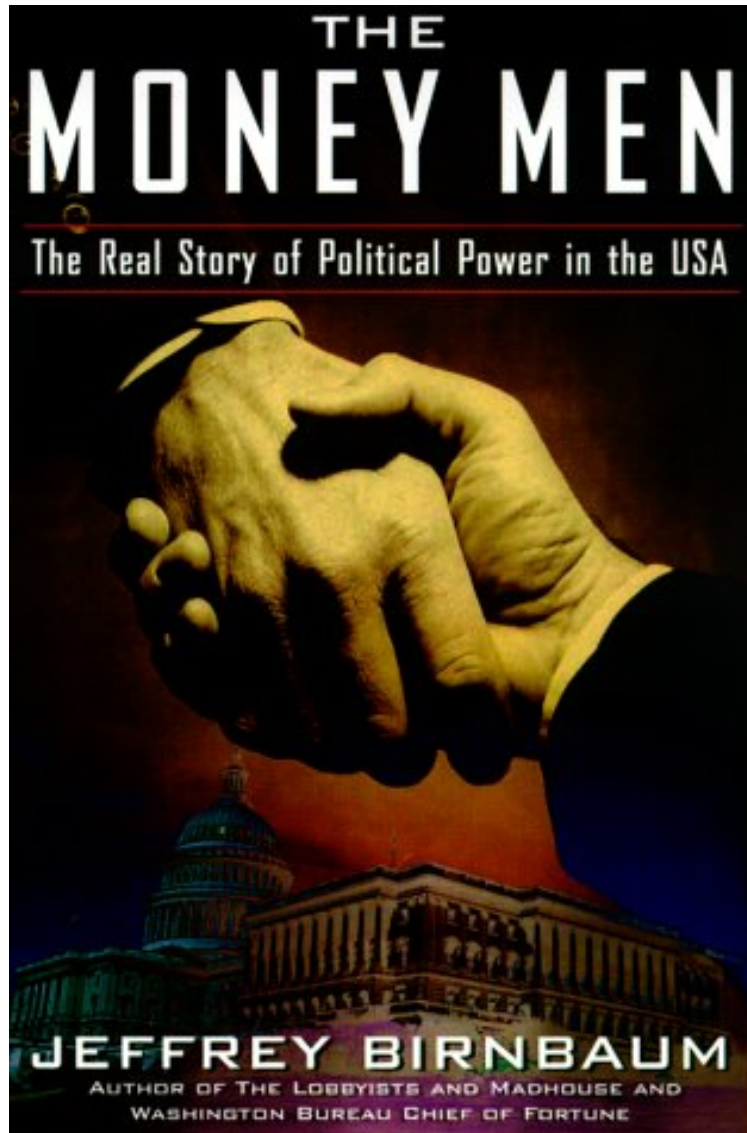


[PDF] The Money Men: The Real Story of Fund-raising's Influence on Political Power in America

The Money Men: The Real Story of Fund-raising's Influence on Political Power in America

Jeffrey Birnbaum

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Jeffrey Birnbaum : The Money Men: The Real Story of Fund-raising's Influence on Political Power in America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Money Men: The Real Story of Fund-raising's Influence on Political Power in America:

8 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Follow the Money?By Clayton A. CoppinReading this book is like following a car with a bent frame. The car seems to be going in a slightly direction than the wheels are carrying it. So

much for following the money. The whole book is slightly off kilter. The reader is confused because in the beginning because Brinbaum says the days of flagrant corruption are long gone, but then tells story after story of flagrant corruption. He says it is not what we think it is then cites numerous examples of corruption that are exactly what I think it is. Most of the tales told are from previously published stories the rest have the flavor of cocktail party chatter, or should I say fun raiser chatter. He names plenty of names, but is short on facts. The problem with the facts are that some of them are wrong. I will let the readers pick their own favorite error mine was him saying that Koch Industries was in the book wholesaling business. Koch is in lots of businesses, but none of them is the book business. The nearest connection was a jointly owned refinery with Hank Ingram, whose family owned the Ingram books, but the Koch - Ingram business relationship ended in 1950. As an error, this is not a big one, but it makes you wonder about what else is in error. He refers to some studies, but fails to provide source information, so you can't check to see if he got it right or wrong. The book is a quick and easy read and if you are looking for the names of some of Washington money guys then give it a try. But mostly this seems like a book that was published to cash in on the hot topic of money and politics. He does make some interesting suggestions for reforming the current system. I liked limiting the length of campaigns, but I don't think that would do much about issue ads. I think we would have months of ads ending with, "call George W. Bush and tell him his eyes are to close together," or "call Al Gore and tell him, he wasn't the first man on the moon".

