

Soft Money

Draft of Radio Speech

8/5/98

~~It is my stated purpose in my 89th year to walk from the West Coast to the East Coast.~~ Why in the world would an old lady attempt such a walk? I'll tell you why. Because I believe Soft Money is a cancer on our Society and needs to be cut out. Call me crazy, call me God-sent, whichever, but I am on a Crusade. My purpose is to create a ground swell for Campaign Finance Reform to eliminate this cancer. I am traveling as a Pilgrim accepting not money, but a night's shelter and food. To get this far in my Crusade I have solicited a great deal of help from relatives, friends and neighbors, I believe soft Money is a cancer on our Society, and must be cut out. I believe our government needs our help in doing so. The first step is to convince our Senators and Representatives that they are wrong in believing that we, the every day people of the United States, do not care whether a meaningful campaign reform is enacted. To do this will be a simple act by you. I need you to give me your support. I need you to sign my petition.

After Watergate, laws were passed that no individual could give a candidate more than \$1,000 but there was no limit put on money given to the two national committees non-federal account, and the monies that are given to them is now known as Soft Money. I say that SOFT MONEY has effected our moral fiber and caused thinking people to wish there was more truth in our government.

When it was recognized by our Legislature that Soft Moeny was a cancer on our Society they determined to enact laws to cut out the cancer. Last year the Senate considered the McCain/Feingold bill, which was supposed to solve the problem. Well, they debated and debated and argued and got no where. There were so many different amendments from the floor to be added to the bill that it soon had nothing to do with the original bill. The final amendment known as the payroll amendment strangled the bill and the Senate gave up and decided to table the bill, trying again in the Spring of 1999.

Now it was the turn of the House of Representatives.. Their bill sister to the McCain/Feingold bill was called the Shay/McMeehan bill. They started to debate it from the first of May, 1998. The bill was a poor tattered thing by the beginning of August, but it was still hanging on. The story became ridiculous. It was said that every Representative and every Senator had a bill of his or her own stored in his or her computer. If a constiuent called to inquire the stock answer was "I don't like the present bill, but I have one of my own to present." There were over 600 amendments filed, against the eleven bills competing for passage. Can you imagine what a spectacle? But some Republicans bolted to vote for it and much to the surprise of many the Shay/McMeehan bill passed..

In April, 1998, Senator Wellstone visited New Hampshire, testing the waters to see whether he might run for President.. He was told that I had decided I would fly to Los Angeles and walk back, getting signatures from the man and woman in the street, to prove to all concerned that we do care what the Senators and representatives are doing about this cancer on our Society and the need for meaningful Campaign Finance Reform. Senator Wellstone said, "Go for it, Doris, you might be the catalyst that will bring the legislature to its senses. If you can come back with the proof that the man and woman in the street does care, and have signatures to prove it, you might just wake us up."

So ready or not here I come. Why should you care about soft money? It isn't taken directly out of your wallet is it? Do you have any idea what soft money is doing to our economy, to your pocket book? Or how it is infecting our environment and our moral fiber? Why I think it is a cancer on our society? Let me give you a few examples. Do you realize that for years the tobacco company was given subsidies by our government? Where do you think that money came from? Our tax money, that's where. Even after cigarette packages held the warning from the Surgeon General those subsidies continued. When the tobacco companies got away with aiming their product at teenagers, in order to keep the coming generation addicted they were able to do so because of their huge campaign contributions. And in 1997 the tobacco industry, in the dead of night was sneaked a \$50 billion windfall. When the \$50 billion tax amendment became public, a furor erupted. No member of Congress would publicly claim any ownership for tobacco's windfall but a candid staff member admitted that the amendment had come straight from the industry. Between 1987 and 1997, tobacco interests gave nearly \$30 million in political contributions, including more than \$15.9 million in soft-money donations.

Do you realize that the smog we have in many of our cities could be eliminated if the auto companies weren't being protected by our legislature.

