



by Grover G. Norquist

McCain's Big Backers

Who needs public financing if the media love you?

The establishment press has successfully focused our attention on the \$57,186,658 Texas Governor George W. Bush raised in the first nine months of 1999. It is an impressive number and was cited by Lamar Alexander, Elizabeth Dole, Dan Quayle, and Pat Buchanan as each conceded defeat in the Republican race for the presidential nomination.

But the establishment press has worked hard to ignore the \$60 million that American—and some foreign—corporations have effectively contributed to Arizona Senator John McCain's campaign. Yes, McCain has raised \$9.4 million the same way George Bush has—in checks of \$1,000 or less. McCain has also spent \$7.3 million of that legally raised money. But McCain's campaign—which on October 15 was down to \$1.4 million cash on hand—is only alive thanks to unreported corporate contributions from one particular industry with a special interest in his legislative agenda.

It is true that nearly a century ago President Theodore Roosevelt signed federal legislation outlawing corporate contributions, but this has not slowed down the soft money flowing to McCain. And the usual watchdogs in the press have failed to cover the huge corporate largesse that dwarfs what Clinton was able to get out of China and Indonesia in 1996. Why the silence? Because the sources of these campaign contributions are the major news media corporations themselves.

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McCain has betrayed conservative principles and a united conservative movement and Republican Party by supporting restrictions on grassroots political activity that was designed by the Senate's perhaps most left-wing senator—Russell Feingold. In return, McCain has received millions of dollars of free advertising for his campaign in the form of flattering news articles, editorials, and time on national television.

If a senator promoted high tariffs to protect the American automobile industry and then received millions of dollars from General Motors and Ford to buy television ads, it would be recognized as the rankest form of corruption. Feingold's legislation (co-sponsored by McCain) would make it a crime for the National Right to Life Committee to raise money and buy television or newspaper ads to tell voters how a candidate stood on the abortion issue within 60 days of an election. Taxpayer groups, property rights groups, the National Rifle Association, and social conservatives who all find the establishment press ignores their positions would be made criminals if they tried to break through the establishment press's biases by buying ad time to talk directly to the American people.

Michael Barone, author of *The Almanac of American Politics*, has noted the worldwide phenomenon in which conservative causes, parties, and candidates poll poorly eleven months of the year when presented through the hostile lens of an establishment press and then do better in the month prior to an election when they can at least compete using

paid advertising. In the U.S. this shows up in the Republican surge in October when political advertising by conservatives and Republicans can compete against hostile "news" coverage.

Under Feingold-McCain the *New York Times* would be allowed to run as many editorials endorsing candidates as it wished. CBS could continue to spend millions bringing liberal guests on their morning shows or paying Republican-hater Bryant Gumbel. But conservatives who wished to pay to get in the game could go to jail.

A minute of advertising on ABC's "Good Morning America" costs \$80,000. The network has given John McCain many "free" minutes to talk about campaign finance reform. A quarter-page ad on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* costs \$28,170. Under present campaign law it is illegal for any individual to contribute more than \$1,000 to a campaign or more than \$25,000 total to all political parties or campaigns in total. One *Times* editorial is worth more than any one individual can give in a year. Ann Coulter of *George* magazine has calculated that McCain's positive press in the editorial pages of the *Times* was worth \$2.2 million this year. In 1999 alone, McCain has appeared on "Face the Nation" five times, "Meet the Press" six times, and "This Week" six times. A one-minute ad on "Meet the Press" costs \$220,000. Average ten minutes per show and NBC has given McCain \$13.2 million dollars in free advertising. Every minute of pro-campaign finance reform puff pieces on "NBC News" is worth \$170,000.

In the last two years, McCain's position on campaign finance reform was highlighted in 2,948 articles (including 659 editorials) in major newspapers. To

uy this amount of space would cost between \$8.4 million and \$19.4 million.

When Feingold-McCain was brought up for a vote in the Senate, Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell filibustered the measure as he has in the past. Every single Democrat voted with John McCain against the filibuster, as did six other Republicans—Thompson, Specter, Jeffords, Chafee, Snow, and Collins.

