

Noted free market economist, Ludwig von Mises, continued to write and lecture until he was almost 90 years of age. One topic frequently discussed in his graduate seminar was the theory of the business cycle. At one session shortly before his retirement, he had been explaining that the alternating periods of economic boom and bust, characteristic of the trade cycle, were consequences of the government's intervention in the economy -- through the manipulation of the quantity of money and credit. The government could not interfere in this way, he pointed out, without its leading sooner or later to serious economic distortions and malinvestment.

One graduate student, flabbergasted when he realized the significance of Mises' critique of government intervention, blurted out, "Are you saying, Professor, that the government should do nothing? Not even in a depression?"

"Yes!" the octogenarian replied. "But I mean the government should start doing nothing much sooner!"