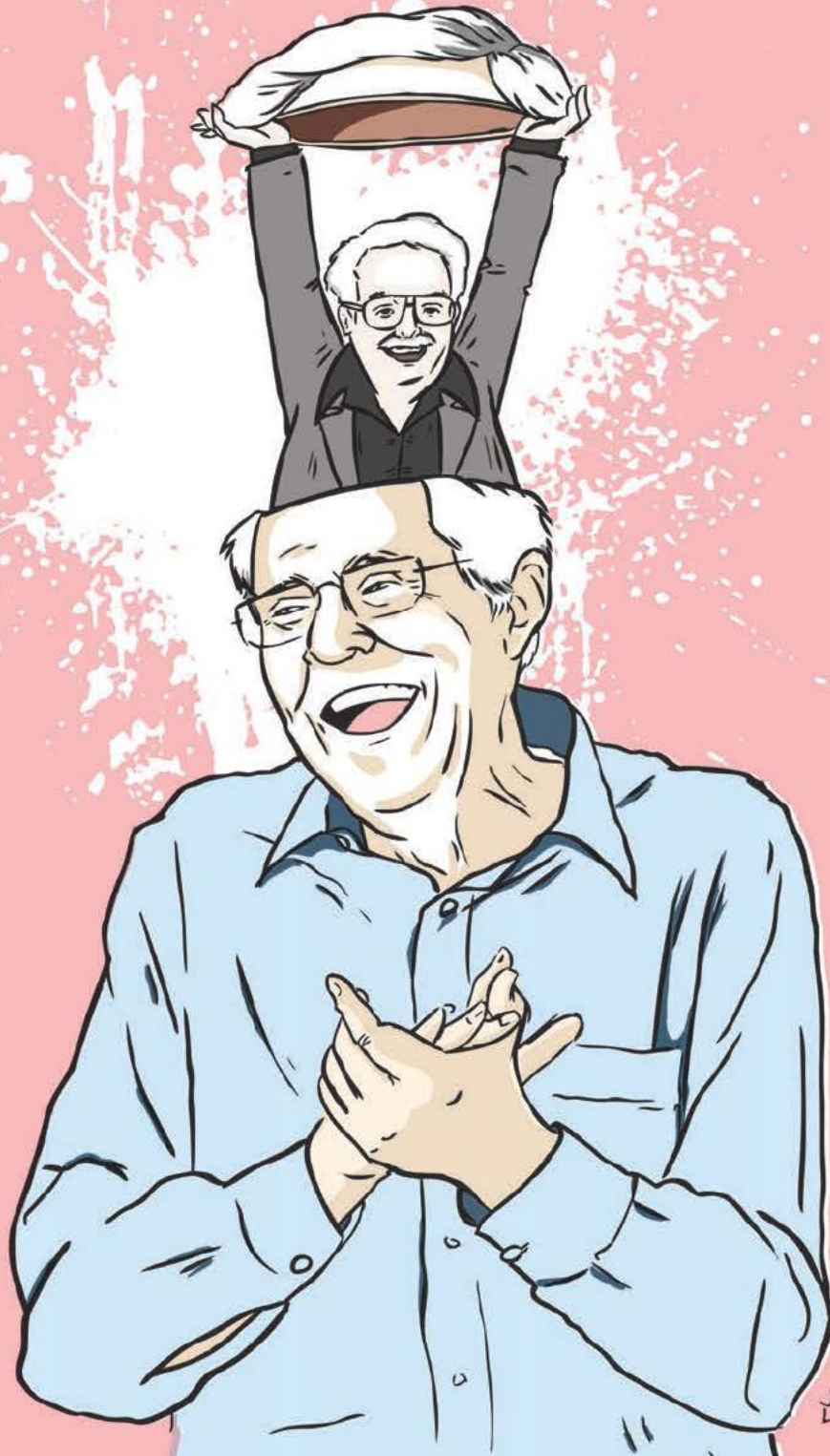


# MEET CHARLES KOCH'S BRAIN



“Was I, perhaps, hallucinating? Or was I, in reality, nothing more than a con man, taking advantage of others?”

—Robert LeFevre

BY MARK  
**AMES**



What makes Charles Koch tick? Despite decades of building the nation’s most impressive ideological and influence-peddling network, from ideas-mills to think-tanks to policy-lobbying machines, the Koch brothers only really came to public prominence in the past couple of years. Since then we’ve learned a lot about the billionaire siblings’ vast web of influence and power in American politics and ideas.

Yet, for all that attention, there are still big holes in our knowledge of the Kochs. In particular what drives them and who their influences are. And that’s a shame because, in the case of Charles Koch, his influences are in many ways more interesting, and more sinister, than the man himself.

Back in the early-mid 1960s, Charles Koch was just another 20-something oil heir. It was then that he first encountered a libertarian guru by the name of Robert LeFevre.

In the decade or so before gaining influence over Charles Koch’s world, Robert LeFevre made his living as a professional Red-baiter, union-buster, and loyal lieutenant for one of the nation’s most notorious anti-Semites. Working his way up the fringes of the far-right during the McCarthy Era, he finally landed his own corporate-funded free-market gig, “the Freedom School,” (also

known as “Rampart College”), which his backers wanted to turn into the nation’s premier libertarian indoctrination camp.

There are plenty of secondary sources placing Koch at LeFevre’s Freedom School. Libertarian court historian Brian Doherty—who has spent most of his adult life on the Koch brothers’ payroll—described LeFevre as “an anarchist figure who stole Charles Koch’s heart;” Murray Rothbard, who co-founded the Cato Institute with Charles Koch in 1977, wrote that Charles “had been converted as a youth to libertarianism by LeFevre.”

But perhaps the most credible source of all is Charles Koch himself. In a speech he gave to an audience of libertarians in the late 1990s, Koch revealed that his conversion came in 1964, when he enrolled in Freedom School in an intensive two-week total immersion program in radical libertarian ideology, where property is the basis of human freedom, and the state—along with any public organization or even the notion of “public good”—is the very definition of “tyranny.”

As Koch explained in a speech before the Institute for Humane Studies—the first of what would become countless libertarian think-tanks under his control—it was at “Bob LeFevre’s Freedom School where I began developing a passionate commitment to liberty as the form of social organization most in harmony with reality and man’s nature, because [Freedom

School] is where I was first exposed in-depth to such thinkers as Mises and Hayek.”

Awkwardly for Koch, Freedom School didn’t just teach radical pro-property libertarianism, it also published a series of Holocaust-denial articles through its house magazine, Ramparts Journal. The first of those articles was published in 1966, two years after Charles Koch joined Freedom School as executive, trustee and funder.

“Even if one were to accept the most extreme and exaggerated indictment of Hitler and the national socialists for their activities after 1939 made by anybody fit to remain outside a mental hospital, it is almost alarmingly easy to demonstrate that the atrocities of the Allies in the same period were more numerous as to victims and were carried out for the most part by methods more brutal and painful than alleged extermination in gas ovens.”

*Harry Elmer Barnes,  
Rampart Journal, 1966*

The Holocaust-denial articles in Ramparts Journal were significant enough to be included today on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s “Holocaust Denial Timeline.” Also under Koch’s watch, LeFevre created a history program headed by one of the biggest names in early Holocaust-denialism, James J. Martin.

After LeFevre's Freedom School collapsed in 1968, Charles Koch continued to promote the works and careers of Holocaust deniers through his growing network of libertarian organizations, including the Institute for Humane Studies, the Cato Institute and Reason. As late as 1980, the Cato Institute was still publishing works by notorious "revisionists" including Martin, and Harry Elmer Barnes (the inspiration for the neo-Nazi Barnes Review journal, described by the Southern Poverty Law Center as "one of the most virulent anti-Semitic organizations around"). Indeed, in the late 1970s Martin even had a seat on the board of trustees at the Koch-founded Center for Libertarian Studies, which described itself

as "sister organizations" with the Cato Institute, with whom they "coordinate their plans and their programs."

When Ronald Reagan won the presidency in November 1980, Koch quickly revamped the libertarianism he'd been building up for over a decade, cutting free the more extremist far-right proponents from his network. To make his movement mainstream, he cut his official ties with the far-right radicals like LeFevre, with the libertarian Holocaust deniers like Martin, and with co-founder of Cato Institute Murray Rothbard (who backed David Duke), among others. He then moved his more mainstream libertarian machine into Washington D.C., where it has remained the most influential ideas-

mill of the past three decades.

Today, that fringe-right element has been wiped out of the official libertarian record, buried and forgotten.

Exhuming the lost story of Charles Koch's guru and demystifying his libertarian movement's ideology by setting it in its proper historical context will not bring progressives any comfort. Rather, the story that follows will confirm many of our worst fears about Koch's political intentions, and should raise a bevy of new things to worry about. It also serves as a wake-up call to progressives who think libertarians are our natural allies, and yet who know so little about libertarianism's past, which has been lost in the fog of history and cultural amnesia.







Robert LeFevre was born in 1911, and raised in Minneapolis by a single mother after his father, a school teacher turned failed entrepreneur, abandoned their home when LeFevre was just nine.

Father and son wouldn't meet again until the onset of the Great Depression, when LeFevre, a college drop-out desperate for work, abandoned his own wife and daughter to join his father on a traveling scam. They puttered throughout the rural Midwest together, fleecing housewives by taking down-payments on picture frames they never delivered. It was a kind of real-life "Paper Moon,"

stripped of tragedy or comedy or narrative arc.

This was Robert LeFevre's first lesson in free-market capitalism, and he hated it. He wanted to be an actor or a radio celebrity, so as soon as he'd stolen enough money for himself, he left his father to chase his Hollywood dream. He failed, went broke and hungry, and contemplated suicide on the ledge of a Pasadena bridge.

Oddly enough, it was at this very moment, in 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression and of his own personal failure, that LeFevre had his first libertarian political awakening.

