

Daily Meditation10/28/2022

The Meaning of the Mid-Term Elections, part IV

Good morning.

We continue our meditations on the meaning of the midterm elections, which we're in right now. And one of the important behind-the-scenes influencers of right-wing ideology is Charles Koch.

And I'm sharing with you this article done in *The Daily Beast*: "How Charles Koch Successfully Peddled The Snake Oil Of Climate Denial."

It cannot be forgotten that the fossil fuel industry is a source of his massive wealth. So you kind of see where his interests lie here in denying climate change, so that oil may continue to flow. His organization, Americans for Prosperity, has a staff of 1200 -- more than three times the staff of the Republican National Committee. It has directors in 34 states. It routinely hires Republican legislative and campaign operatives. And, the author says,

Thus the Koch network is increasingly and pervasively intertwined with the Republican Party. Koch money has been used to finance primary challenges to Republican officeholders who fail to support positions that the party's own voters reject: reduction or privatization of Social Security and Medicare...

...or who want to do away with "big tax cuts for the rich, elimination of public sector collective bargaining rights," and of course, climate change denial. "The consequence," says the author, "is a growing Republican unanimity in favor of these positions."

And the same organization was very active and blocking access to Obamacare, which it "bitterly opposed." It pushed the idea that states can reject the statute's expanded Medicaid funding (that is from Obamacare), which would have provided health care to the poorest citizens of the country.

Twelve states have refused to take the money, including Texas, which has the largest uninsured population in the country. Insurance has thus been denied to 2.3 million people. Had every state adopted the Medicaid expansion, about 15,000 deaths would have been prevented during the program's first four years.

When it comes to the coal and petroleum industries, Koch has led them to "cast doubt on the science to persuade the world that climate change either is not happening or is not caused by human activity." They pumped a lot of money into responses to propose restrictions on carbon emissions, and worked hard to "disseminate preposterous claims that the scientific community is conspiring in order to empower the state."

Way back in the early 1990s, when President George HW Bush was president, Republicans were accepting the scientific consensus about the danger of climate change. But Koch immediately began funding junk science attacking that consensus.

Bill Clinton proposed an energy tax which would have taxed fossil fuels but exempted renewable energy. And the Koch organization rose up to defeat it.

The American Republican Party "is the only major political party in the world that denies that the human race faces the danger of climate change." ...The only party in the world, and that is because the Koch brothers pumped all this money into the Republican party when under President Bush it was in fact, listening to authentic science.

Americans for Prosperity (the author says) consistently demand tax cuts, the elimination of business regulations, Medicaid cuts, reduced public education funding, and curtailing all environmental laws, state and federal. It has fought at the state level to defeat appropriations for highway repairs and infrastructure investments.

And of course, the Supreme Court judges currently are going along with that: they just gutted EPA regulations about healthy air. And they've taken another case with the intention of gutting EPA regulations about healthy water. Says the author,

Koch is one of the richest people in the world, with a net worth of about \$50 billion. He inherited a mid-size oil refining concern, which is now the second-largest privately held company in the United States.

Because this is a private business, he doesn't have to please shareholders, but he can wait years for his investments in politicians or judges to pay off. In fact, he bought one old pipeline that ended up killing, burning alive several people eight months after he bought it and the jury fined him \$296 million. That's \$300 million to pay to the relatives of the people who burned up. As the author says,

Someone has to decide which dangers to the public are too great to endure... That someone should not be Koch.

His story is not simply one of evil and greed; it is a tale of betrayal and corruption. He has used his influence skillfully to prevent the law from protecting his victims. But those victims now include everyone on the planet.

...Everyone on the planet.

This is one of the primary dark money forces behind the current church of Donald J. Trump.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow. And we hope that you are voting and getting others to vote on principles not on behalf of dark money.