The anger that Republican senators and conservative activists directed against McCain was white hot. McCain was reeling for the national press while publicly claiming his fellow Republican senators were corrupt—by raising money legally in campaign contributions. Interestingly the same level of disappointment and contempt was not directed at the six defectors.

There's a reason for this. Many congressmen and senators vote against the party from time to time. Neither Majority Leader Trent Lott nor Speaker Dennis Hastert expects every Republican to vote in lockstep. Under certain conditions the GOP caucus can be extremely understanding of periodic acts of rebellion. Unfortunately for McCain, he fits none of them.

For one thing, it's easy to excuse members from marginal districts or states. Connie Morella of Maryland voted against impeachment, against the tax cut, and regularly votes for federal funding of abortion. But House leaders know that her district—a suburb of Washington, D.C.—is teeming with federal workers and that a more conservative Republican would not keep that seat. And Morella is not “in our face” about her frequent departures from orthodoxy. Jeffords of Vermont and the late Chafee of Rhode Island could make similar claims to “need” to vote left to win re-election. But McCain is the senior senator from Arizona, Barry Goldwater's home state. There is no home state pressure to vote with the Democrats on campaign finance “reform.” Every other elected Republican from Arizona voted against it.

Terminal liberalism is also understandable. Some liberal Republicans vote to support the National Endowment for

the Arts or to fund population control in Ethiopia not because of district pressures but because of ideological bent. There are perhaps ten members like Sherwood Boehlert and Fred Upton who vote significantly to the left of their districts out of personal conviction. Someday they may face a primary challenge from Republicans more in keeping with the values of upstate New York or southwest Michigan, but until then there is little the GOP leadership can do to move their votes. Maine's Senators Snow and Collins fall into this category. Maine voters do not demand their leeward voting patterns. But John McCain is not a liberal. He champions free trade, school choice, and a strong defense. He's the Senate's best leader against taxing the Internet, votes for tax cuts, and has led the fight to require a supermajority to impose new taxes.

The third “excuse” is the “Ron Paul exemption.” One day then-Speaker Newt Gingrich called on all House Republicans to band together on a budget vote, even though it was a messy compromise that spent too much money. Everyone was expected to go along—except Ron Paul of Texas. Other conservatives wanted to know what it would take to get a “Ron Paul exemption” for themselves. The answer was to have a consistent voting record against all spending—even in your home district. There have been no additional exemptions passed out.

But ideological consistency does not explain McCain's support for campaign finance reform. In 1987, Senator McCain led the fight against the Democratic legislation S.2, pointing out that campaign finance reform was a dirty trick by the Democrats to lock themselves into power. Said McCain: “What this legislation is all about in its present form is who is going to be in the majority for the next 40 years.” The legislation was defeated and Republicans captured the House and Senate in 1994—something Feingold-McCain would have made impossible.

A fourth kind of lapse in party loyalty can be tolerated. It is the art perfected by the late Democratic Senator William Proxmire. He'd go after wasteful spending through his “Golden Fleece” awards—only to turn around to vote for every left-wing program that broke the budget. But

he got more press for his “anti-waste” votes. This cross-ideological trump is also practiced by Sen. Charles Grassley, who votes against high-profile Pentagon waste but is a consistent Reagan Republican vote on foreign policy. Democrat Charlie Stenholm holds his conservative Texas seat by giving the right his vote on high-profile issues—while slavishly doing the work of the hard-left Democratic leadership. He just doesn't send out press releases about his victories for big government. This strategy is accepted as long as the “cross trump” is played in a losing hand or if the issue is one of marginal importance.

But McCain's defection was unforgivable because it almost won a critical issue for the Democrats that could permanently weaken his own party. If Feingold-McCain had passed, it would have transferred unprecedented power to the elite media and to the two pillars of the Democratic coalition that continue to ignore or violate campaign finance laws with impunity: Big Labor and the big city machines. The National Right to Work Committee estimates that labor bosses spent \$500 million in unreported campaign activity in 1996. The political machines in Chicago, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Baltimore illegally turn over thousands of full-time government employees to Democratic campaigns. Their contributions of labor, phones, xeroxing, fraudulent votes, and transportation are not reported and would not be limited by Feingold-McCain.