In his memoir, "A Way to Be Free," he recalled how his father, a Republican hobo, first opened his eyes to the evils of fiat money, of

budget deficits, and of taxing what he called "the producers."

"I think Roosevelt is a Socialist," his father grimly warned him. "Coolidge and Hoover had the right idea."

Here was something Steinbeck never imagined: a laissez-faire tramp; the soup-kitchen goldbug. LeFevre headed back to Minneapolis, to his abandoned wife and daughter, convinced that his problems were all the fault of FDR and envious shirkers who were robbing "producers" like LeFevre and his father of their rightful due.



Naturally, it was FDR and Big Government that saved LeFevre



from starvation. Like his hero Ronald Reagan, Robert LeFevre found a job subsidized by the New Deal's biggest employment program, the WPA, which paid a Minneapolis radio station, WRHM, to hire LeFevre and launch his career as propagandist, product spokesman and cult leader.

The irony was lost on LeFevre. In his memoirs, he is neither grateful for nor interested in the WPA program, nor in the larger politics of the 30's that made it possible for him to survive. Instead, he only thought of how he might please his abusive station manager boss: "A word of praise from him—and it came on occasion—was the one bright sign in an otherwise flat and empty horizon," he later reminisced.

LeFevre would do anything to impress his station manager—including joining a bizarre new cult, the Mighty "I AM" Movement, at his boss's suggestion (the cult was an advertising sponsor of LeFevre's radio station). During the 1930s, the crypto-Nazi "I AM" cult became a national sensation, filling large auditoriums across the country, its followers numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

Nation editor Carey McWilliams went to an "I AM" event in Los Angeles and came away shaken by the spectacle of what he called the "Hitlerian" cult: "By the time an I AM audience repeat a chant for the fourth time, they are shouting with all the frenzy of a mob of Nazis yelling Sieg Heil!"

The Ballards led auditoriums in chants calling for the murders of President Roosevelt and the First Lady: "Blast, blast, blast their carcasses from the face of the earth forever!" Their shows increasingly turned into mass-murder freak-

shows, with chants such as, "If they be of human creation, annihilate them!"

Although LeFevre's time in the cult has been downplayed or spun as a mere eccentric detour by libertarians, LeFevre himself made it clear in his memoirs that his time in the "I AM" cult had a profound influence on him that carried through to his libertarian period. To LeFevre, the libertarian philosophy he adopted in the 1950s was substantively no different from the "I AM" cult teachings of the 1930s, except in the rhetorical presentation of the ideas: one used "logical" language, the other "metaphysical."

More importantly, LeFevre learned from the cult how ideas and tales—no matter how bizarre and disconnected from reality—can empower the priest, and captivate minds. For this reason, it's worth taking some time to describe just how bizarre the Mighty "I AM" cult really was.

The Mighty "I AM" Movement was founded in the early 1930s by a Chicago huckster named Guy Ballard, a notorious conman on the run after fleecing widows who paid him to invest in a fake "lake of gold"—and his wife, Edna Ballard, who ran a small shop selling cult books and wares. The founding ideas and myths for their "I AM" cult were directly lifted from the pro-Nazi "Silver Shirts" movement of William Dudley Pelley, "America's Hitler," who was jailed during World War II charged with sedition. In the early-mid 1930s, Pelley created the Silver Shirts, enlisting thousands of followers, who were given military training then armed for a violent takeover.

When Pelley went into hiding in 1934, abandoning his Silver

Shirts, Guy and Edna Ballard quickly enlisted his senior staff, and plagiarized his books and ideas to create the "I AM" cult. For instance, in the late 1920s, Pelley wrote a book claiming he'd had an out-of-body experience and that his spirit met the spirit of Saint Germain over Lake Shasta; after Pelley went into hiding, Guy Ballard wrote a book claiming he'd had an out-of-body experience floating over mountains in California, where he met the spirit of Saint Germain.

Guy Ballard claimed he was the reincarnation of George Washington, and his wife Edna was a reincarnated Jeanne d'Arc. The "I AM" cult demanded its followers avoid a bizarre catalogue of evils, including bowling, onions, pets, saxophones (but not harps), liquor, sex, family and family members not given over to the "I AM" cult. They even forbade followers from getting out of a swimming pool without having a towel handy.

LeFevre claimed that he came to the cult via a paranormal experience he had while alone in his radio station studio:

"It is as vivid in my mind today as when it occurred nearly forty-five years ago... I heard a series of clicks in my mind. With each of those clicks, a question about ultimate reality that had baffled me had an answer. On the instant, every doubt and fear I had ever known vanished. 'I Am,' was the answer."

There also happened to be a workers' strike at LeFevre's radio station. LeFevre didn't want to join his fellow workers—his only interest was in pleasing his boss. To LeFevre's disappointment, his boss didn't appreciate him crossing the picket lines to keep the



radio station on-air—he accused LeFevre of “betraying your own class” and the radio station agreed to a contract with the union.

Let down by his boss, LeFevre wrote a gushing letter to “I AM” cult leader, “Daddy” Ballard, asking him if he’d done right by breaking the strike at his radio station.

“Daddy” Ballard gave LeFevre what he was looking for, a condemnation of unions as “black magicians” and “an instrument of evil.” He warned Charles Koch’s future guru, “A Communist conspiracy was at work, seeking to undermine and destroy the United States.”

“Daddy” explained that people who owned property had a right to do what they wished with it.”

LeFevre, always the eager bottomer to the rich and powerful, had finally found his Master: “Daddy” Ballard was my idol. I yearned for his approval... I sought to be a better slave.”



In 1939, three years after first joining the “I AM” cult, Robert LeFevre quit his radio job, abandoned his wife and child again, and joined the Ballards’ traveling road show as their stage emcee. In 1940, LeFevre published his first book, “I AM: America’s Destiny,” claiming that he had once driven his car for twenty minutes with his eyes shut while his soul cavorted with Saint Germain somewhere over California’s Lake Shasta. “Now, as I watched, and listened, Saint Germain talked to me. He was real! The world I lived in was unreal. He was the true reality.”

LeFevre quickly discovered how popular he became by claiming this power. Women made themselves available; crowds would gather in apartments to hear his “dictations”

from the spirit of Saint Germain. One married woman he lusted after invited LeFevre to live with her and her husband in their San Francisco penthouse, causing her husband to drink himself almost to death.

It’s hard to tell if LeFevre genuinely anguished over his con job; in his memoirs, his language suggests that more than anything, he feared being found out:

“... What if I suddenly announced to all these good people that the whole thing was a sham? I was tempted to do it.”

“Was I guilty of fraud? Had I (subliminally) perhaps been engaged in some monstrous pretense?”

LeFevre’s stint as cult leader was short-lived. In late 1940, the FBI indicted him and 23 other top “I AM” figures with felony mail fraud. LeFevre immediately turned states’ witness, and charges against him were dropped, while Edna Ballard and her son were sentenced to prison.

LeFevre was alleged to have joined another fascist cult at that time called “Mankind United,” whose leader was jailed for sedition during World War II for calling on his followers to help Japan defeat the United States.



After spending the war years in the Special Services branch, LeFevre moved to San Francisco to become a real estate entrepreneur. Within a couple of years, LeFevre had built up a mountain of debt that couldn’t be serviced, and was forced to declare bankruptcy.

Despite being the free-market guru to today’s most powerful billionaire oligarch, LeFevre couldn’t run a lemonade stand if his life depended on it. Rather than

## THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW

### THE RESPONSES WE GET: A BRIEF GUIDE

<p><b>THE NITPICKER.</b> YOU MISPELLED A WORD, NEGATING YOUR POINT, IF NOT YOUR <b>ENTIRE LIFE'S WORK!</b></p>	<p><b>THE PEDANT.</b> THOUGH IT IS AN AMUSING IMAGE, IT IS NOT TECHNICALLY <b>TRUE</b> THAT POLITICIANS ARE ALIENS FROM ANOTHER PLANET WHO REQUIRE HUMAN BRAINS FOR NOURISHMENT.</p>	<p><b>THE NOOB.</b> WHAT <b>IS</b> THIS? YOU CALL THIS A <b>CARTOON</b>? WHY SO MANY <b>WORDS</b>? I HAVE NEVER BEFORE <b>SEEN</b> A CARTOON SUCH AS THIS!</p>	<p><b>THE EASILY BEFUZZLED.</b> WHAT DO YOU <b>MEAN</b> FOX NEWS HAS A RIGHT WING BIAS? I HAVE NEVER BEFORE <b>SEEN</b> THIS IDEA SUGGESTED!</p>
<p><b>THE SNOB.</b> NO ONE CARES WHAT A <b>CARTOONIST</b> THINKS! CARTOONS ARE FOR <b>CHILDREN!</b></p>	<p><b>THE SCOLD.</b> THIS ISSUE IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS <b>OTHER</b> ISSUES WHICH I BELIEVE YOU SHOULD BE WRITING ABOUT INSTEAD!</p>	<p><b>THE OSTRICH.</b> WHY DO YOU PAY ATTENTION TO RIGHT-WING CRAZIES? IF YOU WOULD JUST IGNORE THEM IN YOUR CARTOON, THEY WOULD <b>GO AWAY!</b></p>	<p><b>THE CONCERN TROLL.</b> I AM A LIBERAL JUST LIKE YOU BUT I THINK YOUR CARTOONS ARE VERY MEAN TO REPUBLICANS AND YOU SHOULD STOP DRAWING THEM.</p>
<p><b>THE RIGHT-WINGER.</b> YOUR CARTOON SUCKS.</p> <p>THE <b>"TRICKY" RIGHT-WINGER.</b> YOUR CARTOON IS GREAT--AT BEING <b>SUCKY!</b> HA HA! MADE YA LOOK!</p>	<p><b>THE VAGUELY DISSATISFIED.</b> THIS CARTOON IS NOT AS ENJOYABLE AS PREVIOUS CARTOONS I HAVE READ.</p>	<p><b>THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE LUNATIC.</b> YOUR CARTOONS ARE A PLAGUE UPON MANKIND, AND I DESPISE THE VERY GROUND YOU WALK ON <b>YARGLE BARGLE BLARRGH!</b></p>	<p>AND THEN THERE'S <b>YOU</b>, DEAR READER--THE <b>SANE</b> ONE! YEAH, <b>YOU!</b> THE ONE READING THIS! OBVIOUSLY NONE OF THIS APPLIES TO <b>YOU!</b></p> <p>HEH HEH!</p>

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take personal responsibility, LeFevre blamed the same forces that Guy Ballard, now dead for nearly a decade, had once told LeFevre to blame: “Communists, I was told, had infiltrated the government. They were casting a malevolent spell on the American way of life.”

