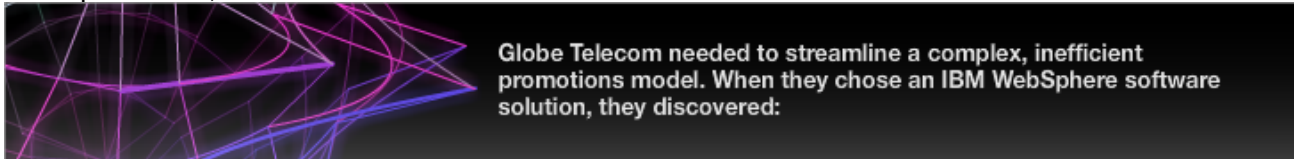


September 7, 2010



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Paula Gordon

Producer and host: The Paula Gordon Show

Posted: September 7, 2010 01:58 PM

NOT My Cup of Tea

Finally! Jane Mayer's identified the engine and the mind of the PR blitz know as the Tea Party. She's blown Charles and David Koch's cover sky high, doing the work we should expect of a reporter. First, a boundless "Thank You!" for "Covert Operations: the billionaire brothers who are waging a war against Obama" (*The New Yorker*, 8/20/2010). Here's why this exemplary journalist heartens me: truthfulness is the antidote to the lies, half-truths and distortions which pour from the Tea-Bangers via their dangerously inattentive or obtuse agents: the main stream media. (Fox appears to be an exception; the network seems willfully dishonest.)

Now. We have an election to win. And here's what the bad guys envision for us if we fail to do the work required -- required -- to win it.

"We have a radical philosophy," chief brother Charles Koch told an editor at the libertarian magazine Reason. His goal? Tear government "out by the roots." Public be damned, including the sheep Kochites push around, the frightened fringe that chants words they've been programmed to believe without considering or understanding the consequences, or knowing they're being led astray.

Who are these guys? Why are they so intent on annihilating both our Constitutional government and everything progressive about the United States? And what of their privately-held Koch Industries, oil-drenched and unreasonable profitable?

Ms. Mayer sums it up with admirable restraint: "The Kochs are longtime libertarians who believe in drastically lower personal and corporate taxes, minimal social services for the needy, and much less oversight of industry -- especially environmental regulation." Here's the other shoe. Charlie and Dave have been "giving money to 'educate,' fund, and organize Tea Party protesters, turning their private agenda into a mass movement." (The Koch's deny that they directly fund Tea Party activity. Ms Mayer connects the dots ... it's Koch money laundered through "non-partisan" non-profit organizations.)

Don't be fooled by the seductive "libertarian" label. These guys hide behind the reference to "liberty" and they abhor our very American embrace of "...liberty and justice for **all**." Their advocacy is *liberty for me and mine* without government interference*. It's a notion that's functionally nonsensical at best, at

worst totally antagonistic to what is best about the United States. John Donne summed it up exactly right, a long time ago: "No man is an island."**

Libertarians seek a "Night Watchman" state. They appear to believe that the one -- and only -- legitimate action of government is to protect private property and its owners, i.e., themselves. Libertarians are one step away from anarchists, who preach a gospel of no government whatsoever. None.

To further Koch Industries' parochial, self-aggrandizing and destructive interests, the Kochs exploit the naivety and ignorance of people frustrated by the damage we've all endured during the rule of Republicans.

Put another way, the extremism of these ideologues and their retainers is indistinguishable from their will to maximize their own profits, at the expense of the rest of us. Anything that gets in their way (specifically government) must be brought to heel. Or eliminated.

The only effective check on the power of great wealth is the collective will of the people whose forbearance has made that accumulation of wealth possible. The people's will can be manifested in a mob or in government. I prefer the latter.

In a republic, attacking the government is ultimately an attack on the people. If the government has failed, its failure represents a failure of the citizens it represents and in whose name it acts. This is the genius and the danger of representative government. All prattle to the contrary, this is what the Constitution is all about.

Though not a secret, it has not been well known that these two Kochs have so much money that their combined fortune is rivaled only by Bill Gates and Warren Buffett. Fortunately, *The New Yorker* gave Ms. Mayer plenty of room to show some of the consequences. Let me whet your appetite:

Why would Kochs hate environmental regulation? Koch Industries is among the nation's top ten polluters.

Fossil fuels are the backbone of Koch Industries. The record shows Kochs fund climate change deniers. Big time. The Smithsonian Institution displays the "David H. Koch Hall of Human Origins" which pushes the Koch-theory that climate change is good for you.

Profits from fossil fuels are greatly enhanced by other Koch businesses, including Georgia Pacific. It produces and relies on formaldehyde -- a known carcinogen -- while David Koch sits on the National Cancer Institute's National Cancer Advisory Board.

Kochs have deliberately undermined our national integrity. A few examples:

They've funded the notorious Federalist Society. It's been key to how we've ended up with a Supreme Court that declares corporations are people, never mind that corporations live forever, can't be jailed, have tax-convenient multiple addresses overseas, and can buy any policy or politician they choose. (Admirably focused, Ms. Mayer chose not to explore this particular thread.)

Koch money stokes and soaks think tanks from the Cato Institute (their money funded its launch in 1977) to the Heritage Foundation.

They've bought their way into mainstream academics. Consider the Mercatus Center. It's buried deep in Virginia's publicly funded George Mason University and is reputedly the epicenter of anti-regulation fervor across the Potomac.

There's more. Lots more.

I certainly welcome and applaud this exemplary journalism. With equal fervor, I am appalled this it is "news" at all.

Is Jane Mayer the only reporter who learned anything from Watergate and its mantra, "Follow the Money"? OK, so we'll never get a full accounting of all that the Kochs have spent until we tighten the tax code. Ms. Mayer found plenty that's public information and readily available. She also did the reporterly thing, she asked questions. Where was everybody else? Apparently reading and watching one another's detritus, while the "tea party" floated in a sea of oil and formaldehyde ... nasty, toxic stuff.

Mainstream media's monumental failures have cost us as dearly on the domestic front as even it acknowledges it's cost us on the foreign one. They've vastly inflated the importance of this sideshow when they should and COULD have known better.

So President Obama's considerable accomplishments are all the more praiseworthy. Aided and abetted by a willfully uncritical media, he's been forced to grapple with a misinformed public, a misguided (or worse) Congress and a totally obstructionist "Republican" party. We elected this President. A new team in Congress is required -- required -- to get what we, the vast majority of Americans, demanded on that historic day.

Check out Jane Mayer if you haven't. Internalize her findings: we've been Koched. Then spread the word. Contrary to the prior administration and to the fevered rhetoric of extreme right wingers, this President does not believe that he makes laws. Writing laws is the responsibility of Congress. It's up to us to help elect a Congress ready to support President Obama. After all, we elected him to get us out of the deep hole the Republicans dug and pushed us into. We've always known that corporatists and their retainers will do whatever is necessary to hold onto the power they have and to grab more. We now have hard -- and oh, so current -- evidence.

Despite the clairvoyance professional magpies claim for themselves, the outcomes of the November midterm elections are NOT foreordained. The magpies are bought. We are not. With letters, emails and phone calls, challenge your local media to follow the money. Do the same to national media. Find the candidates who best represent YOUR understandings and values. Support them with donations and time.

And, most importantly, talk to everyone you know. Help them see that we're being Koched. And that the tea is toxic.

*-- "Our vision is for a world in which all individuals can freely exercise the natural right of sole dominion over their own lives, liberty and property" -- from the Libertarian Party website.

**-- "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee" -- John Donne, from Meditation XVII