Anyone interested in whether America will move right or left in the next generation should continue to keep an eye on Feingold-McCain. McCain claims he will force another vote on his bill next year during the presidential race. There's a reason why liberal columnists and editorial pages that hate McCain's pro-life and pro-gun positions “admire” him. They know that the pro-life and pro-Second Amendment activists will be silenced and later crushed if McCain triumphs on this “simple procedural issue.”

To ask about Senator McCain's policy positions other than his commitment to passing Feingold-McCain is to be reminded of the one-line joke, “Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?” ❀



by Thomas Vinciguerra

That Listing Feeling

Don't be swayed by official lists—be your own guide.

It's official: I have reached "Top 10, 25, 100, etc. List" overload. It was annoying enough when the American Film Institute issued its self-important roster of the top 100 American films of all time. Now the "Biography" television series has the hubris to declare the 100 most influential people of the millennium. *TV Guide* recently unveiled its dubious tally of the 50 greatest television characters in the history of the medium. I can't imagine what's next.

The problem with these lists is not so much the final selections as the absurd pretense that they make to being objective. Superlatives like "best" and "greatest" are irretrievably connected with personal preference. Ask anyone who manages to stay awake during the Oscars. Moreover, it is increasingly clear that the point of such listing is not to have the last word on a subject, but rather to start arguments that will drum up interest in the listmaker's product. Anyway, an utter lack of inspiration has crept into the process: Could anything be more predictable than the Modern Library declaring the top 100 novels and top 100 nonfiction books of the century?

So let's acknowledge, as Henry Luce so famously did, that objectivity is an impossibility. A far more provocative and much less self-delusional exercise can be found in simply going public with one's own personal lists. Here are some of mine. Now go ahead—prove that I'm wrong:

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Top 5 Most Hair-Tearingly Tiresome Couples

5. Julie Andrews and Blake Edwards
4. Woody and Soon-Yi
3. James Carville and Mary Matalin
2. Regis and Kathie Lee
1. Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew Broderick

Top 5 Lines Uttered by Dirty Harry

5. "I know what you're thinking: Did he fire six shots or only five?"
4. "Do things someone else's way and you take your life in your own hands."
3. "Nothing wrong with shooting...as long as the right people get shot."
2. "Go ahead—make my day."
1. "A man's got to know his limitations."

Top 5 Overlooked Reasons Why 70's Nostalgia Must Stop:

5. Terrariums
4. Truly floppy disks
3. Stagflation
2. *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*
1. The rise of Steven Spielberg

Top 5 Scariest Enemies of Godzilla:

5. Mothra
4. Rodan
3. King Kong
2. Raymond Burr
1. Bad dubbing

Top 5 Most Boring Chemical Elements:

5. Lutetium
4. Ytterbium
3. Yttrium
2. Terbium
1. Erbium

Top 5 Threadbare, Lazy, or Just Plain Egregious Expressions:

5. "Grow the economy"
4. "Defining moment"
3. "Sea change"
2. "Spending quality time"
1. "Trying to achieve closure"

Top 5 Most Notorious Ivy League Alumni

5. Aaron Burr (Princeton)
4. Roy Cohn (Columbia)
3. Theodore Kaczynski (Harvard)
2. George Lincoln Rockwell (Brown)
1. Michael Corleone (Dartmouth)

Top 5 Most Delicious Thinking Man's Sex Symbols:

5. Bebe Neuwirth
4. Sheryl Crow
3. Emma Thompson
2. Kristin Scott Thomas
1. Dana Delany

Top 5 Real-Life Villains for the Next 5 James Bond Movies:

5. Saddam Hussein
4. Jesse Ventura
3. RJR Nabisco
2. George Steinbrenner
1. Bill Gates

Top 5 Least Sorely Missed Sociological Phenomena:

5. Sangria
4. Red AIDS lapel ribbons
3. Yuppies
2. Test of the Emergency Broadcast System
1. Lee Iacocca

Top 5 Figures in Need of UFO Abduction:

5. Rosie O'Donnell
4. Rosie O'Donnell
3. Rosie O'Donnell
2. Rosie O'Donnell
1. Rosie O'Donnell