4 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Follow the money

By Clayton A. Coppin

Reading this book is like following a car with a bent frame. The car seems to be going in a slightly direction than the wheels are carrying it. So much for following the money. The whole book is slightly off kilter. The reader is confused because in the beginning because Brinbaum says the days of flagrant corruption are long gone, but then tells story after story of flagrant corruption. He says it is not what we think it is then cites numerous examples of corruption that are exactly what I think it is. Most of the tales told are from previously published stories the rest have the flavor of cocktail party chatter, or should I say fun raiser chatter. He names plenty of names, but is short on facts. The problem with the facts are that some of them are wrong. I will let the readers pick their own favorite error mine was him saying that Koch Industries was in the book wholesaling business. Koch is in lots of businesses, but none of them is the book business. The nearest connection was when Koch jointly owned a refinery with Hank Ingram, whose family owned Ingram books, but the Koch - Ingram business relationship ended in 1950. As an error, this is not a big one, but it makes you wonder about what else is in error. He refers to some studies, but fails to provide source information, so you can't check to see if he got it right or wrong. The book is a quick and easy read and if you are looking for the names of some of Washington money guys then give it a try. But mostly this seems like a book that was published to cash in on the hot topic of money and politics. He does make some interesting suggestions for reforming the current system. I liked limiting the length of campaigns, but I don't think that would do much about issue ads. I think we would have months of ads ending with, "call George W. Bush and tell him his eyes are to close together," or "call Al Gore and tell him, he wasn't the first man on the moon".

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful. A must-read for those wanting to understand campaign finance

By Jon Eric Davidson

Having been active in politics and political campaigns for 10+ years now, and staying current with the news of the day, I thought I had a pretty good working knowledge of the campaign finance issue. That is, until I read Mr. Birnbaum's excellent book, "The Money Men". I found out just how lacking in knowledge I was on this issue. I was drawn to this book because of my interest in politics, and also because I have enjoyed Mr. Birnbaum's work with Fortune magazine and the Fox News Channel. The book he has crafted is not a disappointment; rather, it exceeded all my expectations. The draw to this book from political pro to political novice is that it is thoroughly readable. A lot of people tend to get turned off by issues such as campaign finance because it is presented to us in that "policy wonk" or "green lampshade" form that is hard to digest. Mr. Birnbaum presents the ins and outs of the money game and its players in layman's terms that shed things in a whole new light. The length of the book also makes it appealing, because it doesn't give one the feeling of reading an academic textbook. Another strongpoint of this book is that Mr. Birnbaum is wholly impartial and objective in his writing. He doesn't focus on one side/party or the other; he gives Republicans and Democrats equal time - and criticism. He also does it without being sanctimonious or elitist, and I daresay there aren't too many others inside the Beltway who could present it any better than in this form. Of course, there are a series of proposed solutions to reform the campaign finance system, as should be expected from any book on the subject. But unlike the politicians, Mr. Birnbaum presents proposals that would reform the system while also being eminently digestible to the public-at-large and - provided they had common sense - the politicians. Quite simply, this book is a must-read for those both in and out of politics. For those in the game, it will likely do to you what it did to me: teach just how little I knew while explaining how it works and how to fix it. For those apathetic or thinking politics doesn't matter, this is worthwhile if only to make one understand the issue and begin to find ways to fix the system so as to be palatable. Most of these people think the government doesn't represent them; this is a book that shows one way to show how they can get that lack of representation back. But most of all, for anyone who falls into either category, it is worthwhile to read so one can stay properly informed when the issue rears its ugly head in the media.

The real political campaigns in America begin with the money men. If you assume that fund-raising is so distasteful

that you don't want to hear any more about it, you are closing your mind to one of the most fundamental and fascinating stories in American politics, writes Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, author of *The Money Men*. For the past two decades, Birnbaum has followed the money in Washington, as a reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and *Fortune*. In his Washington Post bestsellers, *Showdown at Gucci Gulch* and *The Lobbyists*, Birnbaum examined the forces that wield power in our capital and the subtle yet influential interplay between pressure groups and politicians. Now, Birnbaum takes us inside the world of the most elite, powerful, and little-known groups in politics: the fund-raisers and fund-givers who have an increasingly large say in the way our government works. If you want to be taken seriously as a political candidate in America, you've got to start with money and the people who raise it. Until now, no one has taken as close a look at who these people are, what they want, and what they get in return for raising hundreds of millions of dollars. In *The Money Men*, Birnbaum takes us behind the scenes and into the mansions, banquet halls, and living rooms of the people raising the big bucks for presidential aspirants in Campaign 2000. He details the ritual mating dance of money that is rarely seen and is captivating to behold. Birnbaum also reveals which lobbying organizations are the most effective in advancing their agendas and how they do it. For anyone interested in the state of democracy, the possibility for reform, and the strange art of political salesmanship, *The Money Men* is required reading.

