

REMEMBERING LEONARD READ A Special Kind of Leadership

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"All of the darkness in the world," Leonard Read once told me, "cannot overcome the light shed by a single candle."

All his life, Leonard's great passion was to feed the illuminating flame of economic opportunity, political freedom, and moral responsibility.

After a successful early career with the Chamber of Commerce and in private business, he founded the Foundation for Economic Education in 1946 and devoted his life to teaching and writing about liberty. He gathered around him some of the wisest thinkers of our time—men like Ludwig von Mises, Frank Chodorov, and Henry Hazlitt—and provided an important outlet for their energies.

When *The Freeman*, that venerable forum of free-market thought, was about to collapse from lack of financing, it was Leonard Read and FEE who rescued it and turned it into the magazine which, for longer than any other, has rallied Americans to the call of free men and free markets.

One unique quality of Leonard's leadership lay in his ability to bring together a vast variety of individual minds and personalities—the young and impressionable, the old and sage—to learn from and inspire one another. These meetings, whether at seminars at FEE's New York headquarters or at informal gatherings in the homes of friends, generated enormous synergy.

Leonard Read was a tireless champion of freedom. His 27 books, thousands of newspaper and magazine articles, and countless lectures and speeches fostered a new appreciation for free enterprise among millions around the world. In addition to founding FEE, he was also an architect of the Mont Pelerin Society, an international group of distinguished scholars, business

leaders, and journalists devoted to the principles of individual liberty.

Yet despite his amazing accomplishments and extraordinary wisdom, Leonard remained a humble man whose winning

President Roche with Read following one of his guest lectures at Hillsdale.



gentleness of spirit and boundless concern for his fellow man were genuine.

I can recall numerous times when, even though exhausted from a day of travel, writing, and speaking, he would strike up a casual conversation with an airline passenger seated next to him. By the time the plane touched down and the passengers disembarked, the new acquaintance would be carrying a raft of free enterprise materials, his eyes lit with the spark of new appreciation for his role as a free man.

I am one of many who were fortunate to have been touched by Leonard Read. He was my mentor, my boss when I served as FEE's director of seminars, and a good and trusted friend. He inspired my work, both then and now, with his keen insights and his noble example.

His quiet contributions over the past decade to Hillsdale College, the Center for Constructive Alternatives, and the Ludwig von Mises Lecture Series have been legion. When we launched *Imprimis* for a thousand friends of the College in 1972, it was Leonard who authored the first issue.

Earlier this year, Leonard Read passed away in his sleep at the age of 85, a bittersweet reminder of man's mortality. Many mourn the passing of this great lecturer and teacher, this gentle sentinel who for so long guarded the flame of freedom. It is in his memory that *Imprimis* here reprints one of his most famous essays.

But the real monument to Leonard Read is one which he himself erected. The millions of adherents to a code of individual worth and free thought who derived their inspiration through his works are a living testimony to the power of this one man, armed with courage and a vision for the future.

Note: The following additional Hillsdale publications by Leonard Read can be ordered by writing the Imprimis office at Hillsdale College: Essays on "The World's Most Important Person" and "The Something-for-Nothing Syndrome" appearing in earlier issues of this journal; Read's lecture; "The Miracle of the Market" in Champions of Freedom, Volume 1; and an "I, Pencil" poster from our Alternatives series. Readers may also write FEE in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York 10533, for the full catalog of Read's writings and a free subscription to The Freeman.