P.S. to the NEWS
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CAMPAIGN FINANCING

Some months ago, Common Cause came out with a report on political campaigns which concluded that the two parties which compete in every Congressional election are not, contrary to what most people think, the Republican and the Democratic parties, but are the party of the incumbent and the party of the non-incumbent. The big majority of incumbents, regardless of political affiliation, tend to be reelected because of their built-in advantages of prestige, publicity, and post office privileges.

Now, Common Cause has lobbied a new bill through the U.S. Senate which will increase the advantages of incumbents over non-incumbents even more. Around Washington, the bill has been aptly labelled "The Incumbents' Reelection Act of 1974." However, since many incumbents are in public disfavor at the present time, and the general public would not take kindly to a scheme to subsidize their reelection, the bill had to be packaged under a different label.

It is called "campaign reform," and it is being presented by its proponents as the answer to Watergate. Their reasoning is deceptively simple. We are told: Watergate revealed abuses in campaign financing, therefore we must have campaign election reform, therefore taxpayer financing is the solution. In other words, since suspect campaign contributions were made even as high as to the recent Vice President, we should turn the whole of campaign financing over to the Government.

Everything is wrong with this plan. If our experience of the

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last several decades teaches us anything, it is that the more money which is put into the hands of Government, the more opportunity there is for more corruption by more people. The biggest corrupting influence is Big Government itself.

This public financing bill will force the individual taxpayer, against his will, to bankroll the campaigns of candidates he does not like or agree with. At the same time, this new bill will prohibit the individual American from making a voluntary contribution to the candidates of his choice. This public financing bill will increase the political power of certain private groups, such as Common Cause, the big foundations, and some big unions, which have the ability to make large non-cash campaign contributions.

Limits on campaign spending mean limits on the amount of television and radio time, newspaper ads, and billboards which a candidate may buy. But there would be no limits on the number of free mailings at the taxpayers' expense which the Congressional incumbent may put out with the franking privilege. There would be no limit on the free advertising a candidate might get from the media if he happens to be one of their favorites. There would be no limit on pre-campaigning by such devices as Nelson Rockefeller's multi-million dollar Commission on Critical Choices for America.

It is to be hoped that the House of Representatives will reject this "phony" reform bill and save us from this latest attempt to load big new spending onto the American taxpayer.

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