.com Jeffrey Birnbaum subscribes to that old journalistic credo Follow the money. He has made a career out of investigating the role of money in politics, both as a beat reporter (first for *The Wall Street Journal*, and now at *Fortune*) and as an author (*The Lobbyists*). This book describes the men and women who give money to politicians and raise it for campaigns. Far from a dry tome about campaign-finance law, it's a page-turning narrative full of colorful characters and interesting anecdotes. As a D.C. insider once put it, the real scandal in Washington isn't what's illegal, but what's legal. Or, in Birnbaum's words: If you assume that campaign money is so distasteful that you don't want to hear any more about it, you're closing your mind to one of the most fundamental and most fascinating stories in American politics. It's okay to be outraged--more than okay. But it's wrong to be so disgusted that you don't want to read another word. You miss all the good parts that way. Birnbaum intends to correct a few popular misconceptions about how Washington works: "It's wrong to think of [elected officials] sitting studiously through boring congressional hearings or making speeches to Rotary Club luncheons. Think of them, instead, in windowless offices grubbing for money almost every spare moment they get." Some may accuse the author of being unduly suspicious of money's place in political life, but then they haven't had what Birnbaum calls "The Moment"--that instant when they finally realize that money plays too big a role in politics, way too big." He then describes how one of his sources, a press secretary for a Southern congressman, had his Moment: "The congressman pledged to vote to fund the aircraft in exchange for a VIP tour of the White House for twenty or thirty of his largest and most loyal campaign contributors." *The Money Men* is crammed with unseemly stories like this, and Birnbaum is admirably bipartisan: he blames both Democrats and Republicans for creating the cesspool in which they live. "Something must be done," he writes. Scandal after scandal has rocked the nation's capital. From overnights in the Lincoln bedroom to illegal foreign contributions from Asia and elsewhere, it is obvious that what was once a hunger for money by politicians has become a form of gluttony. Corporations, labor unions, narrow interest groups, and wealthy individuals are buying their way into our government at a pace that threatens to destroy the democracy that we all hold so dear. Fans of Common Cause and John McCain's campaign-reform ideas will find much to admire on these pages, as will anyone who appreciates good reportage. --John J. Miller
From Publishers Weekly
Campaign finance reform was the touchstone of John McCain's ill-fated run for the presidency, and Birnbaum (*The Lobbyists*) makes it clear why. After hammering away at the difference between soft money (contributed to political parties, not capped by law) and hard money (given directly to candidates and limited by law), this generally workmanlike introduction to campaign fund-raising really comes to life when it begins to describe the impact soft money has on the political system. By far the most illuminating chapter is "The Real Party Bosses," in which Birnbaum maintains that elections offer a choice not between the Democratic and Republican parties, but between the interest groups that undergird them, whether big labor or big business or some other contingent. (Were it not for the support of the AFL-CIO, for instance, Birnbaum contends, "Gore would have collapsed under the pressure from Bill Bradley.") Birnbaum argues that because interest groups can deliver money and votes, their issues--e.g., abortion rights, the minimum wage, gun control--dominate the national debate on an annual basis. And he comes to the surprising conclusion that the most influential group in American politics is not the AFL-CIO or the NRA, but the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), whose war chest and membership are unmatched by those of any other group. Birnbaum, the Washington bureau chief for *Fortune*, clearly knows the players and the inner workings of the capital's numerous money machines, and once his story kicks into gear, he provides an important look at what needs to be done to keep money from being the only factor that counts in American politics. (June) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
In this timely, well-written book, noted political journalist and television analyst Birnbaum takes us, in depressingly gruesome detail, deep inside the baroque world of money men, solicitors, money bundlers, and high-end lobbyists. Money, especially "big money," drives American politics. It serves, among other things, as a gatekeeping device that lets certain candidates into the system

and pushes others out. "The country's first primary is not held in New Hampshire," writes Birnbaum, "but on K Street in Washington (the lobbyist's main drag), on Wall Street in New York, and on Michigan Avenue in Chicago." In the "Greed Era," as the author views today's politics, the law can be circumvented with the help of the Federal Election Commission, the supposed watchdog, which the author calls "the most ineffective agency in Washington. On purpose." Is there a way out of this swamp of money and corruption? The author is not optimistic. He offers a list of somewhat underwhelming reform proposals but in the end seems resigned to the inevitable "legal corruption" of the current system. Recommended for all public and academic libraries. DMichael A. Genovese, Loyola Marymount Univ., LA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.