

Marianas. He enlisted Reed, who said he would raise the matter with Rove, to stop at least one appointment to Interior that might prove troublesome. Small wonder that about this time Reed wrote an e-mail to Enron's top lobbyist touting his pal Abramoff as "arguably the most influential and effective GOP lobbyist in Congress. I share several clients with him and have yet to see him lose a battle. He also is very close to DeLay and could help enormously on that front. Raised \$ for Bush...he (sic) assistant is Susan Ralston (who would become Rove's assistant)."

For his services to the Marianas, Jack Abramoff was paid nearly \$10 million, including the fees he charged for booking his guests on the golf courses and providing them with copies of Newt Gingrich's book. One of the sweatshop moguls with whom Abramoff was particularly close contributed half a million dollars to — you guessed it — the U.S. Family Network that laundered money from Russian oligarchs to Tom DeLay.

To this day workers on the Marianas are still denied the federal minimum wage while working long hours for subsistence income in their little *petri dish of capitalism — America at its best.*

Both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue were now in sync. George W. Bush had created his own version of the K Street Project. Remember how he emerged from the crowded field of Republican candidates in early 1999 and literally blew several of them out of the water? He did so by drowning his opponents with money. In just his first six months of fundraising, Bush collected some \$36 million — nine times more than his nearest opponent John McCain. The money came from the titans of American business and lobbying who understood their contributions would be rewarded. You've heard of the 'Pioneers' and 'Rangers' — people who raised at least \$100,000 and \$200,000 for Bush. Among them were people like Tom DeLay's brother, also a lobbyist; the CEO of Enron, Kenneth ("Kenny Boy") Lay; and hundreds of executives from the country's banks, investment houses, oil and gas companies, electric utilities, and other companies.

While Tom DeLay kept a ledger on K Street, ranking lobbyists as friendly and unfriendly, the Bush campaign gave every one of his Pioneers and Rangers a tracking number, making sure to know who was bringing in the bucks and where they were coming from. In May of 1999 the trade association for the electric utility industry sent a letter to potential contributors on Bush campaign stationary. The writer said to his colleagues that Bush's campaign managers "have stressed the importance of having our industry incorporate the tracking number in your fundraising efforts...it does insure that our industry is credited and that your progress is listed..."

The bounty was waiting. Pioneers and Rangers were paid off with ambassadorships. At least 37 were named to post-election transition teams where they had a major say in selecting political appointees at key regulatory positions all through the government. Remember the California energy crisis, when Enron traders boasted of gouging grandmothers to drive up the prices for energy? Enron's Kenneth Lay had been Bush's biggest campaign funder over the years and what he asked now as a payoff was appointment to the Energy Department transition team. This is how Enron's boss got to name two of the five members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, who looked the other way while Enron rigged California's energy prices and looted billions right from the pockets and pocketbooks of California's citizens.

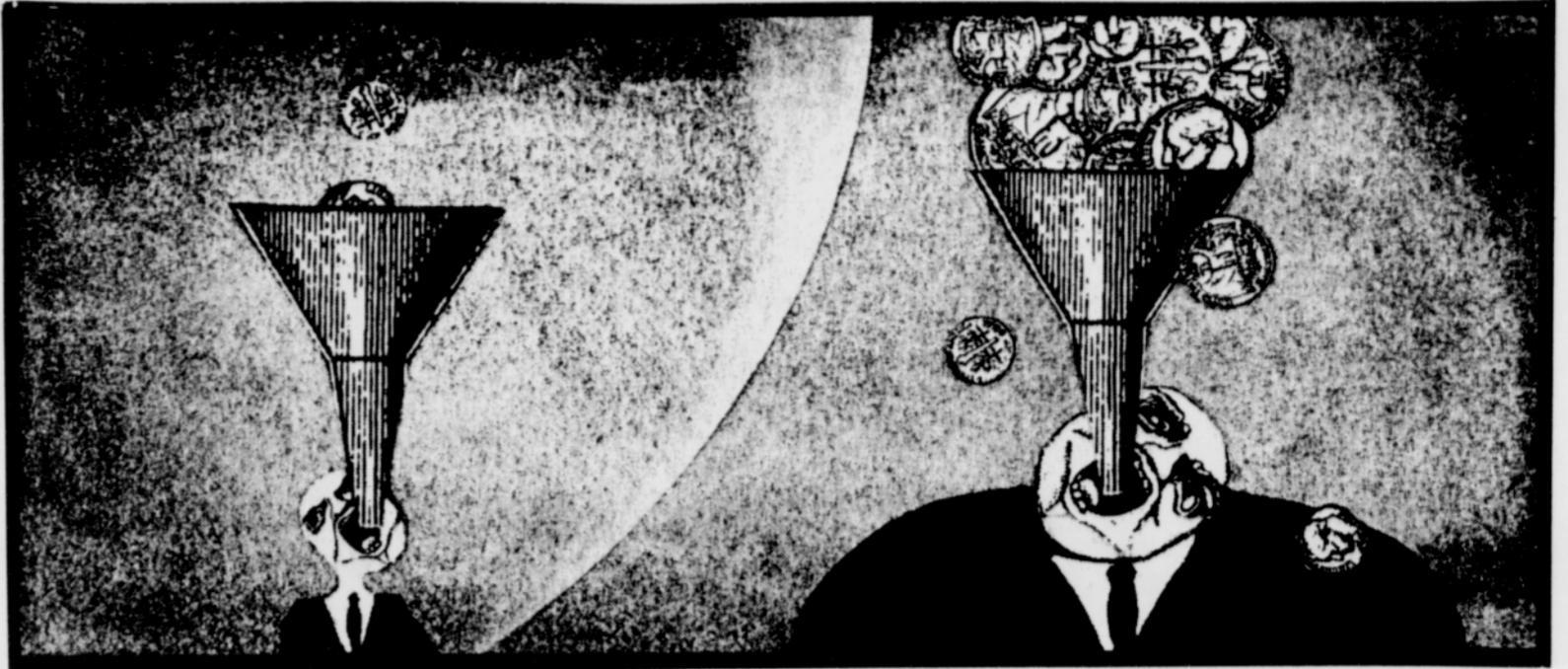
There are, as I said, no victimless crimes in politics. The cost of corruption is passed on to you. When the government of the United States falls under the thumb of the powerful and privileged, regular folks get squashed.

