Political Slush Funds

March 21, 1996 by Phyllis Schlafly

The media are persistently presenting us with reports that voters are "angry," usually with the implication that this condition is the voters' fault and is some kind of a national problem like a social disease. The Heritage Foundation, in a document called "Top Ten Political Slush Funds," has now given us chapter and verse to justify plenty of anger on the part of the voters.

This Heritage document sets forth dozens upon dozens of private groups that are on the federal dole for millions of dollars of our taxpayers' money, part of which they use to lobby and politic for their own special-interest causes. Just to call the roll makes anybody angry at the way Congress, over the years of one-party Democratic rule, has extorted our hard-earned money through income taxes and distributed it among their liberal friends.

Efforts to restrict this welfare for lobbyists last year through the Istook-McIntosh Amendment were drowned under the hysterical lobbying of these corporate welfare recipients. Their advocacy of bigger government, higher spending, and increased government regulation has continued unabated.

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has been giving away our money for many years to a long list of liberal and feminist outfits, of which the most egregious was NEH Chair Lynne Cheney's $2 million grant to UCLA that produced the notorious leftwing revisionist National History Standards. The NEH has given other taxpayer grants to such special-interest groups as the American Bar Association, the American Library Association, and the National Council on Aging.

The current NEH Chair, Sheldon Hackney, has started a stream of tax dollars flowing to something called "National Conversation." Only an ivory-tower liberal could, with a straight face, argue that Americans need federal funding and intervention in order to engage in "conversation," so you can bet in what political direction this conversation will be led.

The Market Promotion Program gives taxpayer handouts to trade organizations to advertise U.S. products in foreign countries. Of course, parts of their grants are used to lobby against reductions in agricultural subsidies, all the while they are mouthing the mantra "free trade."

Here is a tiny sampling of these taxpayer grants: $7 million to the Meat Export Federation, $6 million to

Cotton Council International, $5 million each to the Poultry and Egg Export Council and to the Wine Institute, $4 million to Florida Citrus, $3 million to the California Almond Board, $2 million each to the Pillsbury Company and the Mink Export Council.

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funnels 400 million federal tax dollars to 323 private groups around the country, most of which engage in political and lobbying activities. These tax-paid lawyers file lawsuits, engage in political advocacy, and work in referendum campaigns to prevent welfare reform, to promote racial preferences, to provide tax benefits to illegal immigrants and felons, and even to prevent the eviction of drug dealers from public housing.

The taxpayers are forced to fund Planned Parenthood to the tune of at least $189 million. Much of this money goes in direct grants to state chapters of Planned Parenthood that typically deal with abortion and engage in legislative and political advocacy.

Numerous liberal lobbying organizations that pretend to advocate the interests of seniors have figured out to get themselves on the dole for large amounts of taxpayers money. These include $69 million to American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), $61 million to the National Council of Senior Citizens, and $38 million to the National Council on Aging.

AARP is one of the country's largest and wealthiest private lobbying organizations and doesn't need tax-funded charity. It lobbied actively for Clinton's socialized health care bill in 1994, even though AARP's internal surveys showed that most seniors opposed it.

Grants to an endless list of private organizations are concealed in the fine print of the federal budget under such high sounding titles as Senior Environmental Employment Program ($45 million), Superfund Worker Training Program ($32 million), HHS Discretionary Aging Projects ($26 million), and Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance ($25 million). These political slush funds include handouts to some of the richest advocacy organizations in the country, including the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association.

Some of the wealthiest national unions are on the gravy train, too. The Laborers Union gets $8 million, the Carpenters $4 million, the Chemical Workers $3 million, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers $3 million, the Operating Engineers and the Teamsters each get $2 million, and the Auto Workers $1 million.

Americans are tired of hearing talk about the goal of "a balanced budget in seven years," and tired of the

bleeding-heart Democratic rhetoric complaining that "budget cuts hurt seniors and children." It is an outrage that Congress has failed to eliminate all welfare to private advocacy groups of all kinds.