

Scott Walker, Koch-head



The multibillionaire Koch brothers are used to running their nefarious network of political front groups from behind closed doors.

For more than three decades, Charles and David Koch have been quietly funneling tens of millions of dollars from their industrial fortune into the Cato Institute, Federalist Society, Heritage Foundation, Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks, and dozens of other rightwing organizations set up to push their extremist agenda of plutocratic rule. From behind their plush curtain, they've operated as the rightwing's Wizard of Oz—only Ozzier.

But now, the curtain is being pulled back, and there they are—buck naked and butt ugly—for all to see.

What an unpleasant surprise it must have been, then, for the brothers to find ordinary folks peering at them and their fellow Republican billionaires behind the gated walls of the Rancho Las Palmas Resort, presumably untouchable in the Southern California desert. The rich had been invited to this lair of luxury in late January to participate in an exclusive four-day political retreat that Charles periodically organizes to plot strategy and funnel money into the next election.

In the past, these have been totally clandestine pow-wows. This year, however, the letter of invitation from Koch

Industries was leaked to researcher Lee Fang at the Center for American Progress. In it, Charles bragged that “we will assemble an exceptional group of leaders” at Rancho Las Palmas. And he did—but not the kind of leaders he intended to bring together!

Instead, he found some 1,500 grassroots leaders gathered at the resort to greet the elites. Accompanied by national media, these uninvited guests succeeded in unclocking the Kochs, turning the family's name into a four-letter word.

I was among the rabble intruding



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into this corporate getaway, having been invited by the political reform group Common Cause to emcee the people's Las Palmas rally. I can testify that the Koch crowd was not happy to see us. In fact, photographer Michael Cline snapped a wonderful picture of an exasperated David and Julia Koch glumly watching us from their resort's balcony.

Scott Walker is a Koch-head. He can't get enough of the laissez-fairlyland hallucinogens being pushed by the billionaire Koch brothers.

As the GOP's gubernatorial candidate in Wisconsin last November, Walker took \$43,000 in campaign cash from the Koch brothers' corporate PAC, plus hundreds of thousands of dollars of support from a Koch-funded political front group. Now in office, it's clear that the Guv has also snorted several bags of the Kochs' 100-percent pure, anti-worker, corporate mindset, for he's pushing maniacally to take away the right of Wisconsin public employee unions to bargain collectively. Walker would reduce the middle class workers to “collective begging”—a position of subservience that is the Kochian ideal. So eager was Walker to please his paymaster that he prattled on for twenty minutes about how tough he was on the workers—all this when he thought David Koch was on the other line, though it was a phony phone call.

What the governor didn't anticipate, however, was a jolting side-effect of Koch fairy dust: widespread public revulsion. Tens of thousands of teachers, firefighters, police officers, and other workers—plus school kids and other supporters—filled Wisconsin's capitol in an unrelenting protest. And, while Walker claimed he was only doing what the people wanted, 61 percent of Americans said they didn't want what he was doing.

But that didn't deter this delirious Koch-head. He kept promoting his bill, which included a little provision he buried in Section 44. It would allow the governor, with no oversight, to sell Wisconsin's publicly owned power plants on a no-bid basis to private corporations. Guess who's in the energy business and could profit enormously from this giveaway? The Koch brothers. ♦

Jim Hightower produces The Hightower Lowdown newsletter and is the author, with Susan DeMarco, of “Swim Against the Current: Even a Dead Fish Can Go with the Flow.”