

LETTER TO EDITOR

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David O'Connell Refuses to Publicly Debate James Bartlett on Economics

Senate Minority Leader David O'Connell (D-Lansford) has refused to publicly debate the economic issues important to Bottineau, Renville and Ward Counties with his Republican challenger Dr. James Bartlett, Executive Director of the North Dakota Home School Association (R-Bottineau). Dr. Don Thompson, Economics Professor at Minot State Bottineau had agreed to moderate the debate and provide appropriate rules and format for the event. KMOT Television of Minot had agreed to broadcast 30 minutes of the event. I had planned to work with Dr. Thompson to gather questions from business owners and citizens around District 6 to have Dr. Thompson ask both Bartlett and O'Connell during the debate without their prior knowledge of the questions. This is a disappointing turn of events since David O'Connell would have had a chance to defend his economic viewpoint of socialism which is 180 degrees in contrast to the free market economic viewpoint that Bartlett proclaims. I was looking forward to learning more about how these viewpoints are working out in North Dakota. I see the advantages of socialism in terms of having the government manage the economic system and having many social programs to help the poor and redistribute wealth to help common people, but I also see that we seem to lose individual and economic liberty in proportion to the number of regulations that the legislature passes, not to mention the taxes and fees which reduce my economic liberty. So which is better, socialism, where the government takes care of my needs through tax-funded programs or the free-market with limited government interference in business and individual affairs with hard work as an essential virtue? From my reading about agriculture, socialists seem to think that government programs, price controls, and subsidies are needed to keep families on the farm, but free-market thinkers (not to be confused with the Facism that favors big corporations) say that the government needs to stop taking money from non-farmers to support the farmers in order for all to have more money to develop more small diversified businesses, including maintaining and starting family farms. The free-marketers say that the natural results of supply and demand, free-market pricing, competition between sellers, and competition between buyers is best and that removing government controls on agriculture would result in lower taxes and food prices because of the healthy competition and lower tax burden. I'm not sure who is right about this, but I am disappointed that I won't be able to hear the socialist minded David O'Connell debate the free-market minded James Bartlett on economics.

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