

Morton Blackwell -- My Kind of Conservative

Heartland Liberty Prize comments by Jameson Campaigne

September 15, 2016

I once remarked to Irving Kristol back during the early Reagan administration that it was more fun to be a conservative when we were all in the Catacombs, because we did not have to **watch our backs** ... Being a conservative back then was **not** a career move!

"Now," I said, "self-seeking opportunists have arrived, often elbowing good people out of the way only in order to advance themselves."

He replied, "You **need** those people!"

Well, perhaps. But what libertarians and conservatives need **far more** than **those** people are individuals like our honoree tonight, Morton Blackwell.

Morton's motto, "I am building a movement, not an organization" is well known. His mission has been to create leaders who will build **winning** political majorities for the conservative movement.

There is **not a single person** on the right who has done more for our common cause than Morton. He has built his own organization, The Leadership Institute, into a political talent factory which has trained and educated close to 200,000 future and current leaders in its 37 years -- putting muscle and bone on the ground to advance conservatism in the political arena.

The Leadership Institute now has annual revenue of \$24 million and a full-time staff of 83 people. His **Campus Reform** student web site has well over **10 million** page views a year.

I strongly urge everywhere here to visit the Leadership Institute web site. It is resource-rich both in political philosophy -- much of it written by Morton himself -- and marvelous, practical, political counsel. You will be impressed!

But, in addition to his Leadership Institute work, Morton as a board member has also help guide the National Right to Work Committee to many great victories. He provided the initial idea for the creation of the Heritage Foundation.

He has long served on the board of the American Conservative Union. He has been the Republican Party national committeeman from Virginia since 1988 ... a **lone** voice of sanity at the RNC.

Morton tried relentlessly to change the RNC rules which were designed by the Beltway crowd to help Bush-Romney style presidential candidates win the nomination with only pluralities against divided conservatives in winner-take-all primaries. But he failed in that effort.

He **then** predicted -- a **year** ago -- that these not-changed the rules would give us Donald Trump. **No one** should ever dispute Morton's political crystal ball.

Morton's father once told him, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again. Then quit. Don't make a fool of yourself." But Morton kept trying at the RNC. The Stupid Party kept winning.

But, my prediction is, Morton will **keep** trying, and **not** making a fool of himself.

Finally, there are a thousand anecdotes about Morton making his time and resources available to countless **others** in our movement. Individuals and organizations everywhere.

For example, when Charlie Kirk needed names of college conservatives to kick-start his Turning Point USA student group, Morton supplied him with more than **50,000** names.

When I needed ground troops to distribute our little paperback book on Tom Daschle in South Dakota in 2004, Morton supplied 500 College Republicans from a half dozen campuses in the state who then reached 10,000 households with books. **This single effort** changed a 48-48 polling tie and defeated Senator Daschle in the last two weeks of the campaign.

Morton has shared his staff talent with many organizations, helping them develop competent fund raising programs and much more.

He has mentored thousands of budding young politicians, many of whom now serve in Congress and state legislatures.

I could go on all night, but my time is up. I will conclude with this:

Irving Kristol **should** have said, "We **need** people like Morton Blackwell."

Thank you, Morton.