

Classically Liberal

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Charles Koch and His Threat to Libertarianism

This blog has previously defended Charles and David Koch from false allegations. There have simply been half truths told about them. This doesn't mean they are perfect individuals. In fact, they are currently up to something I consider very loathsome. And for that reason we give notice that we shall never bother to defend the Koch brothers again—even when we think the attack is unfair. We will not spread malicious and false accusations, we just won't defend these two men.

Now, to be fair, I think the main issue is Charles Koch, but David is going along with him in this endeavor so I include both of them in my libertarian version of a fatwa—which just means I think people should have nothing to do with these men.

Many years ago Charles Koch asked Ed Crane what sort organization was needed in the libertarian movement. Crane said a think tank that tackled hard policy questions was important. From that the Cato Institute was born. Charles, some years ago, had a hissy fit about something and took his toys and ran. But he remained a shareholder, as did his brother.

There were four shareholders: including the Kochs there was Ed Crane and Bill Niskanen, who recently died. Niskanen's shares went to his wife but Charles Koch has filed a lawsuit in Kansas, far from Cato's main offices, to redistribute Niskanen's shares to all existing stock holders, instead of to his widow, which would effectively mean a hostile takeover of Cato by Koch.

Cato is the largest and most effective libertarian organization in the world. After Charles had his hissy fit and went crying to Kansas, Ed Crane built Cato into a world class organization. Charles, who has actually done little but throw his money around, now wants to muscle in and take over Cato. Let me be clear, while I think the Kochs have libertarian sentiments, over conservative ones, they simply don't give a fuck about whole areas of human liberty. Koch is the ultimate "me-libertarian" who views liberty as something important to white, old rich dudes and doesn't care about others. He wouldn't deny other their freedom, he just doesn't care when it is denied to them, except on some academic level which has no real impact. Koch funds groups that help him, and doesn't care whether they help liberty in general. If the issue impacts Koch it gets funding. They throw a lot of money at conservative causes, not libertarian ones. Koch has been rather miserly with donations to genuine libertarian groups and quite generous to anti-liberty conservatives.

Now, let us assume for the sake of argument, that Koch is entirely in the right. What will his lawsuit accomplish? It will mean the effective destruction of Cato. This old fart from Kansas is willing to decimate the most influential libertarian organization in the world because he has a point to prove. This is the height of irrational greed. It is greed because Koch has had it in for Crane for years for whatever slight he felt and is doing this to feel good. It is irrational because he will destroy something he claims to value in order to seek that vengeance.

The end result of Koch's action will be to harm libertarianism in a significant way. I don't give a fuck about his motivation, I know what the result will be. And anyone willing to inflict that much damage on libertarians, for any reason, is not an ally, but an enemy, and a very dangerous one at that. So, libertarian friends, if you "liked" Koch Industries on Facebook, you might want to unlike them.

Libertarianism is strong, but endangered. There is a concerted effort to take the libertarian revival and turn it into something other than libertarian. We see it from the so-called paleolibertarians, that gaggle of bigoted, anarcho-fundamentalists who distort and twist the idea of Ludwig von Mises to try and bolster their right-wing agenda. We see it from conservatives who have flooded libertarianism pushing neoconservative foreign policies and social conservatism, while pretending they are actually libertarian. Certainly Koch has done a lot to fund these latter fakes. Now Charles Koch has gone on the offensive, and offensive describes his actions in every sense of the word. He is now actively working to destroy the most effective libertarian organization in the world. As I see it, that makes him the most potent enemy to libertarianism around. He is trying to do what many far left, and far right, groups would love to do—take the Cato Institute out of the game. Charles Koch—you suck.

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