

Koch brothers a bad influence

By: Jerry Ryberg – July 13, 2013

Charles and David Koch (pronounced “coke”) are billionaire industrialist brothers who don’t have enough money. I know, these billionaires, with the exception of good guys like Warren Buffett and Bill Gates, never have enough money. Some background: Fred, Charles and David’s dad, was brought into Russia by Joseph Stalin in the 1930s to show them how to exploit the oil reserves there. Fred used the money from that to build his own oil business here. And now, the boys own Georgia-Pacific and a bunch of other Koch-branded companies that have operations in 45 states. And yes, they employ a lot of people.

But for we in the middle class and the poor, the Koch brothers are super-rich guys who are especially bad. Twice a year, they have politicians, including Supreme Court “Justices” Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, and Rep. Eric Cantor to conferences at one of the Koch’s really expensive homes. And are they discussing how to benefit us taxpayers, maybe bring more jobs home? Well, no. They talk about how further to exploit unbridled capitalism to their benefit, at our expense. Do you suppose they talk about how to engineer some more tax cuts for the wealthy? How to get rid of unions?

According to Robert Greenwald’s 2012 documentary, “Koch Brothers Exposed” the two make \$13 million a day. They fund four “think tanks” such as the CATO Institute, Heritage Foundation, and the Reason Foundation, that work to destroy public education. In 2009, the Kochs tried to re-segregate the schools of Wake County, N.C. Their “Americans For Prosperity” organization funded two candidates to the Wake County school board. They won, using phrases like “neighborhood schools” (segregation) and “forced busing.” And the attempt was made to move backwards FAST. But this resulted in a huge outcry from parents, teachers, students of all colors and the NAACP. In 2011, a new school board election was held, and the Koch candidates both lost. And today, the Wake County schools seem to be doing well.

But Charles and David have huge wealth, and they’re corrupting our universities. They’ve been quite clever in using their grant money to exercise maximal control and influence on campus. In more than 150 colleges and universities, they’ve spent millions to get their point of view instilled in classrooms, faculty members and students. This includes the schools agreeing to hire teachers that have the Kochs’ conservative point of view. Professor John C. Bednar, Clemson University: “They have an immense amount of influence over who those professors are, and what they teach, and what they publish, and what research they do, and what they say in the classroom. This is a major threat to American life. They are trying to use their money to influence the flow of American democracy.”

And back to their part in the corruption of Congress: The Koch brothers contribute more than \$500,000 to members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee which proposes environmental and pollution regulations. The committee passed a bill in 2011 that would gut the EPA and the Clean Air Act. It was then passed by the House but voted down by Senate Democrats.

For their union-busting efforts, Wisconsin was a test case for Charles and David Koch. They don't want to pay union wages to their own workers, so they gave massive amounts of money for Gov. Scott Walker's 2011 campaign against the state workers' unions. The Kochs gave a million dollars to the Republican Governors Association, which contributed \$65,000 to Scott Walker. The Kochs' Americans For Prosperity Wisconsin ran a \$250,000 media campaign against the unions and the protestors. Walker and the Kochs won; the unions lost. So did the people of Wisconsin and America, as the super-rich get even richer, and we, the middle class, take another hit.

State Farm Insurance is a charter member of ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council. Sounds OK, right? But no, it's a partnership of big money, and politicians in our state capitols, writing legislation that benefits ... the very rich. It's estimated that the two brothers have paid more than \$1 million dollars to ALEC, which is working to destroy the voting rights of people who may not like the Koch agenda. They've paid more than \$245,000 to politicians who support voter ID laws. Remember, there are few, very few cases of "voter fraud." The wealthy want to severely limit the number of people of color and young people who vote.