Citizen Koch: Repealing the First Amendment as an Article of Faith

Just in case the Pete Seeger music over the loudspeakers before the movie was too subtle, the "Move to Amend" and other leftist literature and petitions lining tables at the back of the theater at the showing I attended cleared up any confusion.

Yes, in case this moviegoer had had any doubts, *Citizen Koch* would be a movie with a far left-wing bent.

Clearly, the throngs of leftists drawn to Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, would not be disappointed — unless they expected to rally actual throngs. Sadly for the faithful, those vast crowds of left-wing communicants never arrived at the radical church known as the Brattle Street Theater to defend the very name of American "democracy" from the likes of the oil baron Koch brothers.

Only a dozen or so ponied up the $8 to see the Saturday afternoon matinee of this alleged blockbuster documentary. Apparently, the Left is as unchurched politically as they are religiously. Or it could be they were saving their political sermon for the Lord's Day? Maybe the producers should have taken a page from the actual Democratic Party playbook and bussed in paid union members to attend their rallies and protests in order to create the appearance of mass support.

But the dozen who did arrive — in the heart of America's citadel of progressivism, just a stone's throw from Harvard University — heard their 80-minute sermon in video format. It's always fun for the faithful to get a good sermon, and at the end of the film the congregation meandered over to the petition table in the back and dutifully signed their names to repeal the *Citizens United* decision via a national constitutional convention — the first since 1787.

But there was little excitement among the lonely crowd. What they had heard was not the "Good News" they expected from their digital preacher; it wasn't news in any sense of the term at all. The left-wing congregants could have saved their eight bucks and just turned on a random episode of the *Rachel Maddow Show* to hear the same information, and more professionally presented. Or if they wanted to hear it delivered less professionally and by an actual preacher, they could have enjoyed Al Sharpton covering the same issue a day later on the same MSNBC channel.

Just one day before the June 20 Boston premiere of *Citizen Koch*, Maddow had told her viewers of "an ongoing criminal investigation into [Wisconsin] Governor Scott Walker and his campaign." Unfortunately for Maddow and her fellow communicants at Harvard Square, all the courts that considered charges had already thrown the case out. So it's only ongoing in the sense that the lawyers' appeals of the baseless case are "ongoing."

Citizen Koch focuses on the battle in Wisconsin between government-employee unions and taxpayers, but it's really about those evil fossil-fuel vendors Charles and David Koch. The Koch brothers are flooding the airwaves with hundreds of millions of dollars in commercials, we are told, in order to destroy all unions and the entire American electoral process. The two brothers, together worth $100 billion, are accused of funneling up to $400 million into the electoral process in the next election cycle.

This threatens our very system of government, viewers are assured.

Indeed, how are the great shamans of the political Left going to exorcise such a media blitz that threatens to overwhelm all opposing viewpoints? Just for a moment, picture the unfairness of expecting Al Sharpton or Lawrence O'Donnell using their mere 44 minutes of daily air time — each — trying to rebut a massive wave of 30-second advertisements by the Koch brothers totaling two minutes of air time in an hour. It simply can't be done. And in all honesty, reasonable people of every political persuasion would have to agree.

The Koch brothers own Koch Industries, which is a corporation, and viewers are repeatedly told that "corporations are not people." Therefore, according to the leftist worldview, the Koch brothers clearly gave up their rights of freedom of press and speech when they inherited their father's oil empire. That's the first article of faith imparted to the faithful.

One might think that the half-a-dozen times the movie quotes MSNBC hosts such as Dylan Ratigan strategizing his political message with guests would be unsettling to the faithful. One would be wrong. The heterodox might quibble that MSNBC is being hypocritical. After all, MSNBC — which advocates for Democrats around the clock — is also a corporation that's part of a Comcast cable empire which took in more than $60 billion in 2013 and is worth $160 billion. That's almost twice the total attributed to the Koch Brothers.

But the quibblers — simpletons in the eyes of the progressives — would be dismissed because MSNBC is "media" and therefore doesn't count. As all the faithful well know, running a political propaganda network is absolutely, completely, entirely different from buying advertisements in 30-second increments on that same network. Therefore, it doesn't matter to them that the producers of *Citizen Koch* regularly utilize the *Huffington Post* to promote their political views, even though the *Post* is an unabashed left-wing political website that is part of the $2-billion AOL *corporate* media empire.

