

D.C. Columnist Airs USLP Charges Against FEC

The following broadcast was made by syndicated columnist and radio and television political commentator Jeffrey St. John, on his Washington, D.C. NBC-TV show.

At the Federal Election Commission on K. Street, sitting in a storeroom, are eleven cardboard boxes crammed with 200,000 cards and letters. Those letters denouncing President Carter's "instant voter registration" proposals, were originally sent to the FEC from the White House. Why the White House sent them to the FEC no one knows. Some in this town, including yours truly, suspect that the reason the FEC has not destroyed those 200,000 cards and letters, is that the federal election fuzz are going to use those names as part of a political enemies list.

Now, that would be an unwarranted and outrageous suspicion were it not for recent FEC investigations of political groups critical of the Carter White House. On the right, we have the Liberty Lobby and the Libertarian Party; on the left, the U.S. Labor Party. The Labor Party people maintain that the FEC, with the help of the FBI directed by Attorney General Bell are out to get them. The evidence they present is not conclusive, but persuasive, that the FEC is engaging a campaign of political harassment to silence their criticism of the Crater Administration.

For example, FEC investigators barge in unannounced and even badger their campaign contributors. The Labor Party people also maintain that the Carter White House is turning the Federal Election Commission into its own "political plumbers unit." We checked out this set of charges with sources elsewhere, familiar with the FEC, and what we did discover, is that indeed, the White House seems intent on making the FEC totally subservient to the White House and the Democratic Party.

Perhaps the Republicans should begin looking closer at the Federal Election Commission and at its potential for becoming Mr. Carter's personal political gestapo. And they should do it before Congress passes on his package of so-called campaign election reforms. They might begin by asking the chairman of the FEC why the White House sent to him those 200,000 postcards and letters opposing Mr. Carter's election fraud proposals, and just what do they plan to do with them?

FEC Tampering With Mails

The following United Press International (UPI) wire was released from Washington, D.C., July 13.

If you are one of the 114,000 people who wrote to President Carter opposing universal voter registration, your cards and letters have been shipped off to a federal agency that has nothing to do with the issue...all 21 boxes of the cards and letters have been sent to the Federal Election Commission. The FEC doesn't have anything to do with any kind of voter registration, let alone the Car-

ter proposal which...probably won't be passed by Congress this year. The letters were to President Carter opposing his universal registration plan... (description of the plan)...It would allow someone to register on election day by showing up at the polls with a driver's license or other identification. The White House said it was not planning to answer the letters. It sent them to the FEC for informational purposes. It didn't explain why the letters weren't sent to Vice-President Mondale, whose staff drew up the bill, or to Congressional leaders who are considering the legislation. The FEC's responsibility is as a policing unit of spending by Congressional and presidential contenders and handing out federal funds for presidential campaigns under the Campaign Reform Act. The FEC doesn't know what to do with all the letters. They're just sitting there in the Public Information Office. One official said: "We couldn't answer them if we dropped everything and took the rest of the year. There's not much we could say anyway. We have no position on universal voter registration....It's not our job. It doesn't come under our jurisdiction."

The cards and letters have a similar message, suggesting an organized writing campaign. There are indications the campaign was organized by the Republican National Committee or the Republican Senate and Campaign Committee.

A White House spokesman says: "In a purely scientific way, the FEC has an interest in what kind of response is being made....It was put there for information, but we don't expect them to answer them. We're not going to answer them," the spokesman said. "We're just going to keep them. I don't know what else we can do."

The following is an editorial in the Savannah Morning News July 16, entitled "Right to Write:"

The right of a citizen to petition elected officials is an important feature of our system...

But what if officials refuse to listen? Democracy would no doubt suffer as a consequence. Such thoughts come to mind as we reflect on the decision of the White House to ignore a large volume of mail.

The letters, totaling 114,000 were sent in opposition to the Administration's universal voter registration plan. These could have been routed to President Carter, Vice President Mondale, or congressional leaders who are now considering the plan. They went instead to the Federal Election Commission, an agency that has nothing to do with registration.

This to us seems a calculated slap at citizens who oppose the voting plan. One White House spokesman dismissed the letters as "propaganda mail by an organized group."

We are not sure what group the spokesman is referring to, but he should keep in mind...The Administration is the Administration of everyone and not just those who agree with it on every point.