

Guest post: Overlords of the phony ‘grassroots’ Tea Party

By Herb Detweiler

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I do enjoy your columns so much. You are one of the few who still “tells it as it is” and seems to enjoy “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable.”

You mentioned the “Tea Party Movement” in your Sunday column and that triggered a response in me to share with you some of the info that I gathered on that “movement” from reading a most informative and disturbing book: “The Obama Hate Machine” by Bill Press.

It came out earlier this year. Wow, talk about telling it as it is! Press has done some heavy research in his journalistic career and really digs up a lot of little-known info about how the Repubs and their sympathizers and supporters have been working since before Obama was inaugurated to make sure he failed and did not get re-elected. If you haven’t read that book you really ought to hurry to the library and get a copy. It is right up your alley!

The basic fact, which we all pretty much know, is that the Republicans pledged from day one to block everything Obama tried to do in the way of legislation, even when some of the proposals were makeovers of ideas which the Republicans themselves had previously endorsed. The point was to limit Obama’s successes to as little as possible. (Reminds me of that old saying, “It’s amazing what can be accomplished if nobody cares who gets the credit”).

They were very successful at this tactic, even to the point of being willing to let the country go down the drain if necessary to achieve their ideological goals. Then the other half of that strategy was, of course, to make his failure of accomplishment a cornerstone of their campaign against him — “The do-nothing president!”

Talk about hypocrisy! They will tell any lie and use any form of personal abuse to depose the current president.

But the most disturbing part of Press’ book is what it reveals about the powerful Koch brothers and the so-called “Tea Party Movement.” David and Charles Koch run a multibillion-dollar conglomerate called Koch Industries. They are into many, many industries, particularly energy (coal and oil/gas), and are one of the worst polluters in the country. They are little-known

publicly and prefer to keep it that way, hiding behind a vast network of tax-exempt front groups – so-called “institutes” and “foundations” who do their dirty work for them.

Among the more well known of these 57 groups are: Americans for Prosperity, The Cato Institute, The Competitive Enterprise Institute, The Heritage Foundation, The Free Enterprise Institute, FreedomWorks, and The National Taxpayers Union. In a rare 2006 interview in the Wall Street Journal, Charles Koch stated that their goal was to eliminate 90% of all laws and regulations regarding global warming.

In the decade prior to 2010 the Koch brothers spent nearly \$50 million from three of their “foundations” to support climate-denial front groups. From 2005 to 2008 they outspent Exxon Mobil \$25 million to \$9 million to fund climate change denial. California’s Henry Waxman, the ranking Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee said, “It apparently no longer matters in Congress what health experts and scientists think. All that seems to matter is what the Koch brothers think.”

And that Keystone XL pipeline which would bisect the country and which the Republicans have been trying to push through Congress? It would connect Koch-owned tar sands operations in Canada with Koch-owned refineries on the Texas coast! It is being pushed by the TransCanada Corporation – yet another Koch-owned entity.

What about the Tea Party Movement? The media likes to portray those earnest folks as a spontaneous grassroots movement of voter outrage, similar to the anti-tax outbreak back in Revolutionary days. Nothing could be further from the truth!

The Koch brothers decided that they needed an out-front public organization to back up their behind-the-scenes efforts to influence the government – a “citizens movement” to agitate for their anti-regulation, anti-environment, anti-government, anti-union, global warming denial agenda. They turned to FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity, two of their largest and most active front groups.

On April 15, 2009, 600 “Tax Day” rallies “sprung up” across the country. Those rallies gradually morphed into organized groups that took the name “Tea Party” and grew with the quiet backing of the above two Koch organizations. The next spring and summer there was an outbreak of “town hall” meetings and other appearances as members of Congress and their challengers began to campaign for the up-coming 2010 mid-term elections.

Republicans were determined to take over Congress in order to more effectively block Obama’s agenda. Working through Washington lobbyists under the leadership of Dick Armey, a former House majority leader, the Tea Party groups were given information about the time and place of Democratic meetings, were provided with paid transportation to those meetings and talking-point sheets telling them how to disrupt the meetings with their “spontaneous” protests and what to say in media interviews. It was very successful and resulted in a large Republican victory.

The makeup of the Tea Party groups is overwhelmingly white, socially conservative disgruntled Republicans and is older than the general population. Many of them are card-carrying seniors,

and a great number over 65. They rail against government “intrusion” into their lives and denounce “Obamacare” as “socialized medicine.” But I doubt if many of them are ready to tear up their cards for Medicare, which, along with Social Security, is one of the most successful government programs ever, and a perfect example of government-run “health insurance.”

I wonder what the reaction of Tea Partiers would be if they knew their “movement” was not as spontaneous as they like to believe and that they are being used as pawns in the Koch brother’s fight against the government? They sincerely believe they are the true patriots, fighting to take back their country from the evildoers.

The Tea Party has been very successful in influencing Congress and the Republican leaders, and now virtually controls the party, because those leaders and legislators realize that to challenge the Tea Party people is to risk being cut off from the deep pockets which enable their reelection. “Money is power!” and “Money talks!” In other words, as has been said so often, if you want to know what something is all about, just follow the money trail!

It is easy to see why some have called the Koch brothers the single most powerful force in American politics today.

But don’t take my word for all of this, Dan. Get your hands on that book, where it is all thoroughly and sadly documented.

Thomas Jefferson wrote, “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just.” He was referring, of course, to the latent problem of slavery. But I tremble for my country when I reflect how money, power and special interests have overtaken us. We are dangerously close to losing that government of, by and for the people of which Lincoln spoke.

When “Gordon Gecko” intones that “greed is good,” the Republican leadership, in chorus with the Koch brothers, shouts “Amen!” If they are successful in regaining control of our government, I fear we will almost irretrievably fall into a government of, by and for the corporations and moneyed elite, for which Reagan and Dubya paved the way.

America will have lost its soul, and the supreme court’s decisions that money is “speech” and corporations are “people” will have driven some of the last nails in the coffin!

Can this election be any more crucial than that?