

COMMON CAUSE  
2030 M STREET, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

October 1981

Mr. and Mrs. Shaw Mudge  
519 North Maple Avenue  
Greenwich, CT 06830

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Mudge,

As a special friend who helped Common Cause during some of the most difficult battles we ever fought, I'm writing to ask that you renew the generous support you offered in the past. I ask that you renew your support at a time when the gains you helped us win are under severe attack.

Recent disturbing developments in Washington tell the story:

- fundamental constitutional liberties -- protected by the very cornerstone of our political system -- are in danger of being undermined;
- powerful special-interest groups are finding new ways to influence politics after pouring more than \$55 million into last year's congressional campaigns; and
- hard-won gains for honest and accountable government are being seriously challenged.

Congress is currently considering more than twenty bills, introduced by the New Right, which would limit the power of the Supreme Court and upset the balance of our constitutional system. Some of these bills would strip both the Supreme Court and lower Federal courts of the power to hear certain cases involving constitutional issues such as school prayer, abortion, and bussing. Others would redefine terms in the Constitution such as "life," in an effort to reverse constitutional interpretations determined by the Supreme Court. Clearly, if the New Right leadership in Congress succeeds in passing this legislation, the Constitution, in effect, will be reduced to whatever those in political power want it to mean.

Common Cause chairman Archibald Cox, in testimony before a Senate subcommittee, described the situation this way:

"This radical and unprincipled attack on the Supreme Court must be opposed! The very function of the Constitution and the Court is to put individual liberties beyond the reach of both congressional majorities and popular opinion."

If we do not vigorously fight these threats to limit the jurisdiction of the courts on these issues, Congress could just as easily withdraw Federal court jurisdiction to hear cases involving

other fundamental individual liberties such as freedom of speech, freedom of political association and freedom of the press.

On another front, for the last ten years Common Cause has been a leader in the battle against the domination of our government by powerful special-interest groups. A new type of special interest -- the so called "independent" expenditure groups -- pose a serious threat to fair campaign practices and have recently been exposed in the national press. For example, Terry Dolan, chairman of the National Conservative Political Action Committee, has been quoted as saying "A group like ours could lie through its teeth, and the candidate it helps stays clean."

As in the past, Common Cause is at the forefront of the fight to thwart this financially potent band of independent spenders who bypass Federal election law limitations on contributions to candidates by conducting their own campaigns, usually attacking the candidates they oppose.

David Broder, in a recent column, referred to Common Cause's proposed solution to the independent expenditure groups as "ingeniously simple: provide a right of free reply for the target of the independent expenditure campaign. For every negative ad that is run attacking him, give the person under the gun equal time and space, without charge, to respond."

Leaders of both political parties are equally as concerned with the tactics of the independent expenditure groups. The chairman of the Republican National Committee strongly attacked the independent spenders, saying they "create all kinds of mischief," adding, "If campaigns are going to be honest, the candidates have to be responsible for everything that is done."

Common Cause is also continuing our historic battles to limit the amount of money that special-interest political action committees (PACs) can contribute to congressional campaigns. A new bill that was recently introduced in Congress -- the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 1981 -- would place an overall limit on the amount of special interest money candidates for the House and Senate can receive. Common Cause supports the Act's proposed \$75,000 limit for House candidates, and we are examining the proposed Senate formula to determine whether it too is workable.

Another major concern is the effort which has been launched against key measures enacted in recent years to boost public confidence in the honesty and integrity of public officials. Among the current targets are:

- The Federal Election Commission (FEC) which oversees the financial conduct -- or misconduct -- of Presidential and Congressional candidates' campaigns;
- The special prosecutor provision of the 1978 Ethics in Government Act which gives an independent, court-appointed prosecutor the power to investigate suspected criminal behavior by high government officials;
- The conflict-of-interest provisions of the Ethics in Government Act which require federal officials to make full public disclosure of their financial holdings;

- The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act which makes it illegal for American companies to pay bribes in the course of conducting business overseas; and
- The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) which provides citizen access to a broad range of executive branch and government records.

Our fight to prevent backsliding on these key measures is at the very heart of our long-range goals of open and accountable government. Common Cause has proven time and again that changes can be made in the way our government works. The battles may take a long time, but the rewards we all reap in better and more effective government are well worth every effort on our part and yours.

Most recently, the Voting Rights Act, strongly endorsed by Common Cause, won a resounding victory for extension in the House. The Act, considered one of the most successful and effective civil rights laws ever passed, has allowed millions of Americans to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Common Cause was part of a broad coalition of national organizations backing extension of the Act. The fight for extension now moves to the Senate where a tough fight is anticipated in 1982.

Common Cause is also working to defend the Clean Air Act, which serves to protect the public from the potential hazards of unhealthy air. Pressure to weaken the Act from the industries affected by it has been intense. We are actively watchdogging proposed legislation to the Act to insure that the special interests' attempts to weaken it are counteracted with citizen lobbying power.

We have our work cut out for us! The hard-fought gains which your support helped us win in the past are now under severe challenge. I believe we can rally the membership of Common Cause and alert the American public to the dangers inherent in a wholesale destruction of laws and regulations that have been developed out of the painful experience of past abuses.

But, to do this we will again need your help. Effective lobbying efforts and public education campaigns require substantial financial support.

You have been generous to Common Cause in the past. I hope we can count on you once again. Please renew your Common Cause membership and commitment today.

Sincerely,

Fred Wertheimer