

End Legalized Bribery

Cecil Heftel

Seven Locks Press (July 1998)

Unknown \$9.95 (135pp)

978-0-929765-59-4

In *End Legalized Bribery*, Cecil Heftel, a five-term U.S. congressman from Hawaii who left office in 1986, attacks not what is illegal, but what is legal in campaign financing. He charges that the whole system promotes begging, bribery and extortion.

Heftel inveighs against the big money flowing from the auto, defense, health and environmental industries. As a solution, he favors federal enactment of the so-called Clean Money Campaign Reform already adopted by several states. He explains that public financing in the form of an easy-to-manage line of credit should go to candidates who can prove that they have popular support by raising a specific number of small contributions. Another condition: they must agree to not raise or spend any campaign money. He also favors free airtime for candidates.

Seems simple enough. But Heftel, a campaign contribution recipient himself, knows change won't come until the American public demands it—at the voting booth. With federal and state elections only months away, this is one book that wouldn't hurt any voter to read.

JOHN WARK (September / October 1998)

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