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## *The battle for the Cato Institute*

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I knew Ed Crane just slightly in 1977, when he helped found the [Cato](#) Institute. I had only modest expectations. A serious, influential libertarian think tank was a doubtful idea back then. But Crane and those around him have made it a reality. And while we have our disagreements, I have nothing but respect and affection for him.

Cato has managed the difficult feat of becoming both a fount of true-blue libertarian ideas and a reputable source of information even for those who don't share its views. It may be the most successful think tank in Washington.

Now, billionaires Charles and [David Koch](#), who are among the institute's four equal shareholders, [are trying to gain full control](#) and remove Crane, for reasons they have not spelled out publicly.

Crane says their goal is to turn it into "[yet another political arm of their vast empire.](#)" If so, they will be turning gold into straw. Cato's value is precisely that it's not a political entity but an idea factory, where the goal is sound research and intelligent advocacy on important issues. It's hard for me to imagine that getting rid of Crane, who has steadfastly upheld its mission, will be for the good.

The Kochs should keep something in mind: It took decades to establish Cato's reputation. Wrecking it wouldn't take nearly so long.