The movie's producers — Carl Deal and Tia Lessin — favorably quote former Louisiana Congressman and Governor Buddy Roemer intermittently throughout the documentary. It's unclear to me why. Perhaps it's because his Southern drawl makes him sound like a preacher that could rally the faithful, or perhaps because he shares the directors' hatred for the First Amendment. Roemer says this of the intersection of money and politics:

> Sometimes it's a check, sometimes it's the threat of a check. It's like having a weapon. You could shoot the gun, or just show it. It works both ways. Money is a weapon.… And the very rich and powerful have more of it than anybody. Let me put it another way. They have more guns than anybody. Who wins those battles?

Who wins those battles? I don't know the answer to Roemer's question, but I'm pretty sure Eric Cantor would give it to me over a steak dinner. If Eric Cantor — the number two ranking member of the U.S. House of Representatives with a 20-1 spending advantage over his opponent — can be unseated by an unknown college professor, money may be closer to a wet noodle than a gun on the weaponry scale.

But the problem with the political Left is that so many of their fellow leftists are leaving the "true church" and the heretofore mentioned first article of faith. The latest "apostate" to jump ship is the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU "heretics" complained earlier this month that a repeal of *Citizens United* by constitutional amendment "would fundamentally 'break' the Constitution and endanger civil rights and civil liberties for generations," "severely limit the First Amendment," and "severely harm political debate, exacerbate the incumbency advantage, give certain political parties an

unfair leg up, and disproportionately impair third parties."

But really, the faithful might ask, what do we really need the First Amendment for any more anyway? It we get rid of it, we might prevent something with which they disagree from reaching and corrupting their fragile ears! The Left may own nearly all the national television media — ABC, NBC/MSNBC, CNN, CBS, Viacom, PBS — but their faith is fragile, and it will not stand the test of 30-second advertisements.

Clearly, the faithful believe it's in everyone's interest not to hear Tea Party craziness, such as that of Dr. Jake Jacobs, who is filmed for three sentences in the movie, telling people in his Wisconsin audience that Hitler persecuted Jews, and that socialist Jews left Germany for the United States, joined the universities, and are now teaching his audience's tender children and grandchildren in the ways of socialism. Jacobs was labeled as a "John Birch Society educator" in the subtitles, and then the screen went dark to the revelation that the Koch brothers' father, Fred C. Koch, was a founder of The John Birch Society.

Eek! America is being taken over by neo-Nazis who are trying to finish off what Hitler started — or at least that's the message (a very false one!) the film is trying to convey.

Dr. Jacobs, who has not seen *Citizen Koch*, told me in an interview that "they must have sliced and diced and implied that I was anti-Semitic," despite the fact that "I teach holocaust studies at Lakeland College." He said he had been talking in the tightly edited clip about a handful of individual ex-Jews of the Frankfurt School of socialist thought. "I was describing the Institute for Marxist Research, Herbert Marcuse and Theodore Adorno. They were Jews who hated Judaism."

Dr. Jacobs can protest that he's a mainstream professor with a solid record of guarding against genuine anti-Semitism over a lifetime of educational work. But it really doesn't matter to the faithful that Dr. Jacobs has never even been a member of The John Birch Society (a pro-freedom organization that condemns racism including anti-Semitism), or that he's a pillar of support for Israel (where he's lived) and supporter of Judaism generally.

The liberal-left faithful want everyone to repeat their mantra: The radical Right is buying American elections, and they are all Jew-hating, Nazi-wannabes. Praise Buddy Roemer and hallelujah!

There, don't you feel better?

Neither do I. And I don't just want my eight bucks back; I want my 80 minutes back.

Photo: David Koch, from the trailer of Citizen Koch

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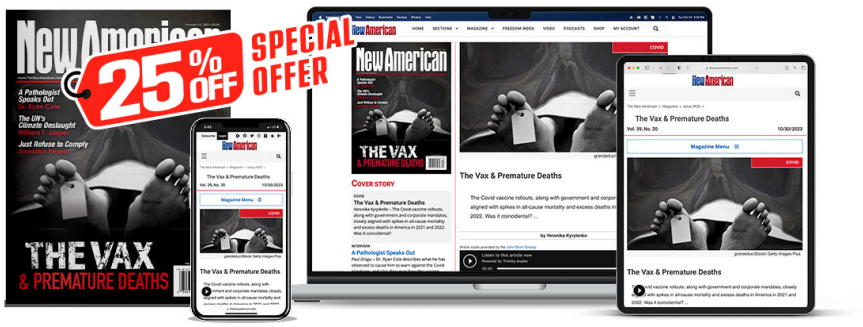

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