LeFevre’s biggest asset in his real estate portfolio was a wino hotel in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district. LeFevre protected the hotel from creditors by creating a legally registered religious organization called “The San Francisco Group” and “donating” the hotel to his religious outfit. Then, LeFevre’s religious group organized a property swap to get rid of the hotel, exchanging it for Rudolph Valentino’s mansion in Beverly Hills, which was owned

by a couple with known ties to organized crime.

As soon as LeFevre and his handful of “I AM” cultists took over Valentino’s mansion in the late 1940s, they turned it into the headquarters of a sex cult called “Falcon’s Lair.” Newspapers across the country printed sensational stories accusing LeFevre’s cult of holding séances that ended in orgies.

Creditors chased him down to Beverly Hills, but LeFevre no longer owned the hotel, let alone Valentino’s mansion.

Then the FBI came looking for him. But instead of going to jail, the strangest thing happened: Everything in Robert LeFevre’s life took a turn for the better. Declassified FBI documents later

showed that LeFevre became an FBI informant and propagandist at the onset of Cold War hysteria and McCarthyism.

Now, suddenly, everything went his way: The underworld partner in his hotel property swap was found dead of a bullet wound to his head; it was ruled a suicide. Meanwhile, Republican Party bosses in Southern California tapped LeFevre to run for Congress as their Red-baiting Republican. He lost in the primary to a more moderate Republican, and was hustled off to his next gig working for a union-busting outfit that Red-baited Hollywood liberals. Two of LeFevre’s targets, “High Noon” director Stanley Kramer, and future B’nai B’rith chairman Dore



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Schary, slapped LeFevre with a \$5 million libel suit.

LeFevre vanished from town, and appeared shortly afterwards in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, working with the local FBI bureau developing a news program for a new TV station.

Recently declassified FBI documents reveal that LeFevre collaborated extensively with the FBI at the height of McCarthyism, working as both an informant and as their propaganda tool. LeFevre collaborated with his FBI handlers to develop the TV news show, cleared his scripts with his FBI handler, and cleared the names of on-air guests with the FBI. LeFevre's collaboration was rewarded by a long sought-after interview with his hero, Joseph McCarthy, at the height of his terror campaign.

He also shamelessly abused his relationship with his powerful handlers to destroy his enemies, no matter how petty the offense. According to one declassified FBI report, LeFevre turned in a heckler who interrupted his speech against the UN—he told the FBI that the heckler, whose name is blacked out, led a “Communist cell” in Ft. Lauderdale.

Just one more reason why Charles Koch and libertarians don't like the rest of the world knowing too much about libertarianism's founding father, Robert LeFevre.



Why did LeFevre rise from the desperate world of cults and fraud to such prominence so quickly? After World War II, corporate America waged war on the countervailing power of New Deal government, labor unions,





and leftist ideology. Their weapons in that war were Red-baiting McCarthyism, and corporate America's economic might. What they lacked was talent, willing collaborators, to wage their war on Americans. After Americans fought and defeated the Axis powers and the Great Depression, they weren't easily persuaded to turn against their compatriots or government to do corporate America's dirty work. Idealism and trust in government were high; the pool of potential rats and snitches was extremely limited. The only people corporate America could reliably hire to front for their war on the New Deal were dregs like LeFevre: crooks, fraudsters, degenerates, bankrupts—people so desperate or so compromised they had no choice, or no soul.

LeFevre was all of that, with an added bonus: From an early age, LeFevre had always worshipped those wealthier and more powerful than he. Ideologically, LeFevre had already shown he was at home among fascists and Nazi cultists. What would possibly prevent him, then, from collaborating with the FBI and Red-baiting Americans?

Just how far LeFevre was willing to go to please the FBI and McCarthyites was shown when LeFevre spearheaded a Red-baiting campaign against the Girl Scouts of America. LeFevre made headlines by accusing the Girl Scouts guide book of harboring subversive anti-American messages. The campaign quickly transformed from absurd to terrifying when the House Un-American Activities Committee called hearings on the Girl Scouts in response to LeFevre's PR war. One Girl Scouts troop leader hauled before the committee was thrown out of the organization when she refused to answer questions about

being a Communist. The Girl Scouts announced they'd made dozens of changes to their guide book, and LeFevre was now a national figure within the well-funded McCarthyist right wing.

It was one of the last, and the weirdest, of the McCarthy-era witch-hunts, and it made Robert LeFevre popular among the far-right. He was hired as the vice president of one of the best-funded right-wing lobbying outfits of the post-war era, the National Economic Council, whose leader, Merwin K. Hart, was not only a self-described "libertarian" but also a Fascist sympathizer and anti-Semite.

Few Americans today know the name Merwin K. Hart, but in his day he was the most notorious and dangerous fascist sympathizer in America, and one of the first major Holocaust deniers. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, who prosecuted the Nuremberg Trials, called Hart "America's leading Fascist." After the war, he engineered the 1946 election of Joseph McCarthy, and waged a Red-baiting culture war through the National Economic Council, which was funded by some of the biggest names in corporate America including the DuPonts, Monsanto, Sears, and the Mellon-controlled Gulf Oil. It was Merwin K. Hart's NEC that destroyed the career of America's most promising Keynesian economist, Lorie Tarshis, in the late 1940s.

In 1958, Merwin K. Hart drew up plans for the John Birch Society, and handed it over to a younger reactionary business lobbyist named Robert Welch. Welch recruited Charles Koch's father, Fred Koch, as one of his 11 founding directors of the John Birch Society. Merwin K. Hart was honored as the JBS head of the

New York chapter until his death.

Right up to the end, LeFevre praised Merwin K. Hart as a great libertarian, "one of the few conservative voices who had consistently supported Constitutional government, human liberty and the free enterprise system."



**"LeFevre and Christian nationalism triumphed."**

*—The Reporter, 1955*

Merwin K. Hart hired LeFevre in 1953 as vice president of his National Economic Council. LeFevre's work for Merwin K. Hart largely involved campaigns attacking the United Nations and fighting internationalism: "Our foreign policy is perhaps the most vulnerable place in which to attack the Red influence in this country," LeFevre explained in a letter. "We must oppose the trend toward internationalism if we are to preserve our Union." In our time, this sort of libertarian anti-interventionist rhetoric, hardly changed from the days of Merwin K. Hart and Robert LeFevre, would be misinterpreted and revered by many on the left as a principled stand against overseas wars. Forgotten in all of this is the early libertarians' coupling of anti-interventionism with extreme McCarthyism and with brutal attacks on labor and leftist intellectuals. Indeed, Merwin K. Hart engineered McCarthy's 1946 Senate campaign victory against a true left-wing isolationist, Robert LaFollette, who was both an America First isolationist as well as a strong supporter of labor rights and one of corporate America's biggest enemies. In our

time, the Koch libertarians would unseat another Wisconsin anti-interventionist progressive, Russ Feingold, in favor of a pro-corporate Republican. Likewise, in LeFevre's time, anti-interventionism was only useful insofar as it served corporate America's goal of weakening trust in government, the left and labor.

LeFevre's biggest assignment for Merwin K. Hart was leading a front group of his called the Congress of Freedom, an umbrella group of all the far-right, pro-segregationist, and libertarian opposition to Eisenhower, to the Earl Warren Supreme Court and to both parties. LeFevre's high point as head of the Congress of Freedom came in 1955, when he forced the United Nations to cancel a meeting in San Francisco by timing a Congress of Freedom meeting at the same time.

LeFevre's point man in his San Francisco triumph was Willis Carto, the founder of America's neo-Nazi movement. In later years, Willis Carto launched David Duke's political career, and he founded the leading Holocaust-

denier outfit, the Institute for Historical Review.

LeFevre was fully aware of Willis Carto's rabid anti-Semitism and neo-Nazi leanings, but as with Merwin K. Hart, it didn't seem to bother him except as bad strategy. In 1956, after Carto launched his first rabidly anti-Semitic, racist newsletter, called Right, LeFevre sent him a congratulatory letter:

"Dear Willis,

I am more and more impressed with 'Right.' There has long been a need for such a publication as this and it seems to me that you are filling the bill. If you can keep on the ball, you should have an ever increasing circulation. I certainly hope that you do."

It was only years later, when Willis Carto questioned free-trade policies, that LeFevre felt compelled to criticize him: "I was very sorry to see you [advocate tariffs], Willis, and I suspect you will live long enough to regret it."



In 1956, a far-right newspaper magnate named R. C. Hoiles brought LeFevre out to Colorado Springs, Colorado, and gave him a job as editorial writer at his Colorado Gazette, run by R.C.'s son, Harry Hoiles. The Colorado Gazette was part of Hoiles' Freedom Newspaper chain, notorious for dividing communities across the country and for spewing anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-democracy and anti-labor vitriol. Freedom Newspaper columnists included Nazi sympathizers. R.C. Hoiles was so far to the right he makes Rupert Murdoch look like Rachel Maddow.

