

**Richard Ryan**  
**Remarks for April 7, 2006 Dinner**  
**University of Chicago**

I wish to add my congratulations and support to the entire team of economists that comprise the Initiative on Chicago Price Theory and especially to Gary Becker whom we honor this evening. He has and continues to provide inspiration to this team. Certainly, the wide range of insightful and socially relevant analyses that this group of economists has generated, most of which have policy implications, is testimony to the vitality and quality of this Chicago Initiative.

I support the Initiative on Chicago Price Theory for a variety of reasons:

- ◆ First and foremost, because I am proud to be an alumnus of the University of Chicago, having received my MBA degree here at the Graduate School of Business 40 years ago this spring.
- ◆ Additionally, I have always had a great respect for the marketplace and the price incentive system. As we can

all agree, it is in the study and exposition of price theory where the University of Chicago has distinguished itself; thanks to an unparalleled legacy of globally recognized economists, including Dr Becker. My knowledge and respect for this subject could not have been cultivated more deeply anywhere else.

Growing up on a farm in downstate Illinois, I was always fascinated by the commodity futures markets and how prices incentivized production and consumption or when they were constrained from doing so. My love for the agricultural sector continued throughout my career with positions at Armour and Company, the Chicago Board of Trade and, after 1979, with DEKALB Genetics, known for its seed corn and the highway signs with the flying ear of corn. Monsanto acquired DEKALB in 1998 and I retired from Monsanto four years later.

I was fortunate to have a career during a time and place that provided me the opportunity to observe first hand how the price incentive system could work for the benefit of society. I witnessed some of the first newly-freed farmer's markets in China during a visit to Shanghai in 1984. This ushered in a

great resurgence of ag productivity, which eventually improved rural life for millions. Later, I saw how free market openings in Eastern Europe and market liberalization in Mexico and South America produced similar results. But perhaps most heartwarming to me, as a former GI, was what I observed in Vietnam. After socialist measures reduced the country's population to near starvation, the Vietnam government, in the 1980's, reintroduced into the food chain the price incentive system together with limited property rights. In remarkably short order, the country regained its status as a leading rice exporter and an important producer of corn as well, which is where my business came in... Imagine my surprise in 1994 when I saw grain merchants and farmers in northern Vietnam checking Chicago grain prices on their cell phones as they made their spring planting decisions. The relative prosperity in rural Vietnam that has occurred over the past 15 years is truly remarkable, as I was reminded during a recent visit. And in all of these places, a freer, more informed market has facilitated the adoption of the newest technologies to further enhance productivity.

Seeing the economic and social benefits that have been generated where agricultural markets have been allowed to

work has provided me some of the most satisfying experiences of my career.

It is with this background that I am delighted to provide a stimulus to help assure that innovative research into the price system can be continued here at the University of Chicago and can add further to the development of scholarship and economic education. As in agriculture, which I have personally witnessed, the social and economic benefits of this kind of research can be enormous. This is why I support the Initiative on Chicago Price Theory and why I have chosen this vehicle as my way of giving back to the university what the University OF Chicago and our predecessor benefactors have made possible for us.