I just recently visited for the first time the Museum of the Presidio in San Francisco. From there American troops shipped out to combat in the Pacific. Many never came back. On the walls of one corridor are photographs of some of those troops, a long way from home. Looking at them, I wondered: Is this what those Marines died for on the Marianas — for sweatshops, the plunder of our public trust, the corruption of democracy? Government by the Abramoffs, by the DeLays, and for the people who bribe them?

I don't think so. But this crowd in charge has a vision sharply at odds with the American people. They would arrange Washington and the world for convenience of themselves and the transnational corporations that pay for their elections. In the words of Al Meyeroff, a Los Angeles attorney who led a successful class action suit for the workers on Saipan, the people who now control the U.S. Government want "a society run by the powerful, oblivious to the weak, free of any oversight, enjoying a cozy relationship with government, and thriving on crony capitalism."

This is an old story and a continuing struggle. A century ago Theodore Roosevelt said the central fact of his time was that corporations had become so dominant they would chew up democracy and spit it out. His cousin Franklin Roosevelt warned that a government of money was as much to be feared as a government by mob. One was a progressive Republican, the other a liberal Democrat. Their sentiments were echoed by an icon of the conservative movement, Barry Goldwater, in 1987:

"The fact that liberty depended on honest elections was of the utmost importance to the patriots who founded our nation and wrote the Constitution. They knew that corruption destroyed the prime requisite of Constitutional liberty, an independent legislature free from any influence other than that of the people... representative government assumes that elections will be controlled by the citizenry at large, not by those who give the most money. Electors must believe their vote counts. Elected officials must owe their alliance to the people, not to their own wealth or to the wealth of interest groups who speak only for the selfish fringes of the whole community."



MARTHA CRAWFORD

I have painted a bleak picture of democracy today. I believe it is a true picture. But it is not a hopeless picture. Something can be done about it. Organized people have always had to take on organized money. If they had not, blacks would still be three-fifths of a person, women wouldn't have the vote, workers couldn't organize, children would still be working in the mines. Our democracy today is more real and more inclusive than existed in the days of the Founders because time and again the people have organized themselves to insist that America become "a more perfect union."

It is time to fight again. These people in Washington have no right to be doing what they are doing. It's not their government, it's your government. They work for you. They're public employees — and if they let us down and sell us out, they should be fired. That goes for the lowliest bureaucrat in town to the senior leaders of Congress on up to the President of the United States.

They would have you believe this is just "a lobbying scandal." They would have you think that if they pass a few nominal reforms, put a little more distance between the politician and the lobbyist, you will think everything is okay and they can go back to business as usual.

They're trying it now. Just look at Congressman John Boehner, elected to replace Tom DeLay as House Majority Leader. Today he speaks the language of reform, but 10 years ago Boehner was handing out checks from tobacco executives on the floor of the House. He's been a full player in the K Street Project and DeLay's money machine, holding weekly meetings with some of the most powerful lobbyists in the Speaker's suite at the Capitol. He has thought nothing of hopping on corporate jets or cruising the Caribbean during winter breaks with high-powered lobbyists. Moreover, the man Boehner beat to succeed DeLay, Congressman Roy Blunt, has been elected to DeLay's first job as Majority Whip despite being deeply compromised by millions upon millions of dollars raised from the same interests that bought off DeLay.

And what now of DeLay? He is under indictment for money laundering in Texas and had to resign as Majority Leader. But the party bosses in Congress gave him a seat on the powerful House Appropriations Committee where big contributors get their rewards. And (are you ready for this?) they put him on the subcommittee overseeing the Justice Department which is investigating the Abramoff scandal, including Abramoff's connections to DeLay.

Business as usual. The usual rot. The power of arrogance.

You may say, see? These forces can't be defeated. They're too rich, they're too powerful, they're too entrenched.

