

story, the production of a radio or television program (on campus stations), the making of a film, conducting an interview with a popular culture figure, the creation of a new game, or the presentation of a multi-media show "to create an event that would be 'cool' in McLuhan's sense of the term." Assignments may include watching the six o'clock news on TV: "There are countless surprises in store for the world this week," says one assignment. "Be the first on your block to really know what's happenin'."

One Bowling Green teacher, Michael Marsden, likes to bring in what he calls "community professors"—specialists in some area of popular culture who do not have academic status, such as a theatre circuit manager who can lecture on how to book films, or a television personality. A thesis for a master's degree can take almost any form; one candidate, an aspiring rock singer named David Capus, has submitted his—it consists of pressings of two of Capus' original songs, *Hour of the Wolf* and *Dream Child*, that have been sent to 500 disc jockeys around the country. Included in the thesis is an account of how Capus intends to make the big time. Browne is exceptionally proud of his first graduate in popular culture, a Cleveland student named Leonard Estrin. A "great square peg," until Browne tailored a series of popular culture courses for him, Estrin originally turned down every standard course he tried, but now, thanks to popular culture, he has a promising job in a Cleveland advertising agency—"the brightest kid they have!" claims Browne.

In spite of Bowling Green's international notoriety as the home of popular culture studies, there are still, out of 14,600 students on campus only about 300 undergraduates in the program, with another two dozen working on master's degrees and a score of Ph.D. candidates for English degrees who are working in popular culture fields. ("That will be a brave young man who takes the first Ph.D. in popular culture," says Browne.) But the new discipline is clearly booming, and a *Chicago Tribune* observer suggests that "like Clark Kent, who can duck behind your back and suddenly become Superman, perhaps Bowling Green's Center for the Study of Popular Culture is in its phone booth stage." What puzzles many

academic trend followers is why the Center popped up in northern Ohio, rather than, say, at some California school near the centers of film and television, or at a New York college near the sources of books, magazines and comics. The reason that this flat, ordinary Ohio town of 30,000 population became a pop-cult capital is obvious: Ray Browne is here. When asked about this, he turns the question aside: "If we'd been Harvard or Yale or Princeton we'd have been famous long ago, but because we're out in Ohio we had to fight to make ourselves heard." Says Charles Leone, the dean of the graduate school who has backed the Center from the beginning, "It's not strange that the Center should be here. I'm delighted that it is—why shouldn't it be here? But there's one thing that gets under my skin, and that's to hear somebody claim that because it's not at Harvard or somewhere like that it can't be of any importance. I say that some of the best work in the country is going on at emerging universities, but there are few who pay attention to that."

Leone gives the back of his hand to journalists who write features that claim Bowling Green is giving master's degrees in comic books. They are just sheep bleating in the wilderness. "They always publish a photograph of that damned cash register or the pinball machine, because they're more visible—shelves of books don't make a picture. We do have a problem—we have to guard against becoming everybody's attic. Still, we may have to accept a ton of junk to find 5 pounds of useful materials, especially when we're not sure just where we want to go with all this. I think we ought to pick two or three areas and emphasize them, and then tell other schools, look at what Bowling Green is doing and do something else." Leone, a biologist, believes that every academic persuasion, including his own, has connections with popular culture. "Biology is directly related to drugs, alcohol, tobacco—all part of popular culture now."

Leone sees popular culture as part of a natural growth rather than as a flash in the pan: "It developed just as genetics emerged from biology," he says. Ray Browne, who of course came through many years of teaching American studies himself, joyfully agrees: "We take American studies and put a smile on it." □

## CAMPAIGN FUNDS

# HOW TO CURE THE CORRUPTION

## SEN. ALAN CRANSTON

Our society has a recurring need to scrap and replace institutions and practices that have become outmoded. An egregious example of an American way whose time has passed is our method of paying for political campaigns:

It may have been all right in the free-swinging, under-

populated, largely agrarian democracy of the 19th century to have political candidates raise campaign money as they saw fit. At worst, rich people got richer and poor people got poorer, but the consequences of political corruption seldom shook the underpinnings of the American people's faith in the democratic system.

When Abraham Lincoln ran for Congress in 1846, his supporters raised \$200 for his campaign. He won—and gave back \$199.25, saying:

I did not need the money. I made the canvass on my

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own horse; my entertainment, being at the houses of friends, cost me nothing; and my only outlay was 75 cents for a barrel of cider, which some farm hands insisted I should treat to.

