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 **MILTON FRIEDMAN:
WHO WAS HE?
HOW DID HE THINK?
WHAT WOULD HE SAY?**



By Stephen L. Bakke  May 18, 2016

Friedman's political philosophy was to proclaim the virtues of a free market economic system with minimal governmental intervention. In his 1962 book *Capitalism and Freedom*, Friedman advocated policies such as a volunteer military, freely floating exchange rates, abolition of medical licenses, a negative income tax, and school vouchers. His support for school choice led him to found the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

No one equaled Friedman's skill at explaining how free markets succeed at coordinating the activities of legions of individuals to produce the goods and services that we today take for granted. **He explained how free-market prices, along with the lure of profit and the fear of loss, guide entrepreneurs, firms and workers from across the globe to produce just the right amounts of product**

Milton Friedman was a Nobel Prize-winning economist whose conservative economic theories helped develop modern conservative economic thought. While very small at only 5 feet 3 inches in height, he stood tall as one of the top two or three economists of the past century. During his long tenure at the University of Chicago, he produced a stream of cutting-edge research on consumer behavior, on the role of money, and on the history of U.S. and British monetary policy.

Friedman was, he always insisted, not a conservative but, rather, a liberal — a true liberal, in the original meaning of that term. Being a classical liberal, it speaks volumes of Friedman's principles that he was among the most vocal and unwavering opponents of the "war on drugs." He insisted that "the government has no more right to tell me what goes into my mouth than it has to tell me what comes out of my mouth."

Friedman was an advisor to Republican U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. He passed away at the age of 94 in 2006.

He is one of the most quoted economists in history. Some examples:

- Concentrated power is not rendered harmless by the good intentions of those who create it.
- We have a system that increasingly taxes work and subsidizes nonwork.
- The government solution to a problem is usually as bad as the problem.
- Only government can take perfectly good paper, cover it with perfectly good ink and make the combination worthless.
- So that the record of history is absolutely crystal clear. That there is no alternative way, so far discovered, of improving the lot of the ordinary people that can hold a candle to the productive activities that are unleashed by a free enterprise system.

- Many people want the government to protect the consumer. A much more urgent problem is to protect the consumer from the government.
- Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program.
- Most economic fallacies derive from the tendency to assume that there is a fixed pie, that one party can gain only at the expense of another.
- The world runs on individuals pursuing their self-interests Einstein didn't construct his theory under order from a bureaucrat. Henry Ford didn't revolutionize the automobile industry that way.
- Most of the energy of political work is devoted to correcting the effects of mismanagement of government.
- Governments never learn. Only people learn.
- The problem of social organization is how to set up an arrangement under which greed will do the least harm, capitalism is that kind of system.
- If you put the federal government in charge of the Sahara Desert, in 5 years there'd be a shortage of sand.
- I am in favor of cutting taxes under any circumstances and for any excuse, for any reason, whenever it's possible.
- The most important single central fact about a free market is that no exchange takes place unless both parties benefit.
- When everybody owns something, nobody owns it, and nobody has a direct interest in maintaining or improving its condition. That is why buildings in the Soviet Union – like public housing in the United States – look decrepit within a year or two of their construction...
- Nobody spends somebody else's money as carefully as he spends his own. Nobody uses somebody else's resources as carefully as he uses his own. So if you want efficiency and effectiveness, if you want knowledge to be properly utilized, you have to do it through the means of private property.
- The great danger to the consumer is the monopoly – whether private or governmental. His most effective protection is free competition at home and free trade throughout the world Alternative sources of supply protect the consumer far more effectively than all the Ralph Naders of the world.
- A major source of objection to a free economy is precisely that it ... gives people what they want instead of what a particular group thinks they ought to want. Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself.
- The important thing is to establish a political climate of opinion which will make it politically profitable for the wrong people to do the right thing. Unless it is politically profitable for the wrong people to do the right thing, the right people will not do the right thing either.
- Inflation is taxation without legislation.
- The most important single central fact about a free market is that no exchange takes place unless both parties benefit.
- Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself.
- Hell hath no fury like a bureaucrat scorned.
- Is it really true that political self-interest is nobler somehow than economic self-interest?
- The power to do good is also the power to do harm.
- One man's opportunism is another man's statesmanship.

