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By Jennifer Rubin

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ABOUT JENNIFER RUBIN

I'm a labor-law yer-turned-blogger who believes in limited government, in free markets and that nearly all wisdom can be found in the Godfather movies and the Torah. [Read more](#)

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Posted at 03:26 PM ET, 03/28/2011

Did the left blow its cover on the war on the Kochs?

By Jennifer Rubin

As [I have reported](#), the left has mounted a [full-throated attack](#) on David and Charles Koch, the billionaire libertarian brothers who give to pro-free-market causes that the left abhors. As odd as it may seem, the left imagines that it can discredit the Tea Party movement or dissuade the Kochs from participating in the political process by making them into the newest bogeymen (Rush Limbaugh is apparently so 2009 in the left playbook.)

But you have to wonder whether,aside from the screwy notion that voters care about the left's conspiracy theories (how well did the slams on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce work in the 2010 midterms?), the war on the Koch brothers is backfiring. The last few days suggest it is.

The latest news cycle was touched off by a cover story on the Kochs, including rare interviews with the brothers in the [Weekly Standard](#). Matt Continetti produced perhaps the most comprehensive piece to date on the Kochs' background, political and philanthropic giving, business holdings, and opponents. A sample:

The Kochs' politics didn't match traditional categories. Republicans, in their view, were just as implicated in big government as Democrats. To this day the Cato Institute calls for a much smaller defense budget, a noninterventionist foreign policy, and liberal positions on social issues. Some of these views have made movement conservatives uneasy. In June 1979 National Review went so far as to publish an essay critical of Cato Institute libertarians by Lawrence V. Cott. The title of the piece was "Cato Institute & the Invisible Finger." The finger in question belonged to Charles Koch.

The intraconservative friction was evidence that Charles was becoming influential. In 1980 David Koch ran for vice president on the Libertarian party ticket. As a candidate, David could use his fortune to educate the populace about the free market. Yet it isn't quite accurate to say, as many have, that David was running to "Reagan's right." Yes, the Libertarians wanted to shrink government. But they also believed it was important to distinguish themselves from Chamber of Commerce, "family values" Republicans. Ed Clark, the party's presidential nominee, described himself as a "low-tax liberal."

Continetti examines their recent rise in visibility, including the newfound prominence for the brothers' seminars:

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In 2003 Charles Koch and [top adviser] Richard Fink had an idea for a seminar that would educate donors in the importance of economic freedom. "It was obvious we were headed for disaster," Charles said. Something had to be done to stop the coming fiscal collapse. The plan was to organize people interested in market issues, explain what was at stake, and suggest ways the participants could promote free enterprise. The first seminar was held in Chicago. Fifteen people attended.

The seminars gained momentum during Bush's second term. Soon the meetings were held twice every year, and by the winter of 2011 they were attracting around 300 people. The Kochs hosted big-name speakers: Antonin Scalia, Eric Cantor, Clarence Thomas, Paul Ryan. "We're not a bunch of radicals running around and saying strange things," said David. "Many of these people are very successful, and occupy very important, respected positions in their communities!" At the end of each seminar the participants would pledge money to conservative groups. One attendee told me the Kochs were among the best political fundraisers he'd ever seen. "They're almost as good as AIPAC," he said, referring to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The piece was so comprehensive that [Politico](#) ran a story simply recapping the Weekly Standard piece. The only addition was an attempted "gotcha," pointing out that three years ago Continetti received a 2008 fellowship from a foundation that received money from the Charles G. Koch Foundation. Is that more relevant than the fact (not disclosed in the piece) that the Politico reporter, Ken Vogel, was a senior associate at the Center for Public Integrity, a George Soros-funded outfit (as are most of the groups that attack the Kochs)? Well, the piece was apparently solid enough that Politio thought it worthwhile to provide the Cliff Notes version to its readers.

But Vogel then adds to the story today with a piece that brings to light the secret conspiracy — not of the Kochs but of the left-leaning groups that have mounted a campaign against them. He writes:

This week, [left-leaning filmmaker Robert] Greenwald's non-profit group Brave New Films plans to release the first part of its documentary series, focusing on what Greenwald asserts are the five most harmful impacts of the Kochs' political efforts. That will be followed by what is billed as an 8-part investigative series "exposing the billionaires' control over your job, your life, and your well being."

Meanwhile, the environmental group Greenpeace is set to release a report updating the brothers' contributions to groups challenging climate change science, and also examining their funding of conservative journalists and media outlets.

And left-leaning non-profit watchdog groups are keeping up the drumbeat as well. Public Citizen is trumpeting its defense in a pending court case of pranksters being sued by Koch Industries, and Common Cause plans to join with another group to examine whether the company and other corporations are paying their fair share of corporate taxes (a top aide to President Barack Obama suggested during an August background with reporters that Koch might not be, though the administration later walked back the claim). . . .

