

The MacIver Critique

Well, it's finally happening. I figured that if my study on Wisconsin's job gap got any publicity, which it has started to get, that it wouldn't be long before the critics would begin to attack.

And they have – but tellingly, the attack has been on me rather than my study. A report by the MacIver Institute, which bills itself as the “free market voice for Wisconsin”, has discovered that I signed a Walker recall petition several years ago, and ran as a Democratic candidate for the State Senate 14 years ago. That, the MacIver Institute says, makes me a “political hack”.

How disappointing. If only they'd dug a little further, they'd have discovered that I routinely cheat at checkers and dominoes. A bit more research would have shown that I actively campaigned against naming Mother Theresa a saint. Complete due diligence would have turned up my irrational hatred of small dogs and children. As disreputable as they made me seem, the truth is that I am far, far worse.

But that was it. An “ad hominem” attack on me, but nothing on the study I did. Now, the MacIver Institute considers itself a think tank, so the people who work there must be thinkers. And not just ordinary cogitative types, I would expect, but real brainiacs, who let their memberships in Mensa lapse because they hated associating with mere geniuses. Indeed, unless I'm sadly mistaken, aren't they world famous because of their research on diffusing bombs, using only household objects like paper clips and ball point pens?

So these brainiac looked into me and found that I am a terribly flawed individual. OK, fine. But certainly these great thinkers also looked at my study, at the data I used and the statistics I employed. And after all of that diligent inquiry, they apparently had nothing critical to say whatsoever. Not a single word. So the implicit message is, McGee is bad, but McGee's study is absolutely on target.

So here's what you should take from the MacIver Institute's attack. First, under no circumstance whatsoever should you consider inviting me over for tea and cake. I'll probably kick your Shih Tzu clear across the room, make inappropriate remarks about your family portraits, and steal a couple of your best spoons to boot. A word to the wise: shun the McGee.

But second, all the conclusions I reached in my study of the Wisconsin job gap are absolutely true. After all, you have not only my word, the word of a political hack, but you now also have the word of all the brainiacs at the MacIver Institute, the free market voice for Wisconsin, who could not identify a single flaw in my analysis.

So you can conclude with great certainty that under Scott Walker, Wisconsin has a job gap, having created roughly 45,000 fewer jobs than if it had kept up with our neighboring states. That at the end of the previous governor's term, we had significantly reduced our recession-induced job gap, to 13,000 jobs. But that since Walker took over, that job gap has grown progressively worse, to about 28,000 jobs by Dec. 2011, about 35,000 jobs by Dec. 2012, and then about 45,000 jobs by Sept 2013. That since Walker took over, we've recovered only an additional 42% of the jobs we lost in the Great Recession, close to last among our neighbors.

In other words, you can conclude that Wisconsin's rate of job creation under Walker has also been rather disreputable. Disreputable, that is, just like me.