Today's candidate would envy Lincoln's concern with that barrel of cider. He did not have to worry about TV spots, computerized mass mailings, whistle-stopping by jet, \$1,000-a-plate dinners, or the other superchrome paraphernalia of today's campaigns.

In this final third of the 20th century, social and economic power has grown prodigiously. The media possess a potential for influencing (if not controlling) the minds of millions of Americans. Corporate conglomerates have appeared, whose assets dwarf the wealth of nations. Our very government has grown into an unwieldy behemoth. An incipient American dictator would find in our government—right now—the tools for surveillance, for manipulation, for control and for retribution, beyond even George Orwell's predictions.

Our institutions of self-government and our elected officials are prime targets of those who seek to dominate these vast power resources. Gaining control of power is what political corruption in the 1970s is all about. And money, in the form of campaign contributions, is the means.

Watergate was a gross perversion of our democracy, but it was not an improbable consequence of the way campaign contributions, in huge sums, corrupt the political environment.

Political big money imperceptibly but inevitably erodes the impartiality of our best men and our best institutions. If the role of the big contribution continues to escalate in politics, Watergate will be only the first chapter in the deterioration of democratic government in the United States.

As Tom Wicker has written in *The New York Times*:

All too plainly, and whatever laws may or may not have been broken, the sense of ethics of too many highly placed men in the Nixon Administration was sadly lacking. That fact, combined with too much money too eagerly given by too many compliant people, made Watergate and the cover-up possible, and the need for drastic change in election financing evident.

I believe that elected officials are clearly in the best position to know the effects of big money in politics. We have a moral responsibility to tell the American people how big money affects politics and we should have the courage to do so. I think the American people are in the mood for honesty. I know they will accept change in our method of financing elections if we talk to them honestly about the problem.

The costs of today's political campaigning force a candidate to seek hundreds of thousands, even millions, of dollars from private interests. The candidate and his campaign fund raisers must seek these people out.

Running for statewide office in California is an extreme illustration of the magnitude of such a fund-raising effort. A Senator from California serves the largest constituency ever to be represented by a legislator in the history of the world. Its 21 million people constitute a

legislative district where political campaigning is big business requiring millions of dollars.

A Senatorial candidate might prefer to keep contributions small and broadly based, yet some reliance on big donors is politically inescapable because of the huge amount of money needed for a successful campaign in California. Senate races in California have cost up to \$2 million.

A candidate knows that he will have to spend his time seeking out large contributors that would be better spent meeting as many constituents as possible—regardless of financial status. Sen. Walter Mondale has said, "the system . . . tells those who run for public office, 'you must first make your peace with those who have enough money to permit you to become elected.'"

The effect of large contributions on the victorious candidate is sometimes blatant, but usually subtle. He knows his victory was won in part by the generosity of those individuals who made large donations. He knows who they are; he remembers their names and the names of their companies.

If he is an honest man, he will not let big contributors determine how he is going to vote. But even the honest public official finds that he must give to the big donor's concerns his time and attention, his sympathetic ear, his willingness to intervene when he can do so legitimately.

The officeholder recognizes that while some big givers contribute solely for the sake of good government and a belief in the candidate and his principles, they are a minority. He knows that the majority expect their contributions will at least give them access to him. And access, at the least, means the ability to drop in anytime for an informal visit or to present their views before the officeholder acts on an issue.

A busy public official can see only a limited number of people in any one day. But he must always do his best to fit a major contributor into his schedule. That may squeeze out someone else who has as much—perhaps more—to say; it is utterly unfair, but inescapable under present conditions.

To eliminate the insidious influence of big money contributions we must, at the very least, impose absolute limits both on the amount of money an individual may contribute to a campaign and on the amount a candidate may spend. There's the rub. A meaningfully low limit on individual contributions would, under present methods of fund raising, create monumental problems for a candidate—especially for one who is challenging an incumbent in office.

Only public financing of federal campaigns can effectively resolve this problem. As Sen. Russell Long, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee has noted, public financing of campaigns would free candidates

. . . from the need of going hat in hand to seek contributions, and in doing that it tends to protect the confidence of the public in the victor, and it tends to reduce the pressure to respond to the entreaties that are made to elected officials by those who contribute to the campaigns.

I believe we should limit the amount a person can contribute to a candidate for federal office to only \$250

—not \$6,000 (\$3,000 each in the primary and the general) as proposed in the Senate-passed reform bill. Not many people can afford to contribute \$6,000 to campaigns—and those who do will continue to have preference over those who don't.

