

Posted by Joan Russow  
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From the Archives 2000 august Corporate Denations: Okanagan By-Election issues;  
Reform/Canadian Alliance and their Grassroots Corporate Donations

To the editor of the Globe and Mail

In Merritt, B.C. during the All-Candidate debate for the by-election in Okanagan-Coquihalla, Stockwell Day was challenged about the Canadian Alliance \$25,000 a table fund-raising dinner. With his poster-boy innocence he responded that he had no idea where the Canadian Alliance funding comes from. I assisted him by informing him about the categories of funders that had contributed to the Reform Party during the 1997 election.

After doing a content analysis of the 1997 donations declared by the Reform party {as of yet no change in the donation screen appears to be forthcoming from the Canadian Alliance} The Reform/Canadian Alliance (R/CA) claims that they are a grassroots party. I documented some of their reported "grassroots" sources of funding.

During the last Federal election, the Reform party received donations from the following institutions and corporations: banks and financial institutions, tobacco, coal, oil, gas, automobile, forest, chemical, mining, nuclear, arms producers, agribusiness, pharmaceutical, and of course the gun lobby. In parliament, the R/CA pointed out the correlation between donations to the Liberals and grants and contributions given to corporations through the Human Resources Department. The R/CA has, however, failed to acknowledge the correlation between funding of political parties and the formulating of the policy of political parties.

Has the R/CA, as official opposition, been a strong advocate of any the following:

\* calling for the abrogating of NAFTA, and the dismantling of the WTO and the implementing of international public trust law: (i) guaranteeing human rights, including labour rights, the human right to food, the human right to housing, and the human right to universally accessible not for profit health care; (ii) ensuRing social justice; (iii) prevenTing war and conflict; (iv) protecting the environment, addressing environmental racism, reducing the ecological footprint, and moving away from the current model of over-consumption \* advocating the revoking of charters or licences of transnational corporations for disregarding the public trust \* addressing climate change through reducing greenhouse gas emissions and through conserving carbon sinks, promoting strong measures to eliminate ozone depleting substances, and subsidizing

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environmentally sound energy alternatives \* moving away from car dependency and promoting environmentally sound alternative transportation \* conserving biodiversity of public and private lands, and banning ecologically unsound forest practices such as clearcut logging, promoting community based selection logging, and just transition for forest workers and communities \* prohibiting a two tier health care system, and promoting a universally accessible, publicly funded not-for-profit health care system, promoting increased spending for community housing and institutions \* eliminating poverty/race related health problems, and, through prevention and precaution, environmentally induced diseases , particularly those impacting on watersheds and drinking water \* banning genetically engineered foods and crops and converting agribusiness to chemically-free organic agriculture, with a fair and just transition program for affected farmers and communities \* withdrawing from NATO, condemning NATO's disregard for international law, ADVOCATING THE DISBANDING OF NATO, and reducing the military budget and military contracts and transferring the savings into health care, education, transportation, community housing, etc. \* banning and phasing out uranium mining, civil nuclear reactors and prohibiting support for the nuclear arms industry, promoting solar, wind, low impact energy efficiencies or safe environmentally sound alternatives \* PROHIBITING THE CIRCULATING IN CANADIAN WATERS, AND THE BERTHING IN CANADIAN PORTS OF NUCLEAR POWERED OR NUCLEAR CAPABLE VESSELS, AND SUPPORTING THE IMMEDIATE CONVERSION OF NANOOSE BASE FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES \* promoting the acting on the commitment to increase the GDP percentage transfer payment to developing countries, and supporting debt forgiveness \* addressing the disproportionate amount of taxes paid by individuals in proportion to corporations. [In the 1950s, individuals and corporation paid 50% respectively. Recently, it was estimated that individuals pay roughly 80% and corporations 20%. ] \* instituting gun control.

In a recent submission to the Senate Committee on the new Elections Act, I raised the issue of corporate funding of political parties and proposed that there be a clause in the Act prohibiting donations from corporations. Nothing in the old or new Elections Act prohibits corporate donations.

It is illegal, however, for Canadian companies to give money to elected officials outside of Canada because such "contributions" are categorized as bribery, and elected individuals or regimes accepting these contributions from corporations are deemed to be corrupt (Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Globe 2000 Report). In Canada, there appears to be a

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difficulty to appreciating the distinction between corporations giving money to political parties and candidates before they are elected and corporations giving money to elected members of Parliament after the election: Yet, the former is described as donations, funding or contributions, the latter, as bribery or corruption. In many countries, both practices would be prohibited.

In addition, in the Elections Act, contributions to Canadian Election Campaigns from foreign citizens is prohibited but foreign companies, if they do business in Canada, can contribute to election campaigns in Canada. Under the Act political parties are only required to disclose the source of their donations when the donations are given to the political party itself, or when the donations are given to candidates during the election. The parties are, however, not required to disclose donations to the constituency organizations or to leader candidates or candidates outside of an election.

During the 2000 election, the Green party of Canada will raise as one of the issues: the condoning of corporate donations to political parties.

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