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## The Original Koch Haters

Posted Wednesday, September 01, 2010 12:12 PM | By [David Weigel](#)

If you've spent time in D.C.'s libertarian subculture, it's really strange to see the Koch family and its donations become infamous. I've divulged this before, but in the interest of full disclosure: I spent two and a half years at Reason magazine, which receives some funding from the Kochs, and in January 2009 I attended and received payment for a Liberty Fund meeting in Alexandria, Va. -- one of the frequent intellectual salons organized by the Institute for Humane Studies, funded in part by the Kochs. In 2008 the New York Times [wrote about a group of bloggers](#) and where they lived, and noted that at the time I was the roommate of Julian Sanchez, a former Reason editor who now works at the Koch-supported Cato Institute.

The point: the Kochs have successfully, over the course of 30 years, funded a powerful libertarian infrastructure. The funny thing is that until mid-2009 or so, other libertarians hated that infrastructure. The loudest critics of the Kochs used to be "paleolibertarians," adherents of the economist Murray Rothbard, who feuded with the Kochs and accused them and their beneficiaries of being suckers for the state. Their blanket term for us: the "Kochtopus."

The closest I got to this battle was in January 2008, when Sanchez and I wrote a piece about Rep. Ron Paul's (R-Tex.) old, pre-congressional comeback newsletters, identifying who had written ugly racial stuff that was getting Paul in trouble as he ran for president. Libertarians outside of D.C. accused the "Kochtopus" and the "Orange Line Mafia" (a reference to the D.C. metro line that, actually, doesn't connect George Mason University, Reason, Cato, and Americans for Prosperity, but never mind) of smearing Paul. This ire went back years and continued into 2009 -- [here's a sample of Rockwell's commentary](#) from last March.

*[T]he state always finds pro-state libertarians most useful. "Why, even X is for this program, so how can you be against it?" The change began with the move of Cato to DC, and then Reason and others too, and the takeover of a local economics department. Note: there are many other Koch non-profits in DC and elsewhere. And the Kochs have long been the biggest donors to the Republican party, for example. For the largest privately held corporation in America, there is apparently more money to be made in cahoots with the state, and in the tradition of Exxon and other Rockefeller interests, which the Koch brothers have for 30 years sought to emulate, after their brief and much-regretted flirtation with Rothbardianism. So it is no surprise that the chief Koch economist has now praised Obama's economic advisors and bank bailouts in the NY Times.*

The reference to GMU's Tyler Cowen as the "chief Koch economist" is pretty risible, but you get the drift. Until the tea party movement started rolling, many libertarians were convinced that the Kochs were throwing money down a rathole, supporting "statist" organizations that were collaborating with, not challenging, power. This is why us Orange Line mafiosos are so surprised to see the Kochs exposed as the Saurons of libertarianism.

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