



## The Koch Brothers and the John Birch Society: Wrecking America One (tax free) Think Tank at a Time

by ClaireConner February 10, 2013

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In part six of my diaries, I finally realize that my mother was right about one thing: the John Birch Society was still a powerful organization despite what Americans thought. Birch leadership had moved away from emphasis on membership and found new ways to spread their tiny-government, libertarian ideas.

By the late 1970s, I was convinced that the Birchers were irrelevant. That made it easy for me to dismiss Mother's comments about "being ready when the liberals failed" out of hand. I couldn't even imagine that my mother knew something I didn't.

Everyone thought that the Birch society had been reduced to a footnote of a footnote in political history. That conviction made it easy to ignore what was really happening: a group of very wealthy men—men who had been leaders of the Society or influenced by Birch ideas—were using their vast wealth to seed think tanks and tax-free foundations.

Before too long, the "Insiders" in the Council on Foreign Relations and their minions were countered by the new right wing kids on the block: The Heritage Foundation, The Cato Institute, American Legislative Exchange Council, (ALEC) Americans for Prosperity, the Club for Growth, the National Rifle Association, the American Enterprise Institute and the Tea Party.

In addition, the Religious Right set up of tax-exempt operations and foundations almost too numerous to count. The right wing recruited politicians to policy seminars where they received model legislation for state and federal government.

My parents played a small part in this movement when they founded and funded the Wanderer Foundation, a right-wing Roman Catholic group. But, my mother and dad never had big money to invest.

One big time Birch family, the Koch family, has spent (and continues to spend) huge sums to bankroll Birch ideas. David and Charles Koch, the sons of Fred Koch—one of the original founding members of the Birch Society and a friend of my father—have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in their favorite political causes.

Yes, I mean that. 100s of millions of dollars.

What we are seeing today is one wave of a Koch tsunami intended to defeat all Democrats and build a permanent GOP majority in the House and Senate. The Supreme Court's Citizens United decision declaring that money equals speech has helped to fuel this juggernaut.

If you pretend that Koch defeats in the 2012 election have stopped them, you are kidding yourself.

When you strip away all the trappings, the Koch Brothers and their allies propose the identical ideas I heard from my father and his Birch allies: this is an unholy marriage of radical libertarian economics in the Ayn Rand model and a regressive, unrelenting culture war.

Put it together and you have exactly what the Birchers longed for: a dismantled safety net, a federal government 40% of its current size and a free-for-all, laissez faire economy where the rich pay no taxes, business has no regulation and the workers have no unions.

The government will be tiny, but what is left will control your personal life, your sexual preference, your fertility and your civil rights and your right to vote.

Welcome to the right wing future.