

## Editorial

### *Re-inventing corruption*

The smashing defeat for the prosecution in the case of former Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, should be the first blow to defeating the whole wave of “anti-corruption” prosecutions which are being wielded by the world’s most corrupt financiers and politicians. That goes for everything from the system of special prosecutors in the United States, to the efforts of international bodies such as Transparency International, who are seeking to topple governments around the world.

Independent counsel Donald Smaltz’s prosecution of Espy, which went on for four years at a cost of \$17 million, resulted in an acquittal on Dec. 2. While that’s good news, there is a sense in which Smaltz and his backers actually achieved their objectives nonetheless. They succeeded in getting Espy out of office, intimidated dozens of people, and, in their own words, “sent a message” of terror to many others.

From the beginning, it was clear that the independent counsel was making farcical charges. The petty “gratuities” which Espy had received were acknowledged to have resulted in no *quid pro quo* — and the first African-American Agriculture Secretary was widely known for a hard stance against predatory agri-business cartels. But, as an article by David Grann in the Feb. 2, 1998 issue of the *New Republic* pointed out, the Smaltz prosecution was taking to its logical extreme the new theory of “anti-corruption” politics. Under this theory, politicians “use the law not as a means of justice but as a means of destroying one another,” and that Smaltz “has redefined corruption in a way that would turn most lawmakers into lawbreakers overnight.”

According to this theory, all “cronyism,” in fact all friendship, between a lawmaker and a constituent, becomes definable as a crime. Politics itself is criminalized, as even cups of coffee, or slices of cheesecake, are redefined as “illegal gratuities.”

Whereas politics used to be the art of improving conditions for one’s country and constituency, such

improvement might now be considered a “conflict of interest,” should these “public corruption” laws be applied as they are being today.

The ever-self-righteous Smaltz, who is in the same league as Kenneth Starr, went so far as to brag about the fact that he was using this case as a means of political destruction. Speaking after he lost the Espy trial, Smaltz said (according to the *New York Times*): “The actual indictment of a public official may in fact be as great a deterrent as a conviction of that official.”

Since when is a frivolous prosecution supposed to be used as a deterrent? One is reminded of the arguments on the floor of the Congress last August around the McDade-Murtha Citizens Protection Act, which was intended to prevent prosecutions undertaken for political, and financial, destruction. Had that bill been in effect, it is clear that the Smaltz prosecution, and many others, including that of Lyndon LaRouche and President Bill Clinton, would subject the prosecutors to severe penalties for breaking the law.

Nor should we overlook the application of this legal “theory” on the international scale. Under the aegis of Transparency International, which works with George Soros’s money and the collaboration of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, mostly small nations are now routinely attacked for adopting policies that will benefit their populations. Such patriotic, popular actions are re-labelled “corruption” or “cronyism,” in the interest of destroying the government, and opening the nations up for looting by foreign financial interests.

This trend began in a big way in the mid-1970s, coinciding, not accidentally, with the Carter administration’s thrust toward eliminating technological progress, and government responsibility to its constituencies. It has been frighteningly successful in the labor, business, and political arena, and is now reaching to the very top, as in the prosecution of the President of the United States. The corrupt have become the prosecutors — and it’s about time they were stopped.