Bannon vs. the Kochs

Jonah Goldberg

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I laughed very hard at this _Politico_ story: "Bannon to Kochs: 'Shut up and get with the program.'" It was a joyful, life-affirming laugh. Alex Isenstadt reports:

He described the Koch political operation as ineffective, saying it had wasted untold dollars on losing past elections. And he argued that voters had rejected the free-trade approach the Kochs embrace in favor of Trump's brand of economic populism.

"We can have a theoretical discussion later, OK? This is why they don't know what it means to win, OK? We don't have time to have some theoretical discussion and to have their spokesman come out and say the president is divisive," Bannon said.

First some background: The Koch brothers co-founded the Cato Institute with Murray Rothbard and Ed Crane. They created or supported countless other libertarian initiatives, programs, and institutions over the last half century. Charles Koch is a full-throated acolyte of Ludwig von Mises, and he built his career around a Mises-inspired philosophy of "market-based management." He wrote a book on the subject — an effort I guarantee you he didn't undertake for the royalties. David Koch ran for vice president of the United States on the Libertarian ticket — against Ronald Reagan! David is fairly liberal on drugs, abortion, etc. But he's hardcore libertarian on economic issues, founding Citizens for a Sound Economy. Both opposed the Iraq War.

I could go on, but you should get the point.

But just in case you don't: The idea that the Kochs would embrace protectionism for the good of the Republican party is insanely, profoundly, splurt-coffee-out-your-nostrils hilariously stupid. Saying to the Kochs, "We can have a theoretical discussion later" about whether free trade is good is like telling surgeons, "We can talk about whether the patient actually needs a heart transplant down the road. You just need to start cutting."

And the idea they should shut up and get with the program because _Steve Bannon_ is playing the tough guy with a _Politico_ reporter is amusing beyond words.

"For 50 years, we've bucked the conventional wisdom and put our money where our mouths are supporting free-market economics as a morally and ethically superior approach. And we've been demonized by the press, hectored from the right and the left, leaned on by presidents and CEOs

alike, and even though we have about $40 billion in F-you money apiece, I think we're going to have to support protectionism. I mean Steve Bannon told *Politico* we have to 'get with the program.' It was a good run."

Yes, I can totally see one of the Koch brothers saying that.

Oh, I almost forgot. This whole thing is a *pas de deux* of asininity, because the candle of dumb burns from both ends. Not only is it barmy to think David and Charles Koch would bend to this, it's even barmier to think that Steve Bannon is the person to lecture anyone about losing elections. I know there are people out there who think Bannon singlehandedly won the election for Trump (pollsters call this demographic "Steve Bannon"). But even if one were willing to entertain that idea, look at his record since. Nearly every goblin, Morlock, and troll that he's supported in his vaunted war on the establishment has gone down in flames. One of his favorites, Paul Nehlen, revealed himself to be a full-on hater of the Jooooz. The golden nugget in Bannon's turd parade was Roy Moore, whom Bannon bet on big. It was a power move in which Bannon broke with the president, who fired him on the theory that Bannon was building a movement. The result: He gave Jeff Sessions's Senate seat to the Democrats. In Alabama.

Meanwhile, with no thanks to Bannon, but with considerable thanks to the Koch network, the GOP gained more elected positions at the state, local, and federal levels in the last decade than any time since the 1920s.

But yes, the Kochs must abandon their principles and cave to the nigh upon papal authority of Steve Bannon. I mean he wears so many shirts, he must know something we don't.