The American auto, iron and steel industries gave more than \$1.7 million in soft money donations to both political parties. The result? For the past three years, Congress has voted for a freeze on Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards, sparing these special interests the burden of making cars and trucks more fuel efficient. Being deprived of fuel efficiency costs consumers about \$59 billion annually.

The loss of access to generic drugs costs consumers as much as \$550 million a year, according to a report by Common Cause in June of 1998. Since 1991 the trade group for brand name drug makers has given more than 8.4 million in soft money donations to their political parties. With the help of this influence, brand name drug companies have successfully convinced Congress to let them hang on to their drug patents and prevent you from buying prescription drugs at a generic price.

Shall I go on? Archer Daniels Midland and its subsidiaries have been given protection for the corn-based fuel additive called ethanol. ADM has given \$3 million in soft-money to both national political parties. This double giving has paid off. In 1995 Common Cause reported that 43% of ADM's products are heavily subsidized or protected by the American government. The Transportation bill passed by Congress in May extends the tax credit for ethanol through 2007, which has cost more than \$7 billion to the government since 1979. And you think that has nothing to do with you? You are footing the bill, my friends, with your taxes. Soft money is a cancer that you are paying for.

What about the much proclaimed ground breaking Telecommunications Act of 1996, which was supposed to make the industries more competitive and responsive to consumer needs? It has actually worked to shrink competition! The resulting jump in cable TV bills and pay telephone rates costs consumers about \$2.8 billion annually. Cable and local phone companies have given 8.7 million in soft money donations to the political parties.

Soft money, this cancer on Society is invading your wallet. You can't see it, you can't smell it. It's insidious. It's there and you are paying for it.

And to get to more prosaic products: peanut butter that staple of the American table, whenever

there are children. Since 1991 peanut interests have given more than \$1 million in political contributions helping to shore up a program founded in 1934. That's 63 years of price control. And since 1991 sugar interests have given more than \$517 million in soft money to both parties, so that the sugar growers are insulated from competition from cheaper foreign sugar.

You see how it works? You see why I say there's a cancer on our Society? This soft money means a fatter warchest for candidates, fatter bottom lines for wealthy companies, and thinner wallets for the rest of us. It's an insiders game--and it determines public policy on Capitol Hill and at the White House, and special interests and politicians have and still are hitting the jackpot. It's time to stop this "river of sewer money" as The New York Times called soft money. But your help is needed to do it.

You can understand why it is so hard for your senators and representatives to take the initiative. They'd be voting against their own pocketbook. A recent news article explained there are about four lobbyists to every Senator and every Representative in Washington. Would you be able to resist taking some of their money? What if you were a Representative and had to keep up two homes: the one in your state and the one in Washington, D. C. You had to travel back and forth at every vacation to keep your constituents happy and you had to be on the telephone begging for campaign money for the next election as soon as you won the first one. What if your wife or your husband back home announced in an early morning call that the dentist had said your 13 year old needed to have braces on his teeth, and the septic system had been condemned and it would cost \$20,000 for a new one. And in that same day you were approached by four different lobbyists offering you money. Wouldn't you be tempted? Wouldn't you feel that just this once it wouldn't matter. And when the sky didn't fall on you for taking soft money, you found you could get on the gravy train that would make life easier for you and your family. That's the way the system works today. You think you are choosing your government? Think again, my friends, elections are won with campaigns. The man or woman who can raise the most money for their campaign and get his or her picture and message plastered on the TV for months is the man or woman who wins. It has been estimated that it cost 22 million to run a campaign as a candidate for the Senate. 22 million for a job hat pays \$103,000.

Maine and Vermont have both passed laws giving State money to the state representatives and state senators. The change may have to come from the States. Right now, I urge you to sign a petition to say to Washington that you do care about Campaign Finance Reform. That you want to vote for candidates that are not chosen for us by the corporations, but by the people; that the government is for the people, not corporations and should be by the people and not corporations..