

## **Politics Are Dirty**

*This is the second article on Election financing. . If you have missed the first article, please backtrack and read it, for it is constructive to this one.*

How did the establishment seize control of entrance to the helm of the ship of state and how do they maintain it? These are simple processes and accordingly easy to imagine.

Once the establishment bought an election for one candidate, a start was made and the process snowballed and became unstoppable. Prospective politicians started knocking at the door of the Establishment crying "me too, me too, please", just as they do now. The path of least resistance is irresistible to humans.

What matters is that by now, in Canada, all politicians in Parliament and the Legislatures, have had their careers underwritten by mega-business and, to a lesser extent by mega-labour. Since whoever pays the piper selects the tune, these people govern on behalf of their respective sponsors, at least when matters affecting their sponsors are at issue.

How does the Establishment maintain such control over the government of the society? Why we the people do not elect politicians who will undo it, politicians who will put an end to influence peddling, who will drive the influence-traders out of the Temple of Democracy?

It is the chicken and the egg question. To change the system, we need to elect a government that is not subservient to those who control the electoral process - but we cannot elect such a government because those who control the electoral process would not allow this to happen. What is depressing is that there is not much we can do about it other than grin and bear it, because we are powerless, we are democratically disenfranchised.

I do not want to imply that all citizens entering politics are opportunists. On the contrary, I strongly believe most of those entering politics are public minded, dedicated individuals who do it to serve society, to make things better. They take Establishment sponsorship as their wooden horse that will take them inside the power structure, at which point they will don once again their idealism armour to fight the battle of the people and return government to the

people, like the inventor of wooden horses, Ulysses, returned Helen to King Menelaus.

Alas, it does not work like that. Once inside they taste power and once they taste power, they shed their principles and espouse the system. They become accustomed to it and with time they become addicted to the trough, cherish the company of those who sponsor their election and learn to appreciate flying in private jets. They socialize with them, they golf with them, they fish with them, they lodge with them, they append themselves to them. And they are surprised, not unlike Alfred C. Newman would be, when people do not appreciate politicians jetting back and forth in their friends aeroplanes.

The power to change the system rests, virtually exclusively, in the hands of the party that forms the government. The politicians who are the "opposition" pack, are virtually powerless, they can change nothing, they can oppose everything the government does but they can neither start nor stop anything.

This last aspect is exploited by those who control the system. The parties' propensity to servitude being equal, the sponsorship dollar is split unequally, in favour of the governing party. A ball park figure of this apportioning is 60/40. This advantage of election finances, is too sweet a deal and the governing party is correspondingly unwilling to forego so as to sanitize the electoral system. Their attitude may change after they are defeated at the polls, for this becomes inevitable with time, but by then they have become powerless and cannot any longer change the system. It is their successors now who have the power but the 60/40 formula will govern their behaviour, for the vicious cycle to perpetuate itself.

Manifesting the strength of the hold the establishment has on politicians, is that electoral financing was specifically barred against scrutiny by the CA, while the other bad aspects of the system were protected only indirectly, by channeling the CA to how votes translate into MLA seats.

Similarly defining the magnitude of the stranglehold of mega-business over the electoral system is a recent Ottawa play. While hurriedly building his legacy cairn on the Hill, immediately prior to his eviction from 24 Sussex Drive, Jean Chretien attempted to curb the amount of corporate contributions to political parties. Such a thing would have the optics of the petit gar de Shawinigan, serving a blow to

corporate control over the Government and this would obscure Shawinigan-gate and other scandals from a future generation.

Chretien's attempt met a fierce reaction from the Members of Parliament and particularly the members of his own caucus . He also encountered fierce resistance from the Federal Liberal Party executive. Unabashed, many of the "peoples' representatives" fought tooth and nail the battle of their sponsors, against the interests of the people, against democracy. Eventually Chretien had to compromise his proposal and to scare the mutineer MPs by threatening to call an election if they would not fall into line. It worked and they rubber-stamped his "legacy".

What is most significant is that after 40 years in politics, Jean Chretien left the political sponsorship issue to the last moment before his retirement. He the ruthless, proud to be street fighter from Shawinigan, went through his long political life thoroughly subservient to the Establishment, never daring offend the hand that fed him election financing. That is, till he reached the Exit.

Another stunning example of this cancer of Democracy, is President Dwight Eisenhower, the many-star general, commander of those who fought the war against the man with the little moustache. He humbly submitted to serving the Establishment for his entire eight-year, two-term tenure in the most powerful office in the world. General Eisenhower, President of the United States of America, dared do nothing till he was at the end of his time at the White House. Only then did he find the courage to warn his "fellow Americans" about the grasp on their neck that the "Military--Industrial Complex" had. Pity? By now, in the words of an American commentator, the "USA Congress and the Senate are fully owned subsidiaries of corporate America".

Indeed, the establishment has cleverly built more security of their hold on that system than meets the eye. Over the years, the lines and the levers of power have become embedded into conventional wisdom and have become accordingly inconspicuous. We have known no freedom from Establishment sponsored politicians, we have seen no other system in operation, we are made to see this travesty as being normal, to see the bribing of politicians as being an integral part of democracy. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Please remember to read the next installment on this aspect of Electoral Reform.

