

Speech

McCain/Feingold March 19, 2001

Should children be subjected to mail and telephone offers for free credit cards by companies that make a careful effort to get around the watchful parents? Over six percent of bankruptcies are filed on behalf of minor children as a result. Would Congress be interested in curbing this abuse? Not if money is available from the credit card companies for their reelection campaigns!

What about people who are terminally ill and who have staggering medical bills. If the Congress cannot properly deal with health care issues of our people, shall it at least provide fairness so that such people are not hounded literally unto death by collection agents? Not if money is available from the credit card companies for their reelection campaigns!

It is well known that the credit card industry bought themselves a bill, and that they did so at the expense of all fairness. It is well known that

the current Congress, the can't-say-no 107th, was happy to prostitute itself for the occasion-though they wink and say they wanted to do it anyway, perhaps because poor people need to be as indentured as possible, from cradle to grave, if industry's interests are to be protected. There may have been uglier congresses in our history, or less competent ones, but there has never been a more fundamentally corrupt one than the present 107th Congress. It shall some day be a mark of great shame to have had a family member who served in it. The 107th shall always be printed with a dollar sign attached and a red light for its symbol.

So now they shall make a nice plum pudding of the McCain/Feingold bill. Some anti-reformers in Congress will say it does not go far enough, when what they really want is to kill it with an amendment that will lose votes for it. Some will say that it is unconstitutional, when the nation's finest constitutional scholars at the Brennan Center and elsewhere say the bill is fine. Besides, we have a Supreme Court to deal with that issue, and if the apologists of corruption really intend to

bang that drum in Congress, I advise them that they are abusing our principle of separation of powers between the three branches.

Other poor senators, crying in their million-dollar campaign troughs, will weep at the idea that any real reform might tilt the playing field unfairly. The playing field is up beyond the moon, and it matters very little to ordinary Americans whether it is tilted in favor of the credit card party or the billionaire party.

Democrats, addicted now to the vast corruption of the Clinton fund raising machine run by Mr. McAuliffe, somehow think that it can continue in business even though it has no bedrooms to rent. These Democrats are softening now on their former reform zeal. They need an IQ test if they think their party will continue from it's new headquarters in Harlem. Soft money is not their friend any more.

But these are small matters compared to the real news of the bankruptcy bill and of so many other bills sold recently to industry by our so-called

leaders. The larger problem—and it is now clear to me and to most Americans—is that there has been a corporate coup in this nation, and the people have lost their democratic republic.

What shall we do? We should call and write these senators, and call them out in public and in meetings, and bear witness to the shame they have heaped upon themselves.—Republican and Democrat. Why should we sit silently while they try to bore us over the next two weeks with their anti-reform amendments to McCain-Feingold and their fraudulent replacement bills like Mr. Hagel's. It would triple the limits on hard money contributions and forever push ordinary Americans out of participation in their own politics.

This corporate coup is the most serious threat to challenge our democratic republic during my long lifetime—certainly democracy had a better chance in the world wars.

It is a coup, undoubtedly. Is it a treason? We arrest government agents who sell America's