In the same year, also in Colorado Springs, LeFevre helped Hoiles to set up the Freedom School. The school's early Board of Fellows reads like a Who's Who of the post-war far-right: Holocaust-denier Merwin K. Hart, LeFevre's former boss; Roger Milliken, the pro-segregationist textile magnate who bankrolled William Buckley's National Review and later helped

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lead the John Birch Society; and retired Brig. General Bonner Fellers, the radical right-winger demoted by Eisenhower early in World War II for “inadvertently” leaking British war plans to the Nazis (Rommel, who benefited from the leak, affectionately referred to Fellers as “my bonnie feller”).

Hoiles described himself a “libertarian” in the 1950s and ’60s, but he gave his own brand of extremist anti-state, pro-property authoritarianism another name as well: “Voluntaryism.” This was the same name used in 19th-century Britain by a movement of Social Darwinists who were influenced by the writings of Herbert Spencer, the founder of Social Darwinism and a forefather of libertarianism. It was Spencer who coined the term

“survival of the fittest,” not Darwin (whose evolutionary theory favored survival of the adaptive, not the strong). Spencer believed that the free market was Nature itself, and he vigorously opposed anything that intervened in the free-market’s “natural” ways. Spencer opposed public education, state support for the needy and efforts to relieve the Irish Famine as much as he opposed British imperialism and military interventionism, all for the same reasons: They interfered in the free-market’s “natural” ways. It’s the same reason libertarians oppose imperialist wars abroad—not because they cause human suffering, but because they interfere in market interests.

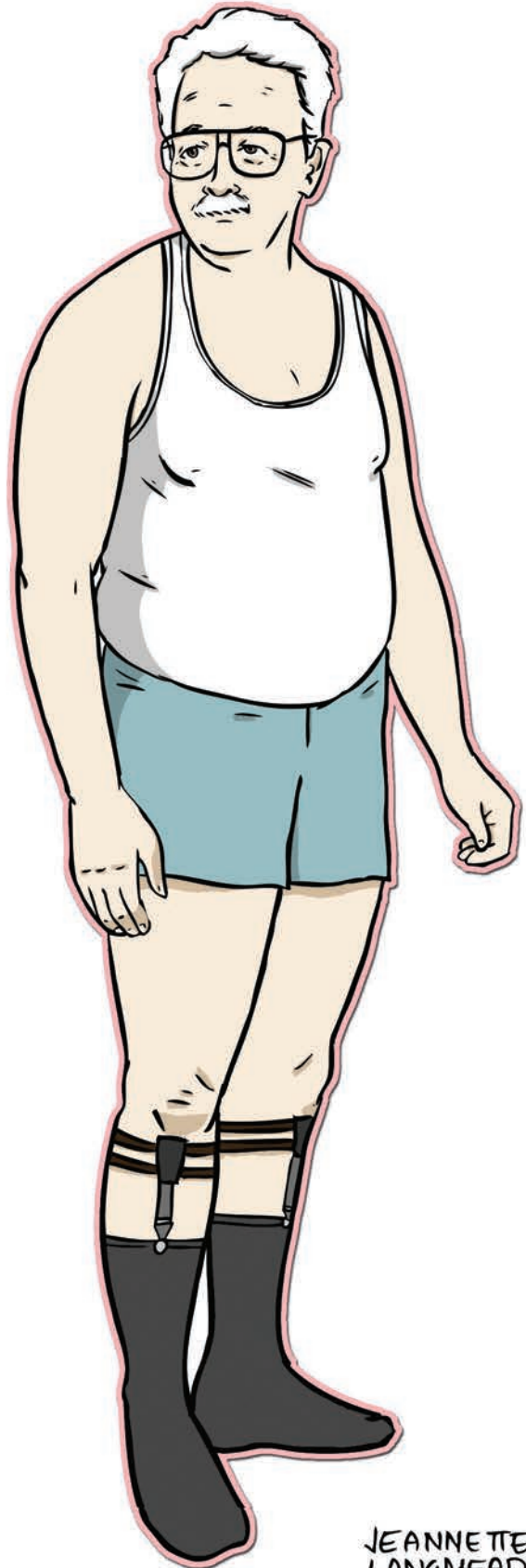
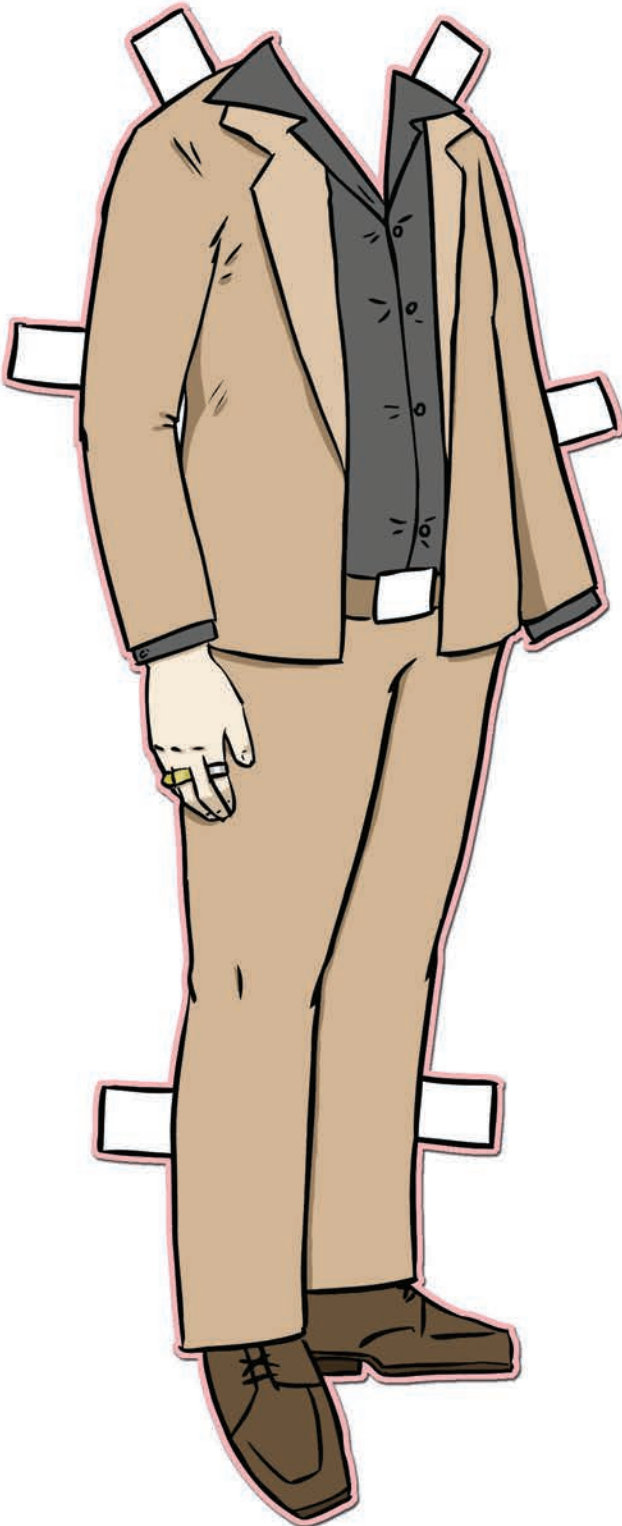
As a Spencer-influenced “Voluntaryist,” R. C. Hoiles

opposed publicly funded schools (Hoiles equated teachers with prostitutes), publicly-funded parks and roads, municipal police and fire departments, standing armies and drug laws that put users in prison; Hoiles also opposed Civil Rights laws, interracial marriage and most of all he opposed labor unions and taxes. Hoiles called taxes “violent coercion” and instead proposed a stateless society based on markets and “voluntary” agreements, pitting individual against individual, without labor unions or governments but with corporations—in other words, survival of capitalism’s fittest, unencumbered by countervailing democratic or labor power.

Hoiles’ “Voluntaryism” was adopted by LeFevre wholesale, and



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repackaged as his own philosophy, which LeFevre rebranded under the name “autarchy” in the mid-1960s. But “autarchy” was an unfortunate choice for LeFevre’s name brand of libertarianism: “Autarky” or “Autarchy” was a term popularized in the 1930s by fascist governments in Italy, Nazi Germany, Spain and elsewhere—a word that described a self-reliant totalitarian system (the original Greek means quite literally “autocratic” or “totalitarianism”). In later years, the label “autarchy” was used to describe the economic systems of tyrants like Idi Amin and Pol Pot. This might explain why LeFevre’s failed label was quietly dropped from the libertarian lexicon, while the term “Voluntaryism” today describes a small but thriving faction of anti-state libertarian free-marketeers, many of whom have been sponsored and trained in Koch-funded programs.

Today, in Keene, New Hampshire, thousands of libertarians live in a “Voluntaryist” commune called “Free Keene”—the brainchild of a Mercatus Center economist funded by Charles Koch.



As LeFevre slowly grew the Freedom School into a libertarian indoctrination camp, checks poured in from other funders, including an anti-Semitic steel magnate named Robert Donner (who once waged a campaign to ban The Nation from Colorado College), the Allen-Bradley Foundation, the Kochs, Adolph Coors, the DuPont-backed Curran Foundation, Deering-Milliken, even GE executive Lemeul Boulware, the man responsible for hiring Ronald

Reagan as GE spokesman.

The pro-business lobby had been talking about creating an outfit like the Freedom School since the end of World War II. Polls taken in the mid-late '40s showed that the American public was wary of big business, while support for government programs and labor unions was high.

Businesses poured hundreds of millions into a propaganda campaign fronted by lobbying outfits like The Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) and Merwin K. Hart’s National Economic Council, both of which contributed to the propaganda. The FEE specialized in the mass-production of libertarian pamphlets and books; Merwin K. Hart’s group fell more on the Red-baiting terror side, pressuring schools and universities.

Different pro-business outfits served different segments of the population. The purpose of Freedom School was to indoctrinate an elite hardcore of future executives and leaders in a radicalized free-market ideology, a sort of Corporate Komsomol vanguard.

The biggest challenge was to convince the public that these advocates of a pro-business ideology were honest and authentic. The promoters of this laissez-faire, anti-government campaign had to look as if their interest was purely intellectual, not underhanded and mercenary. They couldn’t appear to seem like the corporate pitch-men they were.

