

## *Why Left Wing Haters of Cato Should Beware of What They Wish For*

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Back to the controversy about the Koch brothers doing a take over of Cato, the Washington libertarian institute. As I've mentioned before, one reaction of left wing people who disagree with free market economics, and small sized state, is to celebrate the likely weakening of Cato's credibility if two of its financial backers (though not much recently) and founders, turn Cato into an instrument of their political and campaigning interests.

I've just seen an item in the *The Staggers*, the blog section of the online edition of the *New Statesmen* (the most influential left wing weekly in Britain), 'The shadowy world of Egypt's NGOs', by Jenny O'Connor. O'Connor points out that governmental persecution of foreign NGOs is partly explained (though certainly not justified) by the close links between some NGOs foreign governments. In particular political foundations linked with political parties in Germany and the US, which get most of their funding from government. However, well meaning these organisations are, the source of their funding and political links creates an awkward situation. O'Connor makes the surprising but well chosen move of linking with an item in the Cato website 'Loose Cannon: The National Endowment for Democracy' by Barbara Conry. As Conry points out, the National Endowment for Democracy is funded by federal taxes and is controlled by the two main political parties in America together with the AFL-CIO union confederation. NED has frequently intervened in the political process of democratic countries through funding of local movements. Examples in Latin America are mentioned, the sorry story of US government support for violent right authoritarian governments in that region is well known. More surprising, to me

anyway, was the discovery that NED was fighting to 'preserve' democracy in France when the Socialist President, Francois Mitterand came to power and put a few Communist ministers in his government. An act that helped kill of the French Communist Party, making NED interference irrelevant and hilarious as well as obnoxious and immoral.

So left wingers with a big hate for Cato, the death of Cato would be the death of an organisation which exposes and criticises American support for right wing movements abroad. Along which I would mention Cato's opposition to: the War on Drugs, immigration control, high military spending, 'national security' violations of civil rights, tax funded bail outs of Big Finance. Of course its economic views are not agreeable to the left, but Cato does frequently include left speakers in its public events. Surely thoughtful left wingers would wish to share that openness to dialogue.