



Your View: Guest Column - Koch brothers' money threatens America

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BY GARY PARKER

The Koch brothers, Charles and David, of New York, are billionaire right-wing political activists who are funding efforts to defeat Democratic candidates for office. As owners of Koch Industries and its \$100 billion annual revenue, they can afford to influence politics and also the education of our children. They fund think-tanks like the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute, the Tea Party, and also many colleges and universities like George Mason University, Florida State University, and others. They also fund the arts and cancer research, but my concern and focus here is on their influence in politics and government.

They fund think-tanks, Americans for Prosperity TV ads aimed at Obamacare, and political candidates in order to influence elections and government policy. They fund colleges by funding professorships, for example in the university economics department, in order to influence the minds of young people coming out of college. They attempt to control which professors should be hired which is a clear interference with academic freedom by both them and the colleges that allow it.

The Kochs received their wealth from their father Fred, who was a founding member of the now-defunct right-wing John Birch Society. Fred was a chemical engineer who discovered a process to convert oil into gasoline. U.S. companies didn't accept his ideas, and so he went to work in the Soviet Union where his company trained Soviet engineers and helped Stalin establish modern oil refineries. But Fred suffered guilt at helping to build the Soviet Union into a strong military power.

So afterwards, he helped found the John Birch Society whose members considered Eisenhower a Communist agent. Fred believed that there was a Communist plot to take over the government, and he believed that social programs to help the less fortunate among us were part of the plot. Clearly, he was influenced by the communist hysteria of that era. He taught his sons all this constantly, so it's no wonder the Kochs believe what they do today.

Fred was justifiably shocked and angry about Soviet government, but to transfer his paranoia to belief that the U.S. government was headed in the same direction (FDR's New Deal programs as an example) is nonsense. Whatever the U.S. government does in regard to progressive policies like those New Deal programs is a result of democratic decision-making by the people's representatives in Congress. The Kochs on the other hand, like tyrannical Soviet governments

have done, use repetitive propaganda (through TV ads) in lying to the public to promote their views.

The Kochs hate President Obama, Democrats, and all government policies that are progressive in nature, like the federal income tax, Social Security, and Medicare, among many others. With an upbringing like they got from their father, why wouldn't they? They basically were brainwashed by him, and now they're attempting to influence the American public through think-tanks, never-ending TV ads, higher education funding, and their mammoth funding of right-wing political candidates. They are a danger to our American way of life.

Gary Parker lives in Archdale.