That was an understandable worry for outfits like the Foundation for Economic Education, which libertarians often point to as the origins of their movement. Congressional investigations in the late 1940s exposed the FEE as “the most

generously funded of all the conservative pressure groups” of its time, boasting a donor list that included 16 of America’s 50 largest corporations: The Big Three car makers, five of the eight largest steel companies, General Electric and DuPont, Standard Oil, Chase National Bank, Union Carbide, and so on. The head of the FEE was an old Chamber of Commerce pitch-man named Leonard Read, and one of the first propagandists that he hired to churn out pro-business pamphlets was the libertarian guru Ludwig von Mises. The library and literature at LeFevre’s Freedom School was stacked with Foundation for Economic Education literature, paid for by DuPont donations. Members of the FEE board included George Gallup’s partner in his polling business, and a future chairman of the notorious United Fruit Company.



## The Ultimate Libertarian Sacrifice

Another early libertarian who played an important role in the Freedom School was a Red-baiting union buster named Frank Chodorov. He first made a name for himself in the early 1920s after crushing a union drive Massachusetts textile mill, in the height of the first Red Scare.. Harvard Business School invited Chodorov to talk about his union-busting strategy, but some of the MBA students raised concerns about Chodorov’s methods, leading him to conclude that Harvard Business School was a nest of Communist subversives.

Chodorov went broke in the Great Depression, and spent the rest of his life on the fringes of the

far right living off handouts rather than his own profits. Chodorov was born a Jew but hid it until late in life. In fact, he spent World War II working for anti-Semites like Merwin K. Hart. Right after the war ended, Chodorov formed a “committee” to free a pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic U.S. diplomat jailed for passing secrets to Hitler’s spies.

In the early 1950s, Chodorov was given funds to launch a campus libertarian outfit aimed at university students. Chodorov called his strategy “The Fifty Year Plan.” Fifty years later, Chodorov’s libertarian outfit, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), runs the network of right-wing college newspapers that launched the careers of Dinesh D’Souza, Laura Ingraham, James O’Keefe, and scores of other right-

wing activists and trolls.

Chodorov’s ideas were in sync with LeFevre’s and those of LeFevre’s main backer, R. C. Hoiles. LeFevre didn’t consider himself much of a thinker or a teacher, and he asked Chodorov to become the Freedom School’s lead instructor in its early years. Chodorov taught that democracy is evil, that income taxes are evil, that public schools are evil, unions are evil, John Dewey is evil, voting is evil—only the individual is good, unless that individual organizes with other individuals to form a business corporation. If individuals organize into labor unions or governments, they become slaves party to the “violent coercion” of others; if individuals organize in corporate entities, they are free and

advancing the cause of freedom.

In LeFevre’s memoirs about Chodorov’s last lecture at the Freedom School, there’s a gruesome anecdote that captures the weird reptilian malevolence of the libertarian front-man’s world. It’s 1961, the Freedom School is graduating another class of students indoctrinated in “liberty,” and Chodorov steps up to the podium to give his usual graduation speech denouncing democracy and government. It begins normally, but after a few minutes, LeFevre notices something is wrong with Chodorov:

“His face turned a pasty white. He continued to talk, groping for words and saying nothing that made sense. He spoke of his mother and of ‘pretty little girls.’ Then, he began to ramble, giving

## BONUS ACCESSORIES





out words without a context.”

LeFevre realized something was wrong—he tried loudly whispering, “Please take a seat!” but Chodorov seemed frozen. So LeFevre stood up, pried his fingers loose from the lectern, sat him in a chair, and continued Chodorov’s speech for him, which LeFevre was able to improvise having seen it several times. LeFevre didn’t think of Chodorov’s health; what mattered most was completing the job, serving the Master faithfully. Incredibly, the same servile motor function was the last thing to die in Frank Chodorov’s stroke-damaged brain, and he charged for the podium with the determination of a Romero zombie:

“One of the ladies was crying. Frank came out of his chair and

moved to take up his post as speaker. I intercepted and got him to sit down again.”

This was how Frank Chodorov spent his final conscious moments: In a death struggle with a rival shill. LeFevre was as determined as the zombie-Chodorov—this wasn’t even about the students anymore. What mattered was faithfully serving the Master’s cause with at least as much fanatical devotion as the Chodorov-zombie:

“No one looked at me during the talk and it is probable that no one heard a thing I said. They all focused on Frank. But, at least, I made Frank’s point. I had the feeling that should I hesitate, Frank would have come reeling to the podium to correct me, yet he was nearly comatose.”

Instead of rushing him to a hospital, LeFevre and some others dragged Chodorov off to his cabin room, and called his sister in New York to take him away. Frank Chodorov spent the next five years a bedridden vegetable before finally expiring.

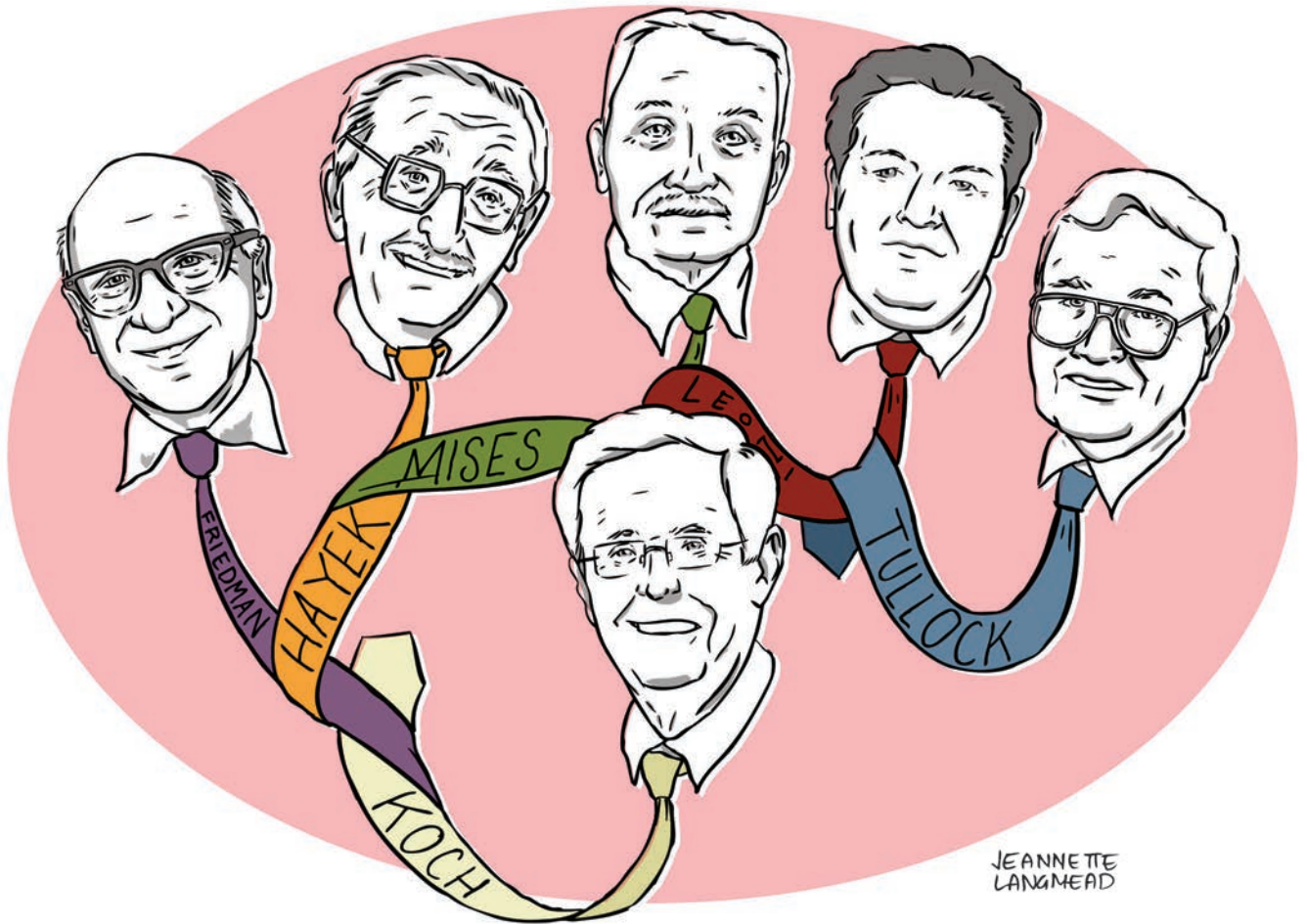
But his message lives on.



Almost from the start, the Freedom School attracted controversy. A group of school teachers from Rockford, Illinois were sent to a summer session in 1959 by the Rockford Chamber of Commerce. They returned in shock over what LeFevre was trying to teach them. Upon returning, they published an outraged letter



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to the local newspaper detailing what they'd been taught: "President LeFevre says that he is opposed to the government doing anything that private enterprise can do better; since he can think of no such area—no government." They demanded that the Chamber release the teachers from having to teach the Freedom School's ideas to their own students in Rockford: "We do not believe that the Chamber subscribes to the theory that the Bill of Rights of the Constitution should be replaced by a single right: the right to own property. We doubt if the Chamber agrees with a philosophy that opposes voting since the act of voting marks approval of government. These are not stray remarks taken from context; they are the foundation of the course."

The Chamber voted and agreed to release the teachers from having to teach LeFevre's ideas.

By the time Charles Koch enrolled in the Freedom School's two-week Executive Program in 1964, the school had already attracted controversy both locally and further afield. The mayor of Colorado Springs publicly denounced the Freedom School and LeFevre for making Colorado Springs look like "the home of crackpots," blaming the bad publicity for scaring away investors. A Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce director told *Time* magazine that LeFevre's outfit was as welcome as "a skunk at a family picnic." And when LeFevre announced a \$5 million expansion program to build a fully-accredited

graduate school called Rampart College, a local Colorado Springs radio station attacked what it called "Rampage College" and the station's popular Jewish radio host accused LeFevre of having a history of anti-Semitism. Actually the entire Freedom School operation was to be renamed "Rampart College" in order not to be identified with the Civil Rights movement's "freedom schools" spreading throughout the south.

