

Current Affairs: Kochs mess with Texas, our minds and our future

Posted: Thursday, April 14, 2011 10:49 am

By Mary Bell Lockhart / Columnist |

Sometimes when you turn over a rock all sorts of creepy things crawl out.

Think Progress, a project of the Center for American Progress, has produced a report on the political dealings of the brothers Charles and David Koch, and the Center for Public Integrity has reported on the Koch lobbyists in Washington.

What crawled out when they turned over these stones is truly disturbing. These reports can be found at: www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/2011/04/koch_brothers.html and www.publicintegrity.org/articles/entry/3120/.

For decades, these legacy-billionaire brothers have moved their radical right, libertarian agenda to make them and their partners more loot.

The agenda is anti-government, anti-tax, anti-regulation, anti-environment, anti-education, anti-science, anti-human and essentially anti-American. The only thing it's "pro" is corporate domination. From their libertarian roots, Koch organizations took over, funded and molded the tea party. And, though in years past the Republican Party rejected this ideology as too extreme, now the GOP has embraced it.

A few things about this agenda must be said:

First, if any suffer under the misperception that this corporatist agenda aims to help people or make this a better world, just "fuggedaboutit." Most of us matter only as paying customers, not beneficiaries, of this agenda. And there are no plans for a time when we've been bled dry and can't pay anymore. There are no plans regarding which planet earthlings can escape to when our resources are exhausted.

It doesn't have to be that way. There are a number of very large corporations that make dandy profits while helping people and protecting the planet. They act on the basis of enlightened self-interest that has long been a fundamental American value. The economist Joseph Stiglitz explains, "It means appreciating that paying attention to everyone else's self-interest - in other words, the common welfare - is in fact a precondition for one's own ultimate well-being. ... Those canny Americans understood a basic fact: looking out for the other guy isn't just good for the soul - it's good for business."

The enlightened understand that we're all in this together; not so the Koch brothers and their band of corporatistas.

Second, the public policies in the Koch agenda don't even work, never have, never will anywhere on Earth. They don't result in better government and healthier societies made up of happier people. They don't even, in the long run, lead to prosperous businesses. They lead to societies divided into "them up there" and the rest of us pecking it out down here. They lead to economic bubbles that inevitably burst and slime everyone, like our recent housing and financial collapses. And they lead to ruin of the environment upon which the future depends. There is the path of disaster crony capitalism.

And third, the reason the Koch/corporatist agenda doesn't work is that it is "a house built on sand." The underlying information upon which it rests is a collection of fantasies, distortions, lies and unscientific notions. Small wonder that part of the agenda is anti-public education and that it created "think tanks" to give the appearance of a credible information base. Heaven forbid that the truth be told!

It is on the misinformation campaign where the Koch brothers started their work and continue today. Their father, Fred, was a founding member of the ultra-right John Birch Society in the 1950s. In 1977, Charles Koch co-founded the libertarian Cato Institute, and in 1980 David Koch was the Libertarian Party's vice presidential candidate. In 1984 David Koch created Citizens for a Sound Economy, which in 2004 split into FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity Foundation. (There's no doubt whose prosperity they are for - their own.) The reports say they have given at least \$85.9 million (that we know of) to 85 right-wing think tanks and advocacy groups over the last decade and a half. Some organizations that receive Koch support are: Heritage Foundation, Reason Foundation, Federalist Society, American Enterprise Institute & Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies, Texas Public Policy Foundation, and the American

Legislative Exchange Council.

They'd like you to think these nice-sounding organizations are about genuine public policy. For example, they'd like you to believe that economic measures are analyzed objectively to derive economic policy recommendations. Actually, just the reverse is true. Like the lead-in to the Iraq war, "the intelligence is being fixed around the policy." For example, though these organizations call for "free-market solutions," they can't point to a single instance of genuinely free markets even existing, much less working well. And they favor corporate tax breaks and subsidies that benefit the oil, chemical and agriculture industries. So much for "free market."

Here's another: They claim regulation of polluting industries kills jobs when actually the opposite is true. Still another: They attack the science of global climate change when we can clearly see the ongoing change all around us. And another: They claim public sector employees earn 69% more than private sector employees, but they are comparing well-educated government scientists to private sector burger-flippers, not employees in comparable jobs.

Notice the American Legislative Exchange Council listed above. ALEC is an organization for elected Republican officials. It cranks out legislative wording for adoption by primarily state governments. This is why in "red" state after state (Texas, Ohio, Michigan, Florida, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Kansas, Maine, Pennsylvania and South Carolina), we are seeing the exact same legislation put forth. The organization stands for limited federal government, greater power to the states and, there you go again, "free markets."

A list of companies on the Enterprise Board of ALEC reveals the corporations that have signed on to the Koch agenda. These include Energy Futures Holdings, Johnson & Johnson, PhRMA, American Bail Coalition, Kraft Foods, GlaxoSmithKline, Coca-Cola, AT&T, Pfizer, Peabody Energy, Intuit Inc., ExxonMobil, Bayer, Reynolds American, WalMart, State Farm Insurance and UPS.

These corporations want a weakened federal government because the federal government is the only entity that can stand up to them, if it will. It's the only entity that can regulate them to protect workers, consumers and the environment.

Want to know why gas prices are so high right now? It's not supply disruption; it's commodity futures trading in oil by a branch of Koch Industries and other speculators. They want to continue doing that to us without restraint.

Whew! I've run out of space, but there's more to this tale yet to tell.

Alpine resident Mary Bell Lockhart writes a monthly column for the Avalanche.

Alpine
Avalanche

© Copyright 2011, Alpine Avalanche, Alpine, Texas. Powered by Blox CMS from TownNews.com.