FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

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LEFTWING BIAS IN PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS

It's time that the American people wake up to the racketry that is perpetrated in the name of the "public interest." That label is usually just a front for an ideology-plus-politics that ranges from left-liberal to socialist.

By wrapping themselves in the mantle of serving the "public," left-liberal activists have been able to finance their political goals through federal grants, foundation gifts, university student activity fees, and mail-order appeals to idealistic addressees.

A new survey by the respected political scientists Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman, published in Public Opinion magazine, exposes the political and moral biases of the executives and senior staff members of so-called "public interest" groups which spend millions of dollars of donated money that is sheltered from taxes.

More than 90 percent of these "public interest" posturers usually vote Democratic; only two percent voted for Ronald Reagan. The public figures they most admire are Ralph Nader and Edward Kennedy.

The majority believe the United States should move toward socialism. Only 30 percent think private enterprise is fair to workers; 94 percent want the government to redistribute income from the rich to the poor. Only 12 percent think homosexuality is wrong; only 5 percent think abortion is wrong; 41 percent have no religious affiliation.

The Lichter-Rothman survey is very different from the run-of-the-mill public opinion surveys. Gallup, Harris and Roper typically survey only about 1,000 anonymous persons and then purport to tell us what 220 million Americans think. Lichter-Rothman, on the other hand, surveyed identifiable persons from 74 groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, Common Cause, and the Center for Law and Social Policy.

The financial, media, lobbying and litigating resources of these misnamed "public interest groups" are massive. Attacks on Ronald Reagan for his cutbacks in domestic spending are generated by these anti-Reagan groups as "education" in the "public interest," and then orchestrated as "news" by the anti-Reagan media.

Another entire cluster of radical left groups operating with funding acquired supposedly in the "public interest" is made up of the student groups on college and university campuses. They receive tens of millions of dollars from mandatory student activity fees.

These fees are forcibly extracted every semester from nearly all college students. These fees put enormous sums of money in the hands of individual students or student committees appointed by the "student government" apparatus, which in turn is usually elected by only 5 to 20 percent of the students.

This immense funding has been controlled for years by the campus radicals who dole it out to various fronts engaged in political action for such goals as "gay" affirmative action, environmental extremism, abortion, a nuclear freeze, divestiture of South African investments, Marxist revolution in Latin America, and the feminist/lesbian agenda. Mandatory student fees also provide $5,000 lecture fees to leftwing idols.

This funding of campus radicals has been going on for years. Then along came Jack Abramoff, an energetic student who started his conservative activism at Brandeis University and is continuing it at Georgetown Law School.

As chairman of the College Republican National Committee, Abramoff has taken on the project of defunding the campus radicals. He has increased College Republican campus chapters from 200 to 1,000 and provided them with a manual of tactics on campus petition drives and referenda, student government elections, lobbying university trustees, lawsuits, and state legislation.

His goal is to stop mandatory student fees, and his prime target is the Ralph Nader-spawned Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) which get millions in compulsory student fees. (The New York PIRG receives $600,000 yearly from student fees.)

Those against mandatory funding won a big victory recently in a lawsuit against Rutgers in New Jersey. Abramoff has begun challenges to mandatory funding on 37 other campuses to force leftists to compete on an equal basis with conservatives in the marketplace of ideas. Students have a right to choose political action, but they should not be allowed to force the nonpolitical majority of students to finance the radical agenda of the political minority.