



Who is Corrupt?

by Richard W. Rahn

Is the just-fired Andrew McCabe (former number two and, at one point, acting director of the FBI) corrupt? I would argue yes, even though we do not know the full extent of his alleged transgressions.

Corruption, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is “dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people (such as government officials or police officers).”

It usually involves one or more of the following: 1. Conflict of interest where officials in power can use their positions for personal gain in an unacceptable manner. 2. Bribery where government officials accept money or other favors to make decisions to benefit those offering the bribe. 3. Cronyism, where the party in power gives government jobs to friends and supporters. 4. Sinecures, where jobs with salaries but no duties are given to friends or family. 5. Fraud, where an election is rigged by a variety of means, or where the government official engages in misrepresentation to protect him or herself or others.

We do know that Mr. McCabe attended and participated in rallies and fund-raising events for his wife when she was running for the Virginia State Senate. In an election in which Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe, a close friend and supporter of Hillary Clinton, arranged for contributions in the hundreds of thousands of dollars to Mrs. McCabe, while at the same time Mr. McCabe was overseeing the investigation of Secretary Clinton’s misuse of government emails, where she “got a pass” from the FBI.

It is unambiguously clear that Mr. McCabe had a serious conflict of interest and also violated FBI guidelines. Mr. McCabe was also part of the team, along with former FBI Directors Mueller and Comey, and others, that did nothing when the Russians were funneling money into U.S. environmental organizations, and arranging the uranium deal to benefit the Clintons. There is much more — but it is clear that Mr. McCabe and some other high-ranking officials at the FBI are Washington swamp creatures.

The Washington swamp refers to the general culture of corruption that pervades the nation’s capital — whereby government officials and bureaucrats, members of the media and business leeches work together to protect their own self-interests — including each other — at the expense of the taxpayer and public at large. Those in government who engage in corrupt behavior are emboldened by the knowledge that there are rarely truly independent authorities — agency review boards, courts, and judges — who will hold them accountable.

So far, Lois Lerner, John Koskinen, Eric Holder, Loretta Lynch, Susan Rice and many others, including Hillary Clinton, appear to have gotten away with things that would land people in the private sector, like Martha Stewart, in jail. There are many members of the media who have incestuous relationships with members of the swamp — friends, relatives, lovers, etc. — who will provide a defense, no matter how outrageous the offense.

This past Saturday evening, immediately after the McCabe firing, I sampled some of the cable news channels to see how the incident was being treated. Those defending Mr. McCabe (particularly on MSNBC) in some cases said Mr. Trump fired him (not true, even though Mr. Trump clearly wanted him gone), it was all political, and it had been done in a rush.

But, it was a non-political body within the FBI that made the recommendation, and, as far as speed, some of us had been writing articles for at least three years, exposing obvious wrongdoing by Mr. McCabe. There were also many tears shed by those concerned about him losing his

pension, as if he had not engaged in major wrongdoing and was lucky not to be in jail.

When you hear members of the media or other organizations, including universities, defending members of the swamp whose significant wrongdoing has been exposed — by giving