

...had 16 pounds and was sleeping 18 hours a day. She thought of ending it all, but when spring herself to do it. In 1975, at age 30, she faced two choices: "I could continue down the road I was on, or I could change," Lontos recalled. Change was the only option. To get her body back in shape,

\$272,000. During the 1980s and 1990s, Lontos became a nationally known motivational speaker, author and sales trainer. She divorced in 1984 and remarried two years later. Today, she runs Orlando, Fla.-based PR/PR, Inc., a public-relations firm she started in 1998. By Cord Cooper

...his surroundings. Sandburg wanted to get down on paper the dignified beauty he found in his surroundings growing up in the Midwest; it was then that he decided to become a writer. He began memorizing images in his head and collecting them in journals, using them later as inspiration for poems such as "Prairie," in which he wrote: "I was born on the prairie and the milk of its

...the prize. Focused intently on his goal to write, Sandburg only took courses he liked and never accumulated enough credits to graduate. But he didn't consider his time at Lombard wasted. College, he said, broadened his horizons and gave him confidence in his abilities — a necessary ingredient if he was to become successful.

...the prize. He felt that writers had an obligation to speak up about the issues of the day, and he used the To-Morrow forum to argue against the death penalty and against hypocrisy he saw in religion and politics. During this period he resumed his practice of attending lectures. Sand-

...the prize. "Complete Poems," published in 1951: "At 65 I began my first novel, and the five years lacking a month it took to finish it, I was still traveling, still a seeker ... (if) I shall live to be 89 ... and speaking my farewell to earthly scenes I might paraphrase: 'If God had let me live five years longer I should have been a writer.'"

# Educator Leonard E. Read

## His Drive To Simplify And Teach Helped Make Economics Easy

By Antonio A. Prado  
Investor's Business Daily 2/27/01

Leonard E. Read wanted to make economics easy. His key, he decided, was a simple pencil.

Many people thought of economics as a difficult science of number crunching and complex concepts, too often defined by big words. But Read (1898-1983) believed it was more like basic common sense.

**FOCUS  
ON  
GOALS**

He decided to break it down into plain English. The best way, he figured, was in story form about a simple subject.

In 1958, Read wrote "I. Pencil," an essay in which he detailed each step in the complex process of making the writing device. He outlined each step in the pencil's manufacture, showing how many people worked to get the product into a writer's hand.

The essay has become a commonly used plot device in teaching how free people in a free market, working independently, create and distribute goods and services taken for granted by most Americans.

Read, who was among the first people to use the term "libertarian," is given credit for building the modern free-market movement.

He decided that he wanted to help

others learn core values that would guide their actions. Thus, he dedicated his life to teaching the importance of each and every individual's role in building prosperity.

Read left a high post at the New York-based National Industrial Conference Board — one of the country's top economic research groups, now called The Conference Board — to form the Foundation of Economic Education (FEE) at Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y., in 1946. His goal was to promote individual liberty, personal responsibility, the rule of law and self-improvement.

Read combed scholarly journals and books to find the people he thought shared his views. He would locate them, then contact them by phone, letter or mutual acquaintances to explain his goals and invite their aid.

The foundation has since served as a model for many economic think tanks. It has drawn on the expertise of Nobel laureates, other top economists, business leaders and scholars.

Read didn't start out touting free markets and individualism. For most of his adult life, in fact, he worked as a spokesman for business and trade groups. He used to defend the official chamber of commerce view, which at the time was in line with President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. He agreed that the economy would get out of depression only through central planning, price controls and by stimulating bank credit through monetary inflation.

But he didn't accept any ideas

blindly; he tried always to keep an open mind. Meeting W.C. Mullendore, a Southern California Edison Co. executive, in the fall of 1933, he challenged him to test that.

Mullendore had publicly chided the chamber's views. Read went into a meeting with Mullendore planning to set him straight on the chamber's official pitch.