But look at what has happened in Connecticut, one of the most corrupt states in the union. Rocked by multiple scandals that brought down a state treasurer, a state senator, and the governor himself with convictions of bribery, tax evasion, and worse, the people finally had enough. Although many of the parties had to be forced, kicking and screaming to do it, last December the legislature passed clean money reform and the new governor signed it into law. The bill bans campaign contributions from lobbyists and state contractors and makes Connecticut the very first state in the nation where the legislature and governor approved full public funding for their own races. Connecticut isn't the only place where the link between public officials and private contributions has been broken. Both Arizona and Maine offer full public financing of statewide and legislative races. New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina and Vermont have clean money systems for some races. The cities of Portland, Oregon and Albuquerque, New Mexico recently approved full public financing for citywide races.

In these places, candidates for public office — executive, legislative, and in some cases judicial — have the option of running on a limited and equal grant of full public funding, provided they take little or no private contributions. To qualify they have to pass a threshold by raising a large number of small contributions from voters in their district. The system allows candidates to run competitive campaigns for office even if they do not have ties to well-heeled donors or big money lobbyists, a near impossibility when public elections are privately funded.

In places where clean elections are law, we see more competition for legislative seats and a more diverse group of people running for office. In David Sirota's words, they "are encouraged to run on their ideas, their convictions and their integrity instead of on how effectively they can shake down the big money." And there are policy results as well. In Arizona, one of the first acts of Governor Janet Napolitano, elected under the state's public financing program, was to institute reforms establishing low-cost drug prescription subsidies for seniors. Compare that to the Medicare debacle going on at the national level. In Maine, where clean elections have been in place since 2000, there have also been advances in providing low-cost pharmaceutical drugs for residents, and in making sure that every state resident has medical coverage.

Why? Because the politicians can do what is right, not what they're paid to do by big donors. They, not the lobbyists, write the legislation. As one blogger put it, instead of dialing for dollars, they might have time even to read bills like 'The Patriot Act' and find the small print establishing a secret police.

California may soon follow Connecticut. Calling for the political equivalent of electroshock therapy, *The Los Angeles Times* recently urged Californians: "Forget half-measures. The cure is voluntary public financing of election campaigns." Already the Clean Money & Fair Elections Bill has passed the state assembly and is headed for the senate.

Think about this: California could buy back their elected representatives at a cost of about \$5 or \$6 per California resident. Nationally we could buy back our Congress and White House with full public financing for about \$10 per taxpayer per year. You can check this out on the website *Public Campaign*.

Public funding won't solve all the problems. There's no way to legislate truly immoral people from abusing our trust. But it would go a long way to breaking the link between big donors and public officials and to restoring democracy to the people. Until we offer qualified candidates a different source of funding for their campaigns — "clean," disinterested, accountable public money — the selling of America will go on. From scandal to scandal. The people out across the country on the front lines of this fight have brought the message down to earth, in plain language and clear metaphors. If a player sliding into home plate reached into his pocket and handed the umpire \$1000 before he made the call, what would we call that? A bribe. And if a lawyer handed a judge \$1000 before he issued a ruling, what do we call that? A bribe. But when a lobbyist or a CEO slides up to a member of Congress at a fundraiser or in a skybox and hands him or her a check for \$1000, what do we call that? A campaign contribution.

Representative Barney Frank likes to say of Congress: "We are the only people in the world required by law to take large amounts of money from strangers and then act as if it has no effect on our behavior."

What law is he talking about? The unwritten law that says your Congressperson has to raise \$2,000 per day from the day he or she is sworn in to the next election day — weekdays, Saturdays, Sundays, Christmas Eve and the 4th of July. As long as elected officials need that constant stream of cash, someone will run our country but it won't be you.

Even some lobbyists are having second thoughts. One of them, Stanton Anderson, was recently quoted in *Business Week*: "As a conservative, I've always opposed government involvement. But it is always the real answer is federal financing of Congressional elections."

Mr. Anderson understands this isn't about a "few bad apples." This is about the system. We can change this system. But we have to believe democracy is worth fighting for.

Listen to what Theodore Roosevelt said 100 years ago when he took on the political bosses and big money of his time for committing "treason to the people."

We are standing for the great fundamental rights upon which all successful free government must be based. We are standing for elementary decency in politics. We are fighting for honesty against naked robbery. It is not a partisan issue; it is more than a political issue; it is a great moral issue. If we condone political theft, if we do not resent the kinds of wrong and injustice that injuriously affect the whole nation, not merely our democratic form of government but our civilization itself cannot endure.

We need that fighting spirit today — the tough, outraged and resilient spirit that knows we have been delivered a great and precious legacy, you and I: "government of, by, and for the people." And, by God, we're going to pass it on.

Bill Moyers, formerly of Public Broadcasting, is president of the Schuman Center for Media & Democracy. This article is the prepared text of his remarks from an eight-day speaking tour in California on the issue of democracy, money and politics. Michah Sifry, Rebecca Wharton, Karen Kimball, and Nancy Walzman contributed to this speech.

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