Apparently Vice President Biden didn’t read last week’s Capitalism Today blog. Here’s his quote from the [New York Daily News](http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/dailypolitics/2010/10/vpotus-joe-biden-dems-will-kee.html#ixzz13VvXynZa):

{“Every single great idea that has marked the 21st century, the 20th century and the 19th century has required government vision and government incentive,” he said. “In the middle of the Civil War you had a guy named Lincoln paying people $16,000 for every 40 miles of track they laid across the continental United States. … No private enterprise would have done that for another 35 years.}

As it turns out, according to Lloyd Mercer’s Journal of Economic History article, The Central Pacific, Union Pacific and Great Northern railroads all would have achieved a positive private return on their investment even without government aid. The small point is that no, governments weren’t necessary for the construction of railroads in the US (outside of protecting property rights).

The larger point is that there are millions of “great ideas” in the last couple hundred years that did not require government vision and incentive. Does V.P. Biden really believe we live in a planned economy where all economic growth comes from the government?

Did the government invent Cyrus McCormick’s reaper? Were Wilbur and Orville Wright on the government payroll when they first flew at Kitty Hawk? No they were small businessmen.

Eli Whitney might be surprised to hear it was the government, rather than he, who developed the cotton gin. Was Elias Howe a secret government employee when he developed the sewing machine? Maybe Joseph Glidden didn’t invent barbed wire – maybe the government got that technology from aliens.

The crazy thing, as previously noted, is that it would take a lifetime to list all of the advancements the private sector has brought us over the years. To hear our Vice President, you would think that none of this ever happened. It’s almost Orwellian where he is trying to rewrite entrepreneurs out of history. The new approved tale is one of government initiative, influence, and power.

Instead, we need to admit that most (but not all) really big, but stupid, ideas over the last few centuries have been products of governments. How many millions died in Mao’s Cultural Revolution? Wasn’t it Stalin who said, “Killing one man is murder, killing a million is a statistic”? Perhaps Hitler was just a private sector plant in an otherwise quality Nazi government? Of course not.

As Hugo Chavez continues to wreak havoc on Venezuela’s economy, and Robert Mugabe drives people to starvation, can’t the V.P. admit that some governments have an awful record of protecting human rights and promoting economic growth?

Has the US government always had “great ideas”? Is that what we call it when we unilaterally cancelled treaties with Native Americans when we discovered gold on their land? Was it a “great idea” to engage in forced bussing of students? Was it a “great idea’ to set up Social Security as a pyramid scheme? Was it a “great idea” to run up the national debt to the tune of $44,000 per person?

If all that President Biden has to say about business is that government is the source of all economic growth, then my “great idea” is to tell him to keep his mouth shut. After all, “it is better to keep your mouth shut and be thought a fool than to open it and resolve all doubt” (Abraham Lincoln).