

File

5

FREEDOM FORUM - KEENE, N. H.
Saturday 4/5/03 1:00

Thank you for that fine introduction.

Sit back and relax, while I tell you a story. In 1997 I read an op-ed in the Boston Globe written by the Common Cause Organization. In it a short paragraph stated that "in the middle of the night, two members of the House of Representatives, added an amendment to a bill that was going to the then President Clinton, to be signed giving 50 billion dollars as a subsidy to a tobacco company". A subsidy is not a loan, Webster's dictionary defines it as a gift, given by the government to a corporation or a single entity, whose product is for the good of all. \$50 billion of our tax money to a tobacco company? Common Cause answered my frantic, agitated phone call.

Yes it was stopped. Yes it was corruption and if you want to know what is going on in the country study Campaign Finance Reform.

What I found was this: A poor man today has to give his soul, or his votes in order to run for office, or he has to be a multimillionaire. Everyone in the House and in the Senate has been elected this way, with the

exception of Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, he does it the old fashioned way. He accepts only legal money.

We give our government in yearly taxes 1.4 trillion dollars. The government in turn, because of laws that have been made by bought senators and representatives, gives to corporations, rich men and unions 150 billion dollars yearly.

They in turn give money in the total amount of 1 billion dollars to Senators and Representatives.

In 1907 Theodore Roosevelt's administration passed a law, saying there should be no money in politics given by Corporations. The same law was made for Unions in the 80's. Those two laws are still on the books, with some amendments. We have never had an Attorney General with guts enough to step in and do his or her job of investigating that billion dollars given yearly. I took a group of students with me when I was in Washington, D. C. and walked to Janet Reno's office and tacked a big sign on her door, advising her to do her job. We wrapped on the door afterwards. No one came and I never heard from her. afterwards. *later*

After Watergate the pundits decided something had to be done about the fact that only 50% of the people that

could vote were voting. Shameful! The Federal Republican and the Democrat committees were formed for the purpose of getting out the vote. Anybody that wanted to could put money into one or the other or both of these committees. At first only a trickle of money was given. The next ^{ELECTION} year a bit more was given. The third election, some bright person said, "Hey we could launder money here. We must report how much we give, but not that we gave instructions for the committee to send some of our gift on to a particular candidate. "Soft money", illegal money was born. And soon over ^{a billion} \$1,000,000,000 of their \$150 billion was finding its way into the coffers of ^{various} a candidate's campaign.

Giving money to a candidate cannot help but translate to access. It is a natural thing, even though it is wrong, for the public official who provides special access for his or her campaign-donors, is stealing that access away from the citizens of the district to whom it rightfully belongs. But as long as there are big political donations, there will be that sale of stolen goods.

So what do you do if you are a little old lady of 89, living on social security, in a small town of 1400 in the wilds of New Hampshire. What can you do to get rid of this corruption. Well, there was the

McCain/Feingold bill in the Senate and the sister bill in the House where it was sponsored by Shays/Meehan . This bill was to eliminate that soft money, but the bill had been trying to get passed ever since Watergate. The system was, for the House who voted on the bill first, to pass it, knowing that it would be filibustered in the Senate. The bill was never going to pass, because though the Democrats were giving it lip-service, they knew no way to get elected except by accepting that 'soft money' or were a multimillionaire. It had to be a grass-roots effort, and since I was unaware of soft money, I ~~who~~ thought I was a good citizen, always voting, serving several terms on the town planning board, as well as serving in the local church as a deacon. (I add that last, because I was recently told that many conservative people in this area believed me to be a Communist. I thought the Communist scare had disappeared when Russia came a cropper, but apparently not.)

Well, most of you know that I walked across the country talking to people about campaign finance reform, to everyone I met, telling them about the McCain/Feingold bill that needed help to get passed. That the bill would never get passed without their help.

When I got as far as Little Rock Arkansas, John Rauh

and his wife Mary flew in from New Hampshire to walk with me, and convince me that I should talk about public funding, that the McCain bill wasn't enough. John told me that it was the real solution and that it now existed in Maine, Arizona, Vermont and Massachusetts. That all of these states had enacted some kind of a public funding bill and that Arizona and Maine had had one election using it, and they pronounced it wonderful.

Here's how public financing works: First, it's voluntary, so there are no constitutional problems about limiting anyone's rights. The candidate who wants to participate has to personally collect a certain number of qualifying signatures and small contributions—usually in the five dollar range from people who live in their district and are on the check list for voting. This demonstrates community support. Someone who has long been active in a parent-teacher group, or scouting or some other such thing will have an easy time of it. Someone who has not helped their community will find it hard sledding. When the candidate meets these requirements, the campaign receives advertising money from the state election fund. The candidate must agree to neither raise nor spend any other money, including ~~no~~^{any} money of his own. That neatly gets special interest contributors

right out of the picture. The cost of such a system is about one-tenth the cost of paying off special interest contributors with our taxes for breaks and other favors. As of Little Rock I started talking to people about the clean money option of public financing. The next time McCain and Fiengold debated Mitch McConnell of Kentucky in the Senate McCain called to ask if I would come to Washington and sit in the gallery while they debated. I hopped the next plane, and sat in the empty gallery, with a young man who had been walking with me and leaned over to hear the debate. Again the bill was defeated. But two years later, after McCain and Fiengold, and Bill Bradley, running for president, concentrated on public funding in their campaign, the gallery was packed. Suddenly the public understood public funding. The bill passed in the Senate first this time and it was now time for the House to filibuster it. The House surprised everyone, including themselves and the bill became law on March 27, 2002, when the now President Bush signed it. I quote Paul Taylor in Mother Jones March/April edition: The measure outlaws the billion dollars of unlimited checks—soft-money.....President Bush has little use for a ban on soft money, and even less for McCain....So he dispensed with the Rose Garden ceremony, and put his signature on (this landmark) bill early that morning in the privacy of his office.”