In 1965, a year after Charles Koch joined the Freedom School board of trustees and had himself elected as a vice president, the *New York Times* profiled the Freedom School, portraying it as an arm of the John Birch Society, and a nest of segregationism:

"So far all the [nearly 1,000]

students have been white. Applicants are required to state their race and religion on application forms. Negroes have applied, Mr. LeFevre said, but so far have not been enrolled. They would be if qualified, he said, though it might present a housing problem because some of his students are segregationists.”

The more people got to know about LeFevre’s libertarian program, the more they started calling it out as an elaborate swindle hatched by wealthy interests, designed to talk the public into dismantling their own government power and institutions—the only power that protected the public from the sort of corporate abuse that had brought on the Great Depression.

The purpose of Freedom School’s teachings, it was becoming increasingly clear, was to turn the American public against their own government, to free up corporations and the rich to do as they pleased, by selling it as “freedom” and to tarnish the forces that impeded corporate power—government, democracy, labor unions—as “tyranny.”



Charles Koch enrolled in the Freedom School in early 1964, when the school was testing out its most ambitious program ever, named “The Phrontistery,” which brought in some of the biggest names in the free-market movement to teach an expanded, cross-discipline approach to libertarianism, incorporating economics, history, politics and philosophy.

The Phrontistery program ran for six months, from late 1963 through early 1964, and it attracted enrollees from the cream of the libertarian world. The Koch brothers were convinced to attend the program by

their father Fred Koch, an oilman, and by Robert Love, a Wichita heir to a cardboard-box fortune. In the 1950s, Fred Koch and Robert Love had led the Kansas “Right to Work” anti-union campaign. In 1958, Fred Koch co-founded the John Birch Society; Love joined the Birchers’ National Council alongside Fred. Charles and David Koch were also members of the John Birch Society, resigning only in mid-1968.

The “fuhrer” of the John Birch Society was another of the hick fascist vacuum-cleaner salesman types that dominated the early libertarian movement. His name was Robert Welch; he’d gone from selling Sugar Daddy candies manufactured by his brother, to serving the interests of Big Business sugar daddies as a lobbyist for the National Manufacturers Association. Welch was also a rabid McCarthyite who never forgave Eisenhower’s abandonment of the witch-hunting senator. The Birchers’ founding book makes the case that America was being subverted by high-placed Communist agents headed by President Eisenhower, whom Welch described as a “dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy” controlled by Moscow for decades. Birchers spread propaganda and films around the country to persuade people that the Civil Rights movement was a Communist plot, that Moscow directly controlled figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Chief Justice Earl Warren, the National Council of Churches, and President Kennedy (Birchers argued that JFK was assassinated in a Communist conspiracy, because Kennedy had planned to “turn American” and betray his Communist handlers). It was Welch and the Birchers who popularized the “Illuminati” conspiracy theories—in private

letters obtained by NSFWCORP Welch describes the “Illuminati” as “the Zionist conspiracy” and makes it clear he can’t talk directly about the global Jewish plot in public. This is another area where progressives totally misread libertarians—ignorant of libertarianism’s history, they dismiss all the far-right conspiracy theory material as incidental, when in fact far-right conspiracy theory thinking is in libertarian ideology’s DNA...

Charles and David Koch were also members of the John Birch Society when they and the other top Bircher executives enrolled in LeFevre’s Freedom School, which, during the winter of 1963–64, was a kind of Libertarian Woodstock – or a Libertarian Jekyll Island. Among the major libertarian figures who gathered under Robert LeFevre’s watch to teach future leaders such as Charles Koch were the following:

- Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek, both future advisors to Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (Hayek also admired South Africa’s “libertarian” apartheid regime);
- Ludwig von Mises, longtime head of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, interwar admirer of Mussolini, escaped to the U.S. near the end of WWII and went to work as a PR lobbyist for the National Association of Manufacturers;
- Bruno Leoni, a founding father of the free-market “Law and Economics” movement whose biggest adherents were Robert Bork and Richard Posner;
- Gordon Tullock, co-founder of the “Public Choice Theory”



movement which argues that public servants are inherently selfish and antagonistic towards the public they serve, and therefore the only answer is privatization because the free market serves the consumer;

- G. Warren Nutter. Argued business monopolies are the government's fault, and only total deregulation can end business monopolies. Nutter also worked for the CIA, an odd choice for a "Public Choice Theory" scholar.

The influence of these figures and their ideas on Charles Koch's thinking became apparent over the next few decades, when he set up his own multi-layered, multi-dimensional network of libertarian idea-mills and influence-peddling operations. In a speech Charles Koch gave in the late 1990s, he explained how his Freedom School experience influenced him:

"[Freedom School] was where I began developing a passionate commitment to liberty as the form of social organization most in harmony with reality and man's nature, because it's where I was first exposed [to] in-depth to thinkers such as Mises and Hayek," he said.

"[They] enabled me to integrate and apply these ideas in a much more productive way. My compulsion to internally integrate all my beliefs ensured that I would radically change the way I viewed the world in all arenas—life, business, non-profits, government, and society. In short, market principles have changed my life and guide everything I do. Following Hayek's model of the free society as an experimental discovery process, I have engaged in a large variety of activities to advance the free society over the past 30 some years."

By Charles Koch's own account, these were the people and the ideas that shaped his worldview and his libertarian politics, a politics which he spent the next half-century promoting and investing in, so that now these ideas are woven into the American cultural fabric at every level: political, academic, media, economic, religious, corporate, even pop culture.

And it was all done under the supervision of Koch's guru, Robert LeFevre.



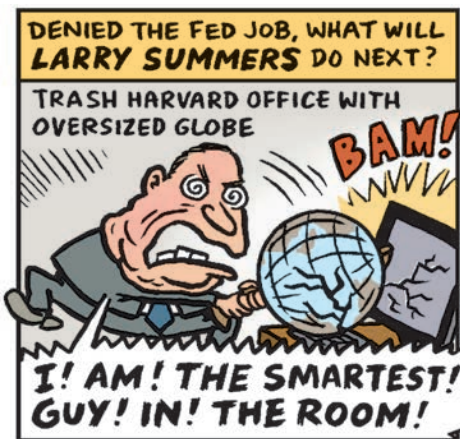
LeFevre was useful to Charles Koch for introducing him to a powerful means of pushing a pro-

business agenda by disguising it as daring, eccentric, profound, counter-intuitive scholarship. The idea had always been, since the New Deal, to turn Americans against their government, leaving them prey once again to powerful and predatory business interests. It was Charles Koch's unique business genius to see how a radical fringe version of pro-corporate ideas could give him leverage for his business interests, and advance his family's larger vision of an idealized America before labor rights, regulations and universal suffrage made doing business trickier.

But ultimately LeFevre couldn't keep up with Charles Koch's ambitious plans to turn Freedom School into a more sophisticated operation, a Cato Institute or an Institute for Humane Studies. Funding ramped up under Charles Koch's guidance: a 1966 Ramparts College brochure features a photo of a young, healthy Charles Koch, shovel in hand, ceremoniously "breaking ground" on a new building addition for a planned accredited graduate school program, as a white-haired LeFevre, in a check-pattered blazer and tie, stands by looking like a Buick car lot manager.

LeFevre had reached his pinnacle—backed by Charles

**NSFWCOMICS | JEN SORENSEN**





Koch and Koch's rich friends, with millions pledged to expand his libertarian indoctrination camp. But at heart, LeFevre was just a petty scam artist in way over his head. A mud slide had caused some damage; funds went missing; LeFevre was constantly scheming to undermine other rival libertarian front-men who fed at the same donor trough as he feasted at. Nothing got done; the promised new buildings weren't built; the promised accreditation never happened. Donors began grumbling; colleagues resigned.

Other, duller, more responsible businessmen were brought in to keep an eye on LeFevre and the money pouring in, while LeFevre was tasked with focusing on his strengths as a libertarian "guru." At Koch's urging, LeFevre recruited the putative heads of Rampart College's

graduate programs. Heading the economics department was W. H. Hutt, a South African free-market economist who opposed the concept of majority rule as often as he defended South Africa's apartheid regime and Rhodesia's white supremacist leader, Ian Smith. LeFevre and Koch chose "revisionist" historian James J. Martin—one of the leaders of the American Holocaust denial industry—to head the history department.

But LeFevre himself couldn't even manage the payroll, despite a boost in funding. In 1968, LeFevre's investors lost confidence and demanded that he run Freedom School on the same for-profit principles that he preached so fanatically.

By 1968, Charles Koch was distancing himself to the extent that his name barely appears in the

materials or reports. As the cut-off date approached, LeFevre grew obsessed with a fatherless 14-year-old girl named Virginia.

"Although I am appalled to admit it, I actually loved this brilliant wisp of a girl," he later wrote. "I was astonished at myself and I was outraged by feelings that welled up within me, beyond my ability to control."

Somehow, he managed to convince the girl's mother to sign over legal guardianship of her daughter to LeFevre and his wife, joining them and the two other women who had followed LeFevre since his cult days, and who lived under one roof with him and his wife.

LeFevre later published a book titled "Lift Her Up, Tenderly," billed as a "free-market 'Lolita'" about

an old sage, “Papa,” and his love affair with his 12-year-old daughter, “Ginny”—all “based on the real life of Robert LeFevre”—only instead of Nabokov’s explicitly described pedophilia, LeFevre details salacious free-market dialogues in which “Papa” always at his desk, always interrupted by his naive attention-seeking daughter, lectures her on the theories of Ludwig von Mises and the evils of big government, occasionally stopping to observe the development of her “budding breasts.” The book failed, except among a handful of home-schooling fanatics.

