



Ed Crane, Anonmouse

A lot of the press coverage of the battle between Ed Crane and the Koch brothers for control of the Cato Institute portrays Mr. Crane as a principled libertarian trying to prevent Cato from being swept into Republican politics. But *Washingtonian* is out with a long [article](#) that portrays the power struggle as originating in Mr. Crane's negative comments about Charles Koch, offered to a *New Yorker* reporter on condition that his name not be used:

In 2010, Jane Mayer, a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, began reporting an article on the Koch brothers. Ed Crane agreed to sit for an interview.

Mayer arrived at Crane's office with an audio recorder, which she turned on at the start of the interview. Although most of their conversation was on the record, Crane asked that his name not be associated with certain comments he made, Mayer says. This method of attribution is known as "on background."

Crane says he participated only because Mayer told him the article was about the libertarian influence on the Tea Party—not a profile of the Kochs. "It became very clear a couple of minutes into the interview that she wanted to do a hatchet job on the Kochs," he says. Crane claims he agreed to speak about the Kochs if his comments were kept off the record—meaning they could not be used in the story.

When Mayer asked about Charles Koch's book on market-based management, Crane told her he thought the book was garbage but Koch's subordinates had convinced him it was a masterpiece.

"I recognized that this was going to piss Charles off, which is why I said, 'It's off the record,' " Crane recalls. "But I wanted Jane to know that I wasn't a Koch sycophant, because I didn't want Cato that closely aligned to what Koch's doing." Mayer says he's confusing the terms "on background" and "off the record."

Several weeks later, a *New Yorker* fact-checker contacted Crane to confirm his comments. Crane claims he verified the comments but said he had been assured certain ones were off the record. He told the fact-checker to review the audio recording; the fact-checker said Mayer's device had malfunctioned.

Though she believed the comments in question were among those Crane had made on the record, Mayer removed Crane's name from the passage and attributed the comments to "a top Cato Institute official." At the time, Crane seemed comfortable with the change, Mayer says.

Mayer's story, published in August 2010...included the following passage: "A top Cato Institute official told me that Charles 'thinks he's a genius. He's the emperor, and he's convinced he's wearing clothes.' "

Shortly after the article appeared, David Koch called Crane to ask if he was the Cato official quoted. Crane admitted he was.

"Charles is really upset," David said.

Note: If you run a non-profit organization, it is not good form to give reporters anonymous negative quotes about your major donors or partners in the organization. The Cato employees who are going around blaming the Koch brothers for trying to destroy their organization may want to think about this.

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