional grasp of economics usually comes to the fore after little more than a single glass of diet chablis and a few Ritz crackers with cheap brie. So I know little enough to feel no embarrassment about forwarding for your consideration the following person, who is my nominee for the world's greatest economist, living or dead. He is Jean Piaget.

Jean *who?* I'm glad you asked.

The late Jean Piaget was a Swiss psychologist who never wrote a single word on the subject of economics. And I'm glad. If he had, he might have decided he was a communist or socialist or one of those terrible other *ists* to which Europeans seem to have affinity just prior to the collapse of one of their economies. But he didn't. So I am free to imagine whatever I wish about



his ideas on economics.

Piaget was somewhat precocious as a child, doing things like publishing scientific papers on ornithology barely a year after his chronological age made it into the double digits. By the age of 15, his interests had moved away from birds and toward clams. He studied mollusks. He was awarded a doctorate in the natural sciences by age 22, that point in life when most of us are still trying to decide between graduate school and getting into a rich uncle's linoleum business.

Piaget found employment with one Alfred Binet of France. Binet is the fellow who invented intelligence testing as we know it today. And Piaget found himself administering to the school-age population of France the tests that Binet had constructed. He wasn't wholly impressed.

He *was* wholly impressed, however, with the following: that the children with whom he worked differed from one another not so much in the *quantity* of their intellectual prowess as in the *quality* of that prowess. So he constructed a theory about developmental epistemology that is now the benchmark by which competing theories are judged. It is perhaps no less an achievement than one might expect from a fellow whose pen pal was Albert Einstein.

Piaget was the first to purport that adults are not simply *more* smart than children, children *more* smart than toddlers, and

toddlers *more* smart than infants. He insisted that the stages of infant, toddler, child, and adult intelligences are epistemological states that differ from one another in much more than just pure quantity.

To the reader not conditioned to the usual musings of psychologists about intelligence, this might not sound very profound. But Piaget was one of the first to give children their reprieve from the gloomy sentence of behaviorism. Too, he believed that cognition and intelligence are uniquely *human* traits, affected by the environment but intrinsic to the organism.

But I can feel you shuffling in your seats. Go ahead—ask. *What has all this to do with economics?* Well, I'll let you decide.

Piagetians postulate many points about human cognition and intelligence. Only three are important here. Together, I would submit, they provide the underpinnings of a better-than-average explanation for the sorry state of the world and its economic policies.

First, Piagetians contend that children have their views of the world bound up in concretes. Indeed, Piaget called this the concrete operational stage, when children are generally incapable of imagining a situation with any of its variables somehow different. So kids at this stage have a lot of difficulty with "what if" questions, such as, What if the sun actually rotated around the earth rather than the other way around? or, What would happen if the average temperature of the United States dropped 10 degrees?

Yes, children love to play around with such questions and try answers to them. But the answers are most often what Piagetians would call translogical, meaning they follow the rules neither of deduction nor of induction, as would an adult's speculations given the same set of hypothetical premises.

Second, Piagetians conjecture that only sometime during adolescence do children become able to deal adequately with such abstractions. This is called the formal operational stage.

It's during the formal operational stage that young adults become able:

- to deal successfully with propositions