

MARK SANFORD GOES GALT

Clearly Jon Meacham and his deputy editors at Newsweek could use a refresher course in compelling journalism from their sister ship test proctors at the Stanley Kaplan Corporation. Newsweek, you see, has just seen fit to publish a lengthy interpretation of Ayn Rand by none other than Appalachian Trail aficionado Mark Sanford.

The Fountainhead is a stunning evocation of the individual and what he can achieve when unhindered by government or society. Howard Roark is an architect who cares nothing about the world's approval; his only concerns are his integrity and the perfection of his designs. What strikes me as still relevant is its central insight—that it isn't "collective action" that makes this nation prosperous and secure; it's the initiative and creativity of the individual. The novel's "second-handers," as Rand called them—the opportunistic Peter Keating, who appropriates Roark's architectural talent for his own purposes, and Ellsworth Toohey, the journalist who doesn't know what to write until he knows what people want to hear—symbolize a mindset that's sadly familiar today.

Yeah, because the guy using state money to fly himself around the globe to meet his Latin lover, while his wife and children are back in the government paid for Governor's mansion, ought to be talking about second hand leeches.

When the economy took a nosedive a year ago—a series of events that arguably began when the government-sponsored corporations Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac went broke—many Americans, myself

included, watched in disbelief as members of Congress placed blame on everyone and everything but government. This wasn't new in 2008. It's an act we've seen over and over since the beginning of the New Deal in 1933. For that reason, I think, those passages in *Atlas Shrugged* foreshadow what might happen to our country if there is no change in direction. As Rand shows in her book, when the government is deprived of the free market's best minds, it staggers toward collapse.

Uh huh, how convenient. Sanford pegs Fannie and Freddie as the ultimate culprits without noting that, while government sponsored, they are privately run enterprises. Nor noting that the reason the GSEs failed is from the complete hash of the financial markets made by the anti-regulatory, free wheeling, Randian geniuses populating Wall Street and the "financial products" markets that Sanford so adores.

Then there is this:

There is one more major flaw in Rand's thinking. She believed that man is perfectible—a view she shared with the Soviet collectivists she hated. The geniuses and industrial titans who retire to Galt's hidden valley create a perfect society based on reason and pure individualism; and Galt himself, in the 57-page speech near the book's end, explicitly denies the existence of original sin. The idea that man is perfectible has been disproved by 10,000 years of history. Men and women are imperfect, or "fallen," which is why I believe there is a role for limited government in making sure that my rights end where yours begin.

Crikey. Sanford found the temerity to actually argue that Rand's "one major flaw" is the one

which would condemn self serving puerile lotharios, like himself, who abdicate even their personal responsibilities to wife, children and workcraft. Sanford also neglects to mention that Rand's objectivism is, by definition, pretty much anti-religion. As Gore Vidal once said, Ayn Rand is an:

...odd little woman [who] is attempting to give a moral sanction to greed and self interest, and to pull it off she must at times indulge in purest Orwellian newspeak of the "freedom is slavery" sort. ... it is gratuitous to advise any human being to look out for himself. You can be sure that he will. It is far more difficult to persuade him to help his neighbor to build a dam or to defend a town or to give food he has accumulated to the victims of a famine. But since we must live together, dependent upon one another for many things and services, altruism is necessary to survival. To get people to do needed things is the perennial hard task of government, not to mention of religion and philosophy. ... Ayn Rand's "philosophy" is nearly perfect in its immorality...

And so it is. Then again, this is a perfect snapshot of the intellectual and moral duplicity that lies at the heart of the C-Street mentality to which Sanford and so many other fiscal scolds in Washington adhere to.

Heck, why should I have all the fun? It is audience participation Friday! Everybody here knows Rand, Sanford and C-Street; read Sanford's Newsweek tripe and dissect in comments!