As soon as LeFevre was forced into the free market in 1968, Ramparts College collapsed in bankruptcy and debt, as had his last free-market venture in real estate two decades earlier. A desperate and broke LeFevre packed his wife and adopted “daughter” into their car, and drove out to Orange County to seek money from the first Freedom School sponsor who had brought him to Colorado Springs over a decade earlier, R. C. Hoiles, who was now retired in Orange County and nearing death at age 90. LeFevre was back in the life of a traveling huckster, a life he’d escaped for a decade—only now with a pre-pubescent girl he loved.

Hoiles reacted to LeFevre’s begging just as LeFevre had taught a “producer” should: by running LeFevre out of his Santa Ana mansion with his cane, screaming abuse, calling LeFevre a “bum” and a shirker. Hoiles was by then one of the richest men in Orange County—his Freedom Communications media empire, worth billions, went bankrupt during the late Bush years, as Hoiles’ squabbling heirs drove it into the ground.

The only thing that saved

LeFevre from the abyss was a new opportunity for libertarianism provided by the radical leftism of the Baby Boomer generation. It was an opportunity that Charles Koch grasped, with help from another Freedom School lecturer named Murray Rothbard, the founder of “anarcho-capitalism,” who advised his new oil patron to latch Old Right libertarianism on to the anti-government radicalism of the Baby Boomers.

In 1967, a year before Ramparts College collapsed, Fred Koch died. Charles was now consumed with taking sole control of and expanding the newly-renamed Koch Industries that his father had bequeathed to his family. David Koch acquiesced; David’s twin brother William fought Charles, and lost, after decades of bruising lawsuits. In control of both the oil-chemicals company and of his political strategy, in the decades to come Charles would merge business, politics and ideology-manufacturing into a grand strategy, becoming one of the richest and most powerful men in the world.

Almost immediately after his father’s death, Charles started introducing change. In 1968 Charles Koch let Freedom School die and he resigned from the John Birch Society. (Until that time, it had not been made public that Charles Koch was himself a member of the JBS.) The Birchers, he understood, were history; for laissez-faire libertarianism to survive with the Baby Boomer generation, it would need a complete rebranding.

In 1969, a new Student Libertarian movement was formed, aping the surface-stylistics of both the SDS and to some degree Yippie radicals, only substituting “free-market anarchism” for socialism on the grounds that socialism meant state intervention, and the

state equaled Vietnam War, the Draft, Chicago ’68, CIA, J. Edgar Hoover. The hope was that enough could be peeled away from socialist and anti-corporate tendencies, by selling libertarianism as a kind of Yogurt n’ Yoga Free-Market Radicalism. Almost immediately, the new student libertarian radicals received an unusual amount of mainstream media attention and praise. The student movement turned into the Libertarian Party, journals sprouted up, the Charles G. Koch Foundation in Wichita was formed (soon to be renamed “The Cato Institute”). Libertarians wore their hair long, raised their fists, denounced Nixon and wars, and called for drug legalization. They also called for the elimination of environmental regulations, slashing taxes on the rich, privatizing Social Security, school vouchers, and busting union power. Except for the long hair and the “groovy” talk, their ideas were no different from R. C. Hoiles’, or from those of his disciple, Robert LeFevre. Fellow old right “libertarian” William Buckley, himself an heir to his father’s oil fortune, dismissed the Kochs’ Libertarian Party movement as “anarcho-totalitarianism.”

LeFevre also latched on to the hippie movement, rebranding himself as an “anarchist” and “pacifist.” One of the leaders of the student hippie-libertarians was Republican Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, who grew his hair out and formed a hippie-libertarian folk band singing songs at college campuses about LeFevre, rebranding him as some sort of crazy old radical hippie-before-there-were-hippies, a free-market Alan Ginsberg. A flyer for a 1974 Libertarian Alliance-sponsored “Anarchist Conference” at Hunter College, with Robert LeFevre as



the main speaker, pandered to Yippie radicals with its facsimile of President Nixon with a gun to his head, with the caption scrawled in capital letters: "THE ONLY DOPE WORTH SHOOTING IS IN THE WHITE HOUSE". The flyer announced, "The Hunter College Libertarian Alliance will hold an Anarchist Conference and all Yippies are invited!"

An FBI informant passed the flyer to the FBI, but according to the declassified FBI files, specific instructions were given to leave the libertarians alone; they were only interested in the left-wing Yippies: "No information is desired... concerning persons planning to attend the above conference unless it concerns the YIP," the memo reads. "No investigation is being conducted of the Hunter College Libertarian Alliance, which is sponsoring the conference."

As soon as the hippie movement faded, Rohrabacher became a founding member of Charles Koch's "Libertarian Supper Club," promoted the anti-tax campaigns of the 1970s, and finally, after getting elected to Congress in the Reagan Revolution, Rohrabacher dropped the libertarian act and came out as a far-right hawk opposed to taxes, government, and labor unions.

LeFevre, meanwhile was reduced to the life of a traveling salesman to survive—the hippies never took to him, despite Dana Rohrabacher's efforts. For a while he had a strong disciple in Samuel Konkin III, who later joined Willis Carto's Holocaust-denial outfit.

Despite what Koch Industries claims, although publicly Charles Koch distanced himself from LeFevre, privately he maintained respectful contact with LeFevre well after Freedom School collapsed.

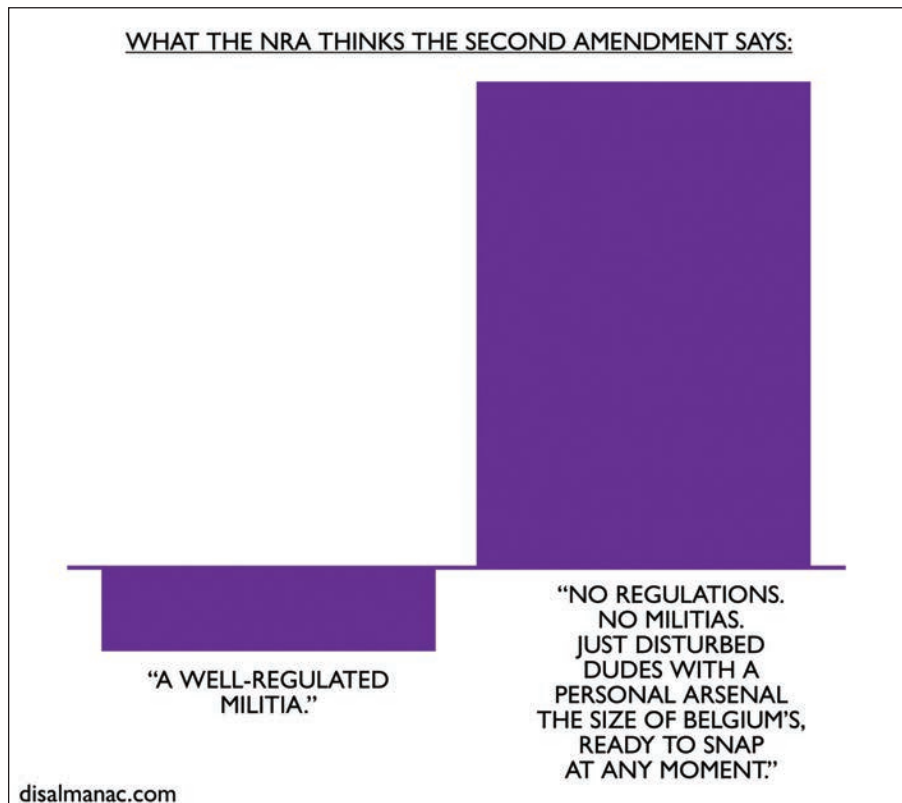
More importantly, Charles Koch kept alive and expanded upon the ideas and structures he first learned from his guru.

In 1973, for example, Charles Koch wrote a personal letter to Robert LeFevre informing him that he planned to take control of his own libertarian think-tank, the Institute for Humane Studies, which Charles had first joined up with in 1964, the same year he'd joined LeFevre's Freedom School. Back then, the Institute for Humane Studies had been a mere shadow of LeFevre's operation; the head of the IHS, F. A. "Baldy" Harper, had taught at the Freedom School and helped design LeFevre's teaching course. One of the IHS's early backers was R. C. Hoiles; another was Warren Buffett's father, Howard Buffett.

Harper died in 1973, and Charles Koch immediately took control of the IHS, which offered seminars and programs lifted directly from LeFevre's Freedom School. One of Charles Koch's first acts as the new IHS head was to write a letter to Robert LeFevre, asking for his personal blessing: "The Board directed me to ask you for a reaffirmation of the endorsement which you gave the Institute under [Harper's] direction," Charles wrote.

It was oddly flattering in a Byzantine court sort of way, and LeFevre eagerly gave his blessing in a written reply playing the role of guru while simultaneously groveling to his on-again/off-again benefactor. Even so, it must have pained LeFevre to receive that letter from his former sponsor, Charles Koch. It was Harper who first pushed the idea of a Freedom School on Robert LeFevre in the early 1950s, but at the time Harper claimed such a libertarian-indoctrination program

#### NSFWCOMICS | SCOTT BATEMAN



could never get off the ground; and when LeFevre made it happen, his sponsors told LeFevre he wasn't a serious enough intellectual to give the Freedom School the sort of credibility needed to advance their agenda. So in the late 1950s, LeFevre's big business funders instructed him to woo F. A. Harper to take control of the Freedom School, leaving LeFevre in charge of fundraising and promotion. But Harper snubbed LeFevre's offer—he didn't want his own reputation as a former Cornell University professor ruined by associating with an indicted fraudster, cultist, and crypto-Fascist crackpot like LeFevre. The raw wound opened again. When the Freedom School closed down in 1968, LeFevre admitted "feeling rather badly used" by Harper.