But to elicit the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of dollars of small contributions needed to amass the huge amounts required to run for the Senate or the Presidency would necessitate a massive and successful fund-raising campaign. This may not prove practicable for every candidate, especially for a challenger. To make things worse, such a fund-raising campaign itself would call for heavy outlays of money. Where is this "seed money" to come from?

The only workable answer, I believe, is a broad system of public financing to complement—and stimulate—small contributions by large numbers of people. I am introducing a comprehensive bill that will bring that about. Hearings on the measure will be held by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, chaired by Sen. Howard W. Cannon.

In brief, my bill would match with federal funds small individual private contributions in both primary and general federal elections. To qualify for federal funds a candidate for the House of Representatives would first have to raise at least \$2,500 privately. A Senatorial candidate would have to raise \$10,000; a Presidential candidate, \$100,000. These are not formidable amounts, but they are high enough to keep out nonserious candidates who have no real base of popular support.

Candidates who raise this "qualifying" money from private sources would then become eligible for federal matching funds: 2 to 1 in the primary and 4 to 1 in the general election. However: (a) only private contributions of \$50 or less would be eligible for federal matching, and (b) under no condition could any single person's private contribution exceed \$250.

Moreover, there would be rigid limits on how much money—public and private—could be spent in a campaign: 10¢ per person of voting age in a Presidential primary and 15¢ per person in the general election, for example. All private and public contributions would be deposited in a single trust account to be expended under the supervision of a court-appointed bank officer.

The public financing formula I proposed has the advantage of covering primary as well as general elections. It would bring more people into the electoral process and decrease the influence of the so-called "fat cats."

Tight limits on nonmatching private contributions, added to the incentives of matching funds, will motivate a candidate to seek out the small contributor. Political influence no longer will require the kind of contributions made by Ashland Oil or American Airlines. It no longer will require the \$2 million contribution of a Clement Stone. The American working man and woman will be on a par with the executives of the largest corporations. And what is equally significant, my proposal will enable the "outs" to raise sufficient funds to challenge the "ins."

The artificial limits imposed by other proposals severely hamper minor-party candidates. They fail to recognize that in some states or districts a third party may

be, in fact, the major party, or that some candidates can run successfully as independents with widespread support. Handicapped by artificial limits, such candidates would find it impossible to run a winning campaign. My proposal places no restrictions on the minor-party or independent candidate. He can participate in the matching program as fully as his base of support justifies.

Incumbents in office have an understandable urge toward self-protection. We would be less than human if we did not. But we also know that equal opportunity is the very essence of democracy—and that the protection of equal opportunity for all Americans supersedes in importance the protection of incumbents in office.

Incumbents have overwhelming advantages quite apart from the matter of money. Some of these advantages—such as the recognition that comes from public service—cannot be affected by any form of legislation. But if we insist upon maintaining—or expanding—the money-raising advantages we already possess, we will betray our trust.

We should not try to postpone the inevitable. I believe reform must come, and I predict that more than one of those incumbents who stand in its path will be swept aside—and out. And rightfully so. After all, what have our careers in public life meant if we permit self-interest to dominate our actions on this most crucial of issues?

I estimate my proposal would cost the individual taxpayer \$1 or \$2 a year—a bargain price to pay to take the curse of big money out of the political system and get it back into the hands of the people, where it belongs. As Clayton Fritchey has pointed out, public financing of an election year's campaigns "at the maximum . . . would be less than one-tenth of one per cent of what Vietnam cost."

The fact is that big campaign contributions buy economic privileges of various kinds, like tax breaks, exceptions to the law, special subsidies or careless law enforcement. Every one of these economic privileges takes money out of the pockets of the average American taxpayer. By spending \$1 to \$2 a year the average citizen could get back literally hundreds of dollars in the form of fairer taxes, more competitive prices and better quality consumer products.

Events of the past year have caused some of those who have fought public financing in the past to rethink their positions. For example, Sen. Howard Baker, the vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, said in late July: "I was one of the sturdiest opponents of public financing in the past. . . . In light of the hearings which have been held, I owe it to myself and the public to reconsider that possibility."

If enough members of Congress are willing to "reconsider that possibility," then we may finally be able to "shut off the underground rivers of private money that pollute politics at every level of the federal government," as Sen. Edward Kennedy put it. Ending our electoral system's dependence on large private donations may be the most crucial issue of our time. It goes to the very heart of our democratic process. How we resolve it will in turn determine how we resolve every other problem our nation faces. □

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