unquote Now the bill had to go to the FEC for clarification of language. But the FEC began to pull the bill apart and it has ended up in court where quotes Taylor:" U. S. Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky immediately rushed into court to secure the 'Naming rights' in a lawsuit that he hopes will become both a landmark constitutional case and his own great political legacy."The case is called McConnell v. Federal Election commission. It has 54 plaintiffs including the Chamber of Commerce to the AFL-CIO, from the Christian Coalition to the ACLU . All contending that the bill infringes on their rights to free speech maintaining money is speech. The FEC is allowing both the Republican and Democrat parties to set up new State Committees, to replace the old Federal committees, so as far as I can see we are coming out with a minus position.

Why? In 1907 Theodore Roosevelt's administration was able to set up new rules, saying that no money for corporations should be in politics. The same law was passed against the Unions in the 80's. ~~New amendments to this rule were made and thus it stood~~ until the McCain/Feingold bill was passed. An individual could give 'hard money' in the amount of \$1,000 to 25 different candidates running for office. His spouse could do the same. But in order to get the

Before

Before the bill was passed

McCain/Feingold bill passed it was necessary to compromise this law saying that this \$1,000 donation of hard money would be increased to \$2,000 So if the bill is passed, ^{yes, sorry by the courts} we have a new loophole for 'soft money' and hard money is doubled.

On the other hand there are 30 different states working on clean money campaign laws. If we could just get a few of those states enacting Clean Campaigns, as public funding is often called, a critical mass could occur and Federal Public Funding could ^{occur}. I have been ^{working} walking for the past three years in various states who ask me to come and cheer the choir ~~on~~.

One of the states that is working the hardest is our own beloved New Hampshire. This law has had two trials, with such close results that the whole country believes that she will be next. Oh I hope so. I guess I would die happy, should New Hampshire be the fifth state to enact Clean Elections.

This is the legacy that I wish to leave to my 16 great grandchildren and all the children in this country. This is the gift we give to those living and dead who fought the wars, through the years for making the world safe for our Democracy. We are fast becoming a

⑨

Fascist ^{Country} State, they say. But I declare we will never allow our country to be a **Fascist State**. We are going through a dark time, but it is no coup. This ^{is} not the end of American Democracy or the beginning of some fascist regime. We are too big, we are too wilful and too brave a people for that to ever be so, though there is great cause for worry.

Those of us who might worry the most must work the hardest now. Now we must put aside campaign finance for a while, our most societal problem that we face in America today. It must sit on the backburner ^{to dinner} until this war is over.

Here is the good news: We still have elections There will be an election in November of 2004 or there will be hell and blood to pay.

We Americans have a dream of independence, of responsible self-governance and individual freedom. We want to see ourselves as a beacon in the world for the great dreams of freedom and justice and for simple kindness and common sense. We want to offer the world that dream of freedom and plenty that dream that humans have always held in their hopes for themselves and for their children. We enshrine our Declaration of Independence and our Bill of Rights with greatest pride, for they are the roadmaps to the

pursuit of happiness.

We hold this dream in spite of the reality of our history. We have engaged in slavery and we have wiped out noble races who lived here first. We hold our dreams in spite of everything, because it is our duty to hold this dream, imperfect as we are. All the nations of the world remind us of our duty when they send us their children to educate or to assimilate into a culture where individuals have a chance to freely live up to their unique potentials. The French reminded us of our duty with their gift of Lady Liberty that stands today in New York Harbor. Oh, I hope they do not take her back!

For in our slow and wobbly path forward to a better world, we sometimes find ourselves taking a great step backward. And so it is now, as we discard our bill of Rights and discard international cooperation, and are for naked self-interest instead of justice. It has happened before. We have invaded and bombed before, when we might have negotiated, or when we might have worked cōoperatively....Americans have gone to jail before, and suffered popular abuse before, because they stood against great wrongs. Their lonely job has been to hold that torch for us in dangerous times. And so it is now, as many prepare to go to jail

(11)

rather than pretend that nothing serious is happening in America. Can our shaky old hands hold that great torch? Well, we must do our best until the nation awakes again and embraces its dream again.

In 1860 Abe Lincoln, said: "Let us have faith that right make might and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."

And those of us who care for the direction of the American dream have one job now to do, and that is to begin working toward that election day in November of next year. We need not wait for a good candidate. We have work to do now with our neighbors, so that they have refreshed in their hearts the idea of a great America - one that takes care of its people and one that acts as a force for reason and peace and justice throughout the world - one that abides by the Bill of Rights.

Those who live in states where the electoral outcome is certain need to work in neighboring states where it is not. I have set up a volunteer program for that work on my website, Grannyd.com. It is time for us to begin our work.

We stand here together today because we care about

each other. We care about our brothers and our sisters who struggle in poverty and injustice, not only here but everywhere in the world. We have a vision and our vision is a copper-clad lady in the harbor of New York City.

We are for freedom. We are for the justice that allows all people the proper pursuit of happiness. We are for the elimination of poverty. We are for equal rights. We are for the protection of our fragile environment. We are for the education of our children. We are for treating the ill and housing all the people. We are for jobs and decent living. That is all to say that we are for love. We are for love. And most of all and forever, while others are for bombs and death and great lies, we are for love and its truth.

Thank you.