

THE KEATING ONE?

November 20, 1991 is a day that should live in infamy. On that day the Senate Ethics Committee rebuke Alan Cranston for “improper and repugnant” behavior in soliciting nearly \$1 million in contributions to his campaign and other causes from Charles Keating. Keating obtained Cranston’s intervention with regulators on behalf of his collapsing Lincoln Federal savings & Loan.

Cranston’s professed “deep remorse” was belied by his defensive allegations that “everybody does it.” That isn’t true, Mr. Cranston; everybody does *not* do it.

But what *is* true is that money buys access and it buys influence—and we don’t need a clearer case than Cranston’s to understand that and to do something about it.

But what can be done? Here are three things that senators can and should do immediately; First, if Cranston’s conduct doesn’t violate any Senate rules, then the rules need to be rewritten! And not by the Senate! The Senate should appoint an independent commission, perhaps with one or two former members who distinguished themselves by their integrity, but with the majority being concerned citizens, *not* part of the “power club” on the Hill. And the Senate should commit itself *in advance* to be bound by the standards that these citizens create.

Second, the Senate should acknowledge that the fundamental cause of corruption in Congress is not money but careerism. No one comes to serve for a term and then return to careers as banker or teachers or merchants. Everyone comes to stay—and stay—and stay. That lust for power that has turn legislative service into a career is what drives the need for money

- money to ensure re-election
- money to supplement salaries, with speeches, honoraria and hidden interests in private deal and partnerships
- and money for pork-barrel projects that continually derail the larger common Interests of the nation to secure the “gratitude” of special interests who will Ensure the endless re-election of members

Congress should put an end to “careerism” by imposing term limitations immediately.

And third, the Senate Ethics Committee should resign. Perhaps there are six men and Women in the Senate possessed of sufficient conscience and moral courage to sit in judgment Of their peers, but *these* are not they.

Ethics at Work? Not on Capitol Hill. Not Yet.

This is Gary Edwards.