

The Attack On Western Civilization—Congress And Corruption

Part 5: Congress and corruption

Lamm added, “I would encourage all immigrants to keep their own language and culture. I would replace the melting pot metaphor with the salad bowl metaphor. It is important to ensure that we have various cultural sub-groups living in America reinforcing their differences rather than as Americans, emphasizing their similarities.”

In this continuing interview, you enjoy a front row seat as to what happened to our U.S. Congress in Washington DC. The basic corruption via lobbyists, corporate money and the loss of the rule of law.

At the end of WW II Congressional salaries amounted to about \$12,500 a year⁴ and, when in session, members were expected to work a five-day week which was often shortened to four by mid-day arrivals on Monday and departures on Friday. Today, annual Congressional pay is \$174,000 with add-ons for committee chairmanships and other functions; and with a retirement plan that vests after only five years and pays at 80% of salary level for life. Simultaneously with this increase in compensation, the Congressional work week has been reduced to 2.5 days while in session, reducing the total number of days worked during the year to 133.

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The reason Congress offers for its steadily shrinking work week is that its members must be in their districts to seek and receive voter opinion. The truth is that, more often than not, what is being sought and obtained is additional political and financial support often screened by local activities and causes.

This may seem like an unnecessarily long attention to Congressional practices, but the larger tale of our and others' serious and serial errors (political, social, cultural) cannot be fully understood without recognizing Congress' failures and its contribution to the existential threats that now press upon WCIV.

We cited the 1960s as being the gateway decade to the rest of the 20th century. It was prophetic in the sense that it displayed in different times and forms both great promise and real peril. This is a contradiction that has been present throughout history in varying degrees, but what makes it particularly notable in our time and place is the unequalled wealth and power that accrued to our nuclear armed, commercially dominant, technologically advanced, resource rich, vastly wealthy, peacetime, superpower United States.

In too many instances it seemed our government had little idea of how to wield this power so that it would benefit the American people. We have to ask what mentality was at work when Congress withdrew from the Social Security (SS) Trust Fund the deposits of millions of Americans' earned retirement funds and spent the money on its own political agenda. These workers' savings, paid out of wages over years of employment, were replaced by worthless IOUs for which not even partial payment has

been made, while in the meantime the amount of the SS payroll deduction has steadily increased.

Other instances of our political leaders' inability to fully comprehend the consequences of their actions have been as predictable, but not as outrageous, as the SS Trust Fund debacle. President Eisenhower proposed and Congress passed legislation that created our national interstate highway system which, upon its completion, became the envy of the world.

It benefited farmers, industry, commuters, vacationers, students, truckers, as well as our many state and federal parks and historic sites that attract tourists from all over the world. It was a game changer, a win for everyone, and as its funding for maintenance was included in the federal gasoline tax, Congress could anticipate not having to debate and provide additional funds.

Sadly, Congress could not even bring itself to raise the gasoline tax enough for minimal maintenance expenses of a few hundred million dollars a year with the result that what was our showcase highway system now shows signs of decades of deterioration, is unsafe and will require about \$1.5 trillion to meet current traffic, safety and structural standards.

Some recent research has stated that the average American watches 5 hours of television daily – a shocking figure. But

what's even more shocking is what they watch, what is available on our small screens. It's mostly a very low mix of sex, violence, trashy humor, game shows, sitcoms and endless commercials all dumbed down to the lowest levels that our national marketers are convinced will bring them ever larger sales and profits.

This situation results from a fateful decision made by Congress in the early days of the growth of television technology and broadcasting. Recognizing that the broadcast frequencies used by TV were a national public asset, Congress sought a system that would retain public ownership and yet give the government the authority to manage the medium's growth and set policy for its development and direction.

What resulted was a licensing system under control of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which held regular auctions of the broadcast frequencies to commercial interests. This program reaches as far back as the late 1940s, during which time the cast of licensees doesn't seem to have changed very much. CBA, NBC, ABC and other early entities, either in their original or modified ownership form, are still broadcasting from their accustomed channels.

The broadcasting industry and the FCC have always maintained a close relationship, as might be expected when such valuable properties as communication rights and big money are involved and exchanged. The failure in this particular mix of government and commerce is the product that has resulted.

In Britain, our English counterparts solved the programming problem by establishing the government owned and operated British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) to conduct all aspects of radio and TV broadcasting – editorial, commercial, entertainment – and to set policy for this global organization. Different types of programming are assigned to specific bands so that classical music lovers, for instance, can tune to its designated band and not have to listen to

“rap” or “rock”.

The answer most commonly given by supporters, of our system is that the BBC’s government involvement runs counter to our capitalistic, free enterprise tradition and that, although it may work with a much smaller population such as that of the United Kingdom (UK), it would not be successful here.

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