



The Inner Secrets of the Right Wing Echo Chamber

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If you have been paying attention to television, radio, newspapers, the Internet, various talk shows, including the batch on Sunday morning, you have heard two words repeated a lot; so often that there is actually the sound of an echo. Word one is collapse ... collapse ... collapse; word two is bankrupt... bankrupt ... bankrupt. Can you guess why these words are repeated over and over (and no, this is not about the Greek economy)?

Rather, these words are being used and reused to describe the persistent disinformation that, if successful, will impact millions of people, probably even you, who are reading this. Did you guess right? The first message is: "We must raise the retirement age or the economy will collapse." And two: "Social security is bankrupt."

These two statements have been repeated thousands of times in and on American media. Yet there is not one scintilla of evidence that either one of these statements is accurate. But they have lodged themselves into the mainstream of American thought, constantly repeated by corporate media, as if they are obvious truths.

How does this happen? Since the 1970's the conservatives in this country have developed a very powerful propaganda infrastructure, that is currently heavily funded by guess who? Right, the Koch brothers. It goes like this: large amounts of money *a la* Koch brothers are given to conservative think tanks where well-paid staffers develop position papers. The think tanks release the position papers pushing conservative ideas, then an army of publicists place the pundits from those very think tanks for media appearances to promote the ideas, repeating the talking points. The corporate media parrots these positions as if they're fact; conservative politicians (funded by the Kochs and other conservative donors) embrace and promote the same talking points, as if they're fact. This is the nature of the echo chamber. When it is fully operational, the same points are made in many media appearances, in every kind of media until the ideas become the conventional wisdom.

But you really need to watch how this works in action. Robert Greenwald's Brave New Films has produced a groundbreaking investigative piece, which focuses on the cottage industry, largely funded by the Kochs, whose sole purpose is to turn fringe ideas into mainstream policy arguments. In BNF's investigative work, they found documents and interviews that illustrate a vast industry of spokespeople, front groups, think tanks and elected officials, which have built a self-sustaining echo chamber.

The video "Echo Chamber" highlights the onslaught on Social Security as just one example. The Koch echo chamber on Social Security begins with think tanks like the Cato Institute, Heritage Foundation and Mercatus Center at George Mason University and the Reason Foundation, which owe their founding and achievements to Koch backing. These think tanks take their \$28.4 million in Koch funding and produce more than 300 position papers distorting the purpose and effectiveness of Social Security.

And so it goes. But watch the video. It's well worth it. And short and digestible.

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