The rally [at the Kochs's most recent conference] — at which protesters waved signs reading "Koch Kills" and "Uncloak the Kochs" and chanted "David and Charles Koch: Your corporate greed is making us broke" — in some ways marked the public debut of the anti-Koch campaign.

Participating in the protest and surrounding events were a handful of other liberal non-profit groups, including the Oakland, Calif.-based civil Ruckus Society, as a pair of major unions, Greenpeace(which flew a blimp over Rancho Mirage with stylized portraits of the Kochs bracketing the words "Koch Brothers; Dirty Money") and two representatives of the White House-allied Center for American Progress (which has relentlessly tracked the

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Kochs' political activity on its Think Progress blog).

Back in Washington last month, representatives from Common Cause, Greenpeace, Public Citizen and Think Progress huddled with researchers from the Service Employees International Union at SEIU headquarters to figure out how to make the most of the sudden focus on the Kochs. And meeting participants have continued to trade research about the Kochs and strategize via a Koch-related email listserv and a rolling series of conference calls.

In other words, groups that purport to be nonpartisan are actually involved in a coordinated effort to smear the Kochs. Shadowy figures! Undisclosed money! Yes, folks, it's called *projection*.

And as we've pointed out at Right Turn, those left-leaning groups have more than a common agenda:

Since 1999, Common Cause, the Ruckus Society and the Center for American Progress have received a combined \$7.2 million from foundations controlled by or linked to Soros, according to an analysis of grant information provided to POLITICO by Common Cause and data from the Internal Revenue Service provided by the Capital Research Center.

The data also show that those foundations have given another \$4.6 million to Public Citizen, Brave New Foundation (a non-profit affiliated with Brave New Films) and a few other liberal groups that have been critical of the Kochs, including the Alliance for Justice, People for the American Way, and Public Campaign. Additionally, some of those groups are beneficiaries of a liberal donor network that meets in secret twice a year – very much like the Koch donor network – though it's impossible to know how much the groups received from those donors.

"Soros money being used to protest money in politics strikes me as ridiculous," [Washington Examiner columnist Tim] Carney told POLITICO.

Ridiculous or hypocritical? Both, and maybe just a tad improper.

Carney's boss, [Mark Tapscott](#), has a take on whether one prominent member of the Soros gang is playing by the rules, the IRS's rules:

Media Matters, the George Soros-backed legion of liberal agit-prop shock troops based in the nation's capital, has declared war on Fox News, and in the process quite possibly stepped across the line of legality.

David Brock, MM's founder, was quoted Saturday by Politico promising that his organization is mounting "guerrilla warfare and sabotage" against Fox News, which he said "is not a news organization. It is the de facto leader of the GOP, and it is long past time that it is treated as such by the media, elected officials and the public." . . .

Being a C3 puts MM in the non-profit, non-commercial sector, and it also bars the organization from participating in partisan political activity. This new, more aggressive stance, however, appears to run directly counter to the government's requirements for maintaining a C3 tax status.

Since Brock classifies Fox News as the "leader" of the Republican Party, by his own description he is involving his organization in a partisan battle. High-priced K Street lawyers can probably find a federal judge or a sympathetic IRS bureaucrat willing to either look the other way or accept some sort of MM rationale such as that it is merely providing educational information about a partisan group. . . .

Beyond the partisanship issue, explicitly declaring that your purpose as a tax-exempt non-profit public foundation is to interfere with the commercial interests of somebody else's legal

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business enterprise falls nowhere within the scope of purely educational activities.

At another point much later in the same return, MM's purpose is more succinctly described as being "dedicated to comprehensively monitoring, analyzing and correcting conservative misinformation in the media."

So the bottom line here is that one leftist billionaire whose front groups DON'T fully disclose their donors or their coordinated campaigns are attacking two libertarian billionaires who've been remarkably candid (written a book, held conferences, etc.) about what they are up to (i.e. advancing a limited-government, free-market agenda).

Left unsaid in all of this is the degree to which the Kochs' political giving has been exaggerated. How much do they give? Over the last 20 years, about \$11 million. Not chump change for you and me, but kind of stingy actually for billionaires whom the left would have us believe are taking over the American political system. By way of comparison, Duke Energy — the third-largest nuclear power plant operator — has been a major donor to Democrats, including the president. That would be the same Duke Energy that just forked over a \$10 million line of credit for a single purpose — the 2012 Democratic Convention. Just the sort of thing Common Cause would be concerned about. After the next conference call with the other members of the Soros gang, I'm sure it'll get right on it.

By Jennifer Rubin | 03:26 PM ET, 03/28/2011

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eric654 wrote:

No surprise then that the Koch brothers refinery in Texas was one of the first targets of the EPA last year. The Clean Air Act states that all medium and large sources must be regulated. Instead the EPA made up a version that said only large sources had to be regulated, so large that only Koch and a few others qualified.

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