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ON

THE WASHINGTON MERRY-GO-ROUND

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DREW PEARSON AND JACK ANDERSON SAY: ELECTION REFORMS LONG OVERDUE;
NIXON VIOLATED LAW IN NOT FILING CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS; NETWORKS GOT
BULK OF MAJOR PARTIES' CASH

WASHINGTON—During every national election, there has been a big hue
and cry about revising the Corrupt Practices Act in order to police the
huge amounts of money raised for each party which put candidates in hook
to business, labor and lobbyists seeking favors from Uncle Sam.

But after each election the hue and cry subsides, the demand for re-
form is forgotten. Thus, for over a quarter of a century, reform has been
postponed.

Meanwhile, the last election saw all records broken. Mr. Nixon set a
goal at the start of his campaign of $21 million, exclusive of the $7
million he raised to get himself nominated at Miami Beach.

Meanwhile also, Nixon, though claiming to be a champion of law and
order, has flagrantly violated the law. The Corrupt Practices Act
specifically provides that campaign contributions must be filed on
Oct. 21 and Oct. 26, with a final report on Oct. 31. Humphrey and
Wallace complied, but Nixon did not. Furthermore, the Associated Press,
which is supposed to keep the press informed regarding developments, did
not bother to report on Nixon's flagrant ignoring of the law. Even when
former Secretary of State Dean Acheson called attention to Nixon's
failure, the AP failed to report the news.

Purpose of the Corrupt Practices Act is to give the voters a chance to
scrutinize big campaign contributions before election day and see who the
prospective candidates will be obligated to. With Nixon filing only the
day before the voting, obviously this became impossible.

--CAMOUFLAGED CAMPAIGN FUNDS--

Meanwhile Republican money raisers last month resorted to all sorts of
devious devices to cloak expenditures. They prepared a list of 20
committees by which contributors could sprinkle their money among many
different organizations so that it would be perfectly legal, yet
difficult for the researchers to trace their gifts.

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Here is the list:


It will be seen from the above that there is no difference between most of these committees, take for example the "TV for Nixon-Agnew Committee" and the "Nixon-Agnew TV Committee." The only difference is a matter of juxtaposition of words. The 20 different groups were organized for the purpose of deceiving the public, and those newspapermen with the energy to dig into the sometimes musty files of the Senate and House clerks.

---HOW THE MONEY WAS SPENT---

The manner in which the money was spent is also interesting. The largest block of cash in both parties has always gone to the TV networks, despite the fact that the airwaves are owned by all the people and licensed free to the networks. Part of the money went to pay for nationwide broadcasts by the top candidates, more to pay for commercial spots sold to individual radio and TV stations throughout the nation.

Nixon employed the expert Madison Avenue firm of Fuller, Smith and Ross to turn out slick one-minute spots, plus questions-and-answers offering one sentence solutions to complex problems. Some of these backfired. The Republicans high command, for instance, belatedly vetoed one commercial showing a grinning Hubert Humphrey immediately after a shot of a battlefield scene in Vietnam; also with a smiling Humphrey immediately after a shot of a riot-torn American city.

Nixon's campaign handlers found that his meeting with groups of "concerned citizens" who asked him penetrating questions was an effective campaign gimmick. The questions were supposed to be spontaneous. But one panelist let slip the fact that the questions were screened in advance. He started to ask Nixon about the spy ship Pueblo, then hesitated and asked whether this was one of the "restricted" questions.

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There was another case where a radio commercial began with the statement that "Bob Norsworthy is a Democrat, but on November 5 he is voting for Dick Nixon." An enterprising Democrat took the trouble to track down Bob Norsworthy at his Detroit address and found that he wasn't a Democrat at all. Norsworthy had been president of the Young Democrats Club when he was a student at Ferris State College, but for the past several years he has been an active Republican, and served as campaign manager for Peter O'Rourke, the Republican candidate for Congress in Detroit's 14th district.

Some Senate candidates, with a lot of money dumped into their opponents' campaign chests, remembered how they had voted two years before on the proposal by Sen. Russell Long, D-La., to solve the political money dilemma by letting each taxpayer contribute one dollar from his income by so checking his income tax returns. It was estimated that this would raise $30 million. But the Senate, after a long hassle, turned down Long's proposal.

It will be interesting to see whether the next Congress really does something about the ever-escalating cost of electing a new President and new members of Congress.