



Mont Pelerin Society A Window Into Ideological Heart Of Kochtopus Climate Denial

It's known as the [Kochtopus](#) – the extensive network of think tanks, institutes, university departments, political funding arms and “grassroots” activist groups funded by oil billionaires Charles and David Koch.

The multi-tentacled network has pumped tens of millions of dollars into groups that deny the risks of human-caused climate change.

But if it is Koch cash that helps fuel these groups, then what is it that fuels the Koch brothers themselves beyond the obvious financial interest?

As [DeSmogBlog has revealed](#), Charles Koch is a long-standing member of the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) – a global group of industrialists, academics and economists who share the “neoliberal” ideology of limiting government control.

If the Koch network has many groups dangling from its tentacles, then Charles Koch's membership with the Mont Pelerin Society provides a window into the ideological heart of the Kochtopus.

DeSmogBlog today publishes the [global membership directory of the Mont Pelerin Society as it was in 2010](#), with all personal contact details redacted.

The Mont Pelerin Society was established in 1947 by economist and philosopher Friedrich von Hayek – considered by many to be the “godfather” of free market economics.

Letters [uncovered in 2011 show that Charles Koch](#) wrote personally to Hayek in 1973, three years after becoming an MPS member, to encourage him to claim social security and medical benefits.

Koch's enthusiasm for state welfare appeared to be in contradiction of the Mont Pelerin Society's “statement of aims”, which describes expansion of state welfare as a “danger”.

Koch funding within MPS membership

At least 12 of the think tanks and institutes appearing on the list of US members of the Mont Pelerin Society have also accepted money from at least one of the three Koch family foundations – the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation, the Claude R. Lambe Charitable Foundation and the David H. Koch Charitable Foundation.

The biggest US think tank represented among the MPS membership from the United States is the [Cato Institute](#) – the neoliberal free market group Charles Koch helped to establish.

Cato's executive vice president David Boaz and co-founder Edward Crane are among the Cato Institute associates who are members of the MPS.

Last year, former Czech Republic President and Prime Minister [Vaclav Klaus](#) was named a “Distinguished Senior Fellow” at Cato. Klaus, who was accepted into the MPS in 1990, does not believe that humans can cause climate change. He has claimed that climate scientists are “rent seekers”.

Cato is also the home of [Pat Michaels](#) — a climate science contrarian who is ubiquitous on media outlets in the US such as Fox News — who once admitted that “about 40 per cent” of his funding came from fossil fuels. Michaels is not an MPS member.

American Enterprise Institute

Four MPS members list their affiliations or contact details as the American Enterprise Institute, including the current MPS president and [AEI scholar Allan Meltzer](#).

AEI scholars tend to be sceptical of the risks of human-caused climate change, often advocating against regulation of carbon dioxide emissions.

One of those scholars is Roger Bate, who has been associated with a number of “think tanks” both in the US and in the UK.

[Tobacco industry documents](#) show how Bate was in contact with cigarette manufacturers RJ Reynolds, Philip Morris and British-American Tobacco during the 1990s as he tried to raise money for a book on risk, which would include a section on secondhand smoke.

At the time, Bate was the head of the environment unit at the UK-based Institute of Economic Affairs. Bate co-wrote an IEA book sceptical of human-caused climate change with Julian Morris, another MPS member and prominent climate science denialist who is now a vice president at the [Reason Foundation](#).

The 1994 book – [Global Warming: Apocalypse or Hot Air?](#) – examined “the so-called scientific 'consensus' about global warming” and concluded there was little need to act on the issue.

Acton Institute and Heritage Foundation

Samuel Gregg is a research director at the Acton Institute – a free market group with a focus on religion that has received Koch cash.

Like many of the other Koch-funded groups, Acton has also received funds from [Donors Trust](#) – a multi-million dollar cash pot funded by anonymised rich conservatives.

In 2009, [Gregg claimed](#) “many reputable scientists dispute aspects of the prevailing tenets of climate change” before quoting Australian mining entrepreneur and geologist Ian Plimer, who has never written a peer-reviewed paper on climate change. Plimer claims that climate change is natural and is not caused by humans.

Gregg also [writes favourably](#) of the views of senior Australian Catholic Cardinal George Pell who has argued carbon dioxide is “not a pollutant, but the stuff of life” and that climate science lacks empirical support. Pell’s views were [rubbished](#) by actual climate scientists.

Another free market climate science denialist group to be well represented within MPS is the Heritage Foundation, an active promoter of climate science misinformation while lobbying against regulations covering greenhouse gas emissions.

Six MPS members list Heritage in their affiliations or contact details, including founder [Edwin Fuelner](#), who is the MPS treasurer and an executive committee member, and Heritage’s executive vice president Phillip Truluck, an MPS member since 1990.

Other groups with MPS members include think tanks the Reason Foundation, Pacific Research Institute and funding group the Earhart Foundation.

MPS member John Goodman is president of the National Center for Policy Analysis, which has produced a “global warming primer” which underplays recent trends in warming and sea level rise and opposes cuts in greenhouse gas emissions because they would be too expensive.

NCPA also opposed moves to remove lead from ammunition used by hunters on environmental grounds because it would “raise the cost of hunting”.

Going global

From Argentina to Venezuela, the MPS directory shows almost 400 members in more than 50 countries. The Atlas Economic Research Foundation, a US-based global network of about 400 free market think tanks around the world, also has MPS members.

Dan Grossman, chair of the Atlas board, is an MPS member. So is president Alejandro Chafuen and long-standing board member William Sumner.

Atlas board member and former president John Blundell, a former president of the Charles G. Koch Foundation, is also an MPS member. Blundell is reported to have once said that the aim through Atlas was to “litter the world with free-market think-tanks”.

With Mont Pelerin Society members in senior positions in many of the most influential US-based think tanks, it seems the society – advertently or otherwise – is helping to litter the world with a collective denial of the risks of human-caused climate change