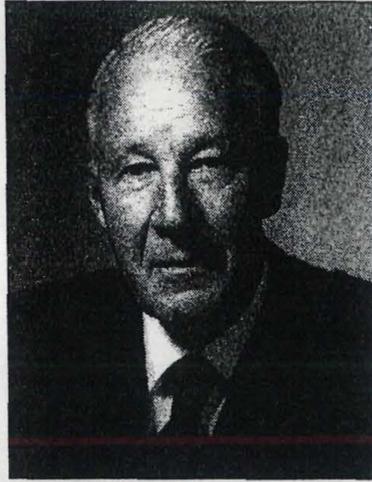
But Mullendore kept up a rapid-fire outline of facts that disputed Read's ideas. Read came out of the talk as an advocate of liberty, refuting henceforth Roosevelt's New Deal for the long term.

Touting free-market ideas at that time was not easy. Many scholars and business leaders had adopted the Keynesian economic notion that capitalism was unstable and led inevitably to mass unemployment.

"At the time, government control of the economy was all the rage," said Donald Boudreaux, president of FEE. "Almost everyone assumed that prosperity required extensive central planning."

In her biographical essay "Leonard Read, the Founder and Builder," Mary Sennholz wrote that in the years after World War II, many Americans expected Congress to expand the social welfare state and control the economy.

Meanwhile, Read was planning a counterattack. He "was laboring in Irvington-on-Hudson to rally the remnants of old-fashioned liberalism and prepare for an intellectual counteroffensive," she said.



**FREE MARKETEEER:** Read promoted individual liberty, personal responsibility, the rule of law and self-improvement.

Read learned early how to persist. His father died at age 40 when Read was barely 11 years old. His sister Ruby was 9.

He worked as much as 16 hours a day to augment the family's income, sometimes milking cows and working at the village store for extra cash.

But because he worked so much, he had little time for school. As a teen, he realized his education was lacking and resolved to fix that.

He applied to and was accepted by the Ferris Institute, a private prep school for poor children in Big Rapids, Mich. To pay for tuition, he worked for the school, firing the fur-

nace at 5 a.m. each morning, carrying wood and water, raking leaves, mowing lawns, shoveling snow and doing other work.

Read made the grade by reading voraciously and studying hard. To ensure he conquered the toughest subjects when studying, he'd focus on them first while he was fresh and saved the easier topics for later. Read graduated in 1917.

Patriotic, Read soon enlisted in the Aviation Section of the U.S. Signal Corps, serving as a rigger who helped build and service planes in France during World War I.

After the war, Read wanted to attend medical school. Without money for college, however, he started a successful produce firm.

A keen entrepreneur, Read watched the trends carefully. He figured that chain stores would gain on his market share due to their advantage of economies of scale. The time had come, he believed, to close up shop and move to the West Coast.

Read knew business and decided to apply his already-gathered experience in his next job. He spent 18 years running chambers of commerce in northern California, western Seattle and in Los Angeles.

With the urging of B.F. Goodrich Co. Chairman David Goodrich, Read gathered a handful of national business leaders and scholars, plus journalist and economist Henry Hazlitt to launch FEE and share ideas. Prominent Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises soon joined, staying until his death in 1973.

Read tried to stay upbeat and alert until the end.

"One way to check whether you ought to be doing this or that is to feel your zest pulse. If it's low, chances are you should be elsewhere or doing something else."

### Wisdom To Live By . . .

- ON ACHIEVEMENT**  
*It's amazing what ordinary people can do if they set out without preconceived notions.*  
Charles Kettering, electrical engineer, inventor
- ON INTEGRITY**  
*Start with what is right, rather than what is acceptable.*  
Peter Drucker, business writer
- ON WORKING SMART**  
*Don't tell me how hard you work. Tell me how much you get done.*  
James Ling, business executive
- ON ATTITUDE**  
*Never mistake motion for action.*  
Ernest Hemingway, writer
- ON ATTITUDE**  
*Humility is to make a right estimate of oneself.*  
President Harry Truman
- ON DEALING WITH PEOPLE**  
*Getting people to like you is merely the other side of liking them.*  
Norman Vincent Peale, clergyman, author
- ON LEARNING FROM MISTAKES**  
*Deliver me from the man who never makes a mistake — and also from the man who makes the same mistake twice.*  
Dr. William Mayo, founder, the Mayo Clinic