Seedy cretins like LeFevre were now being nudged further out of the movement's public face, as Koch upped his investments into libertarianism and needed a more presentable face for his radical right-wing ideas.

Still, Charles Koch and his new top guard never forgot LeFevre. When the Kochs bought and developed Reason magazine in the 1970s, with Robert Poole (who still edits today), the magazine regularly consulted with LeFevre to get his blessing on their ideological directions.

One of LeFevre's teachings that Koch kept alive after Freedom School's collapse was so-called "historical revisionism"—a euphemism for Holocaust denialism. In early 1976, Poole ran an entire issue devoted to "historical revisionism" featuring Holocaust deniers including James J. Martin, Percy Greaves (one of the first instructors and trustees of LeFevre's Freedom School, later on the editorial board of Willis

Carto's Holocaust denial outfit), and Austin J. App, another figure named in the Holocaust Museum's "Holocaust Denial Timeline."

It was under Charles Koch's executive watch that one of the biggest names in American Holocaust denial literature—James J. Martin—had been hired to head the Rampart College history department. When the program collapsed in 1968, an angry Martin demanded that he be paid in full for the remainder of his contract, and to his surprise, he was paid. As Martin later told it,

"I had read so much stuff by LeFevre over the years... all the bawling about the sacredness of contracts, that I said to myself, 'Well, for once I'm going to hold him to one and see what he does!...' I expected him to just walk away. But he had the backing of two, three, four millionaires, Charles Koch, all these other guys in Wichita, and sixty-thousand dollars was no money to them. Hell, they spent that maybe at the casinos on weekends."

Koch continued promoting the works and ideas of James J. Martin right up through 1980, even after Martin joined the editorial board of Willis Carto's neo-Nazi Holocaust-denial outfit, the Institute for Historical Review: Martin served as a director at the Koch-funded Center for Libertarian Studies, spoke at numerous conferences on historical revisionism put on by Koch's Cato Institute and Institute for Humane Studies, and in 1980, the Cato Institute published works by James J. Martin and another Holocaust denier, Harry Elmer Barnes.

Even as he nurtured the far-right libertarian fringe, Koch simultaneously invested in building up a mainstream wing of libertarianism. In 1978, Reason editor Robert Poole wrote to LeFevre describing his magazine's new quasi-mainstream editorial direction:

"Dear Bob:

Thanks for your comments about REASON's improvements. I appreciate them greatly, but, to repeat an old cliché—you ain't seen nothing, yet. Just give us another year or so.

I must explain a little about where REASON is going. We are making a very concerted effort to broaden REASON's base beyond the libertarian movement. Already, only about 60% of our readers think of themselves as 'libertarians,' per se. What we want to do is to expand ahead of the movement—to be something of a recruiting ground, reaching out to the broad general public of intelligent, educated people and offering them an exciting alternative to Harper's, New Republic, National Review, etc. In terms of our editorial policy, this does not mean watering down our libertarian views, but it does mean a change in focus away from the movement itself, and its heroes, villains, and in-group controversies..."

In 1979, Charles Koch founded the first of his many Washington D.C.-based lobby outfits, The Council for a Competitive Economy, with Charles Koch as chairman and David Boaz (now at Cato) as executive director.

The CCE fostered the Kochs' biggest lobby fronts—Citizens for a Sound Economy, Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks, and more. The CCE's president, Richard Wilcke—who had been converted to libertarianism in the '70s after seeing LeFevre speak at one of Charles Koch's "Libertarian Supper Club" events in Wichita—regularly corresponded with LeFevre through the early 1980s, even seeking his approval for a libertarian lobbying group in the seat of the U.S. government Leviathan. A clearly bitter LeFevre baited Wilcke for lacking libertarian purity, and Wilcke, a true believer, responded in letters that went on for pages. Charles Koch finally tired of the libertarian purists, disbanded the CCE and restarted his lobby outfit under a new name—Citizens for a Sound Economy—with a new chairman, Ron Paul, who needed a job after losing his 1984 run for the Senate.

LeFevre spent his last years servicing his old clients, offering free-market seminars in a depressing First Western Bank office building floor in Santa Ana, and selling taped recordings of his lectures on the gold standard and government tyranny through the back pages of libertarian journals. In the last years of his life, LeFevre survived by driving out to South Carolina to entertain a rich textile mill magnate and segregationist, Roger Milliken, who paid LeFevre to come to his estate and regale him with free-market, anti-labor and anti-union homilies on "freedom" and "liberty."

In 1986, on one of LeFevre's long drives back from Milliken's South Carolina estate to his Orange County home, LeFevre suffered a massive heart attack on the road and died. If his posthumous memoirs

are to be believed, he had gone to meet with the ghost of St. Germain somewhere over Mount Shasta for all Eternity.

By the time of his death, LeFevre's name and memory were a liability, although his ideas lived on in the wealthiest and most politically powerful American oligarch of our time. Charles Koch and his libertarian movement were now in the Big Leagues, and reactionary old libertarianism was becoming confused with a new form of leftist politics by an increasingly muddled American left.

Ronald Reagan's chief economist, William Niskanen, was hired by the Cato Institute to serve as its chairman until his recent death. The 1994 Gingrich-led "Republican Revolution" was fashioned by the Cato Institute's libertarian pamphleteers and publicists. And Ron Paul, whose political career was seeded with Koch largesse and sinecures at Koch think-tanks, is today revered by fanatics on both the right and left excited by what they perceive as Dr. Paul's fresh, bold, new, politics.

One watches this political confusion, and the failure of all our institutions, and sees how the Kochs' wealth has soared by leaps and bounds to where they are today, according to the latest Forbes 400 ranking—Charles and David Koch's combined wealth (it's all really Charles' anyway) now equals Bill Gates' \$72 billion; they are tied for first place. The Kochs' media tools claim that the brothers invest in libertarianism out of disinterested philanthropy—a lie repeated by everyone from BuzzFeed's Ben Smith to the Huffington Post's Radley Balko to Glenn Greenwald, who described the Kochs as "True Believers" whose investments in libertarianism had nothing to do

with profits. (Greenwald has taken money from the Cato Institute to entertain their annual Benefactor Sponsors fundraising event held at the Four Seasons in Las Vegas.)

Some people saw this coming, but no one took it seriously. A perfect example: a letter to a Colorado Springs newspaper published in 1963, denouncing LeFevre's Freedom School:

*"It's money they want, and with the money, they expect to grab power, build up influence and use them to tear down the fine institutions which our forbearers had taken pains through the years to establish. Are we so dumb as to give them the weapon and help them to destroy the very things which we have held sacred and dear?"*

Sadly, the answer is yes. Today, the author of this letter wouldn't recognize his Colorado Springs, which has become a notorious hotbed of Tea Party anti-government extremism.

In 2010, the Koch brothers' frightening political, economic and ideological power was at last fully exposed in a New Yorker feature that made Charles Koch the most talked-about plutocrat villain since the days of the Rockefellers. When Koch Industries posted their official reply, they cited a number of alleged errors in the article. Among the alleged errors cited:

"Robert Lefevre. While Charles and David Koch both have met LeFevre, they were never 'devotees' of LeFevre, as Mayer asserts. In fact, they have had no contact with him since the 1960s. LeFevre died nearly 25 years ago, in 1986."

As LeFevre tried to deny the Holocaust, so the Kochs try to deny LeFevre. 🍄



# KOCH BROTHERS FROM ANOTHER MOTHER

How libertarian thinkers at the Phrontistery influenced Charles Koch's strategy:

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- \* Bruno Leoni: Koch funds established the "Law and Economics Program" at George Mason University. The Washington Post discovered in the late 1990s that 40% of federal judges had been enticed to attend George Mason U's "Law and Economics" seminars in swank vacation spots, where the federal judges were subjected to free-market indoctrination. Congress subsequently attempted to ban such blatant influence and ideology-peddling on the judiciary, but the bill was denounced as "tyranny" and failed to pass. Koch also seeded the Institute for Justice, which spearheaded the Citizens United case among others.
- \* Milton Friedman: The Kochs' Cato Institute has a "Milton Friedman and the Cato Institute Photo Essay" celebrating their long close relationship, from Cato-funded operations to smuggle Friedman's books behind the Iron Curtain, to Friedman granting Cato exclusive rights to establish a \$500,000 "Milton Friedman Prize" (recently reduced to \$250,000). Cato is so tightly bound to Milton Friedman's reputation that it issued an elaborate, 20-page, full-color Cato Institute attack on Naomi Klein's "Shock Doctrine."
- \* Gordon Tullock, Warren Nutter and the "Public Choice Theory": Koch money transplanted Tullock and James Buchanan and their entire Center for the Study of Public Choice to George Mason University. Today, James Buchanan is a Senior Fellow at the Kochs' Cato Institute.
- \* James J. Martin, "revisionist" historian: After Charles Koch took control of the Institute for Humane Studies in the early 1970s, his staff began printing the "revisionist" works of Martin and other historians sympathetic to the Axis powers. As late as 1979, Cato held a summer conference on "historical revisionism" headed by Martin, who by this time was employed by neo-Nazi Willis Carto's Holocaust-denial outfit. He continued publishing Martin's work under the Cato brand through 1980, while the following year, the Institute for Humane Studies published an entire journal issue dedicated to celebrating World War II revisionism and to praising anti-Semitic isolationists including Charles Lindbergh, Ralph Nye and others. The 1980 Libertarian Party platform—bankrolled and controlled by the Kochs—called for cutting off all aid to Israel, a libertarian position advocated by Merwin K. Hart since the founding of Israel.
- \* Friedrich von Hayek: In 1973, shortly after taking control of the Institute for Humane Studies, Charles Koch began wooing von Hayek to take a leading role as an IHS "fellow." Hayek accepted the offer two years later, after winning the Nobel Prize.
- \* Ludwig von Mises: In 1974, Charles Koch's Institute for Humane Studies began a series of conferences promoting and branding the so-called "Austrian school" of free-market economists led by the late Ludwig von Mises.

