

Campaign Financing Reform Overdue

By Drew Pearson
and Jack Anderson

During every national election, there has been a big hue and cry about revising the Corrupt Practices Act in order to police the huge amounts of money raised for each party that put candidates in hock to business, labor and lobbyists seeking favors from Uncle Sam.

But after each election the hue and cry subsides, the demand for reform is forgotten. Thus, for over a quarter of a century, reform has been postponed.

Meanwhile, the last election saw all records broken. Richard Nixon set a goal at the start of his campaign of \$21 million, exclusive of the \$7 million he raised to get himself nominated at Miami Beach.

Meanwhile also, Nixon, though claiming to be a champion of law and order, has flagrantly violated the law. The Corrupt Practices Act specifically provides that campaign contributions must be filed on Oct. 21 and Oct. 26, with a final report on Oct. 31. Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace complied, but Nixon did not. Furthermore, the Associated Press, which is supposed to keep the press informed regarding developments, did not bother to report on Nixon's flagrant ignoring of the law. Even when former Secretary of State Dean Acheson called attention to

Nixon's failure, the AP failed to report the news.

The purpose of the Corrupt Practices Act is to give the voters a chance to scrutinize big campaign contributions before election day and see who the prospective candidates will be obligated to. With Nixon filing only the day before the voting, obviously this became impossible.

Camouflaged Funds

Meanwhile Republican money raisers last month prepared a list of 20 committees by which contributors could sprinkle their money among many different organizations so that it would be perfectly legal.

Here is the list:

"Nixon-Agnew Finance Committee, Nixon-Agnew Campaign Committee, Nixon-Agnew Election Committee, TV for Nixon-Agnew Committee, Nixon-Agnew TV Committee, Nixon-Agnew Communications Committee, Republican Victory Committee, Nixon-Agnew Victory Committee, Republican Campaign Committee, Americans for Good Government, Republican National Finance Operations Committee, Republican National Finance Committee, Agnew for Vice President Committee, Grassroots Committee for Nixon-Agnew, Independents for Nixon-Agnew, Nixon-Agnew Committee, Women's Finance Committee for Nixon-Agnew, RN Associates, Democrats for

Nixon-Agnew, United Citizens for Nixon-Agnew."

It will be seen from the above that there is no difference between most of these committees. Take for example the "TV for Nixon-Agnew Committee" and the "Nixon-Agnew TV Committee." The only difference is a matter of juxtaposition of words. The 20 different groups were organized for the purpose of deceiving the public, and those newspapermen with the energy to dig into the sometimes musty files of the Senate and House clerks.

How Money Was Spent

The manner in which the money was spent is also interesting. The largest block of cash in both parties has always gone to the TV networks, despite the fact that the airwaves are owned by all the people and licensed free to the networks. Part of the money went to pay for nationwide broadcasts by the top candidates, more to pay for commercial spots sold to individual radio and TV stations throughout the Nation.

Nixon employed the expert Madison Avenue firm of Fuller, Smith and Ross to turn out slick one-minute spots, plus questions-and-answers offering one sentence solutions to complex problems. Some of these backfired. The Republicans high command, for instance, belatedly vetoed one

commercial showing a grinning Hubert Humphrey immediately after a shot of a battlefield scene in Vietnam; also with a smiling Humphrey immediately after a shot of a riot-torn American city.

Nixon's campaign handlers found that his meeting with groups of "concerned citizens" who asked him penetrating questions was an effective campaign gimmick. The questions were supposed to be spontaneous. But one panelist let slip the fact that the questions were screened in advance. He started to ask Nixon about the spy ship Pueblo, then hesitated and asked whether this was one of the "restricted" questions.

Some Senate candidates, with a lot of money dumped into their opponents' campaign chests, remembered how they had voted two years before on the proposal by Sen. Russell Long (D-La.) to solve the political money dilemma by letting each taxpayer contribute one dollar from his income by so checking his income tax returns. It was estimated that this would raise \$30 million. But the Senate, after a long hassle, turned down Long's proposal.

It will be interesting to see whether the next Congress really does something about the ever-escalating cost of electing a new President and new members of Congress.