

Reform Bill Excludes Unions

By Spencer Rich

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In a vote that split the campaign reform coalition, the Senate yesterday refused, 52 to 37, to make unions which operate voluntary political funds like COPE give up their government job-training and manpower contracts.

Also beaten, 55 to 33, as the Senate completed its third day of debate on the comprehensive campaign reform bill, was a Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.) proposal to slash the maximum amount an individual may contribute to a federal political campaign to \$1,000 for primary, runoff and general election combined.

Hart's aim was to close the spigot so tightly on large private campaign contributions that public financing from the Treasury would be mandatory, and the influence of private donors wiped out.

However, the Senate approved, 88 to 1, an amendment by Democratic Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) imposing penalties of 10 years' imprisonment or \$25,000 fine for converting political campaign funds to private use, or spending them for attorney fees to defend anyone accused of criminal activities.

Adverting to the Watergate affair, Byrd said his amendment was designed to make sure that "any political contribution made to the party or candidate of one's choice would be used for the intended purpose for which

it was given—lawful political activity." Byrd said his amendment, if it were already in effect, would have prevented any campaign money from being used as a defense fund or hush-money for Watergate defendants.

In other action on the bill yesterday, the Senate:

- Approved by voice vote an amendment by Lloyd M. Bentsen (D-Tex.) making the comptroller general an automatic member of the seven-member Independent Electoral Commission which the bill would set up to enforce the campaign laws.

- Voted 81 to 7 for an amendment by Bill Brock (R-Tenn.) forbidding members of Congress to use free congressional franking privileges during the 60 days before election to mail newsletters and other material to "boxholder" and other non-specific simplified forms of address. Brock said this would help curb political mailings.

- Approved an amendment by Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.) and Adlai E. Stevenson III (D-Ill.), as modified by John Pastore (D-R.I.), barring state political parties or special groups like Committee for the Re-election of the President from serving as conduits for overt contributions from groups like COPE, Ampac and Bipac to individual candidates in excess of the bill's existing limits on direct contributions by such groups.

The bill would limit such a group to a \$5,000 contribution to a candidate for Con-

gress (separately applicable to primary runoff and general election for a \$15,000 total), and a \$15,000 contribution to a presidential candidate (separately applicable to each stage of his race, for a \$45,000 total).

- Approved an amendment by Walter Huddleston (D-Ky.) requiring broadcast stations to give minor party candidates at least 15 minutes of air time during the campaign if they gave any air time to major party candidates.

The defeated anti-COPE amendment was bitterly opposed by the AFL-CIO and United Automobile Workers for fear it would force unions to give up contracts they hold with the government for worker training and related activities. But it was strongly pushed by Common Cause, the citizens' organization which has formed an alliance with the unions on most other provisions of the bill.

Under a 1940 law, a business or union is barred from holding a government contract if it makes political campaign contributions, even from a voluntary fund to which workers contribute of their own free will.

Common Cause argued that this law is just, because it would "prevent those who are in a direct business relationship with the government from purchasing access and influence" through campaign contributions.

Until a few years ago, the law had never been enforced. But Common Cause brought a lawsuit for enforcement, and unions and businesses operating voluntary political funds then asked Congress to repeal the 1940 statute.

The campaign reform bill, as approved by the Rules Committee, contains such a repeal provision, and yesterday's 52-to-37 vote preserved it.

Common Cause labeled the outcome "pure special-interest triumph" which "makes clear that money talks loudest in the U.S. Senate." Of the Maryland Virginia senators, only Wil-

liam L. Scott (R-Va.) voted against repeal.

The Senate Thursday had voted to impose a \$3,000 limit on the amount an individual may give to any one candidate for federal office, separately applicable to the primary, runoff and general elections for a \$9,000 total. Yesterday Hart proposed cutting this to \$1,000 for all three contests combined.

He also proposed that the bill's \$100,000 limit on a family's aggregate contribution to a number of candidates be cut to \$15,000 (for example, \$1,000 each to 15 different candidates).

This amendment was backed by the unions, Common Cause, the National Committee for an effective Congress, Ralph Nader's Congress Watch and the Center for Public Financing, but senators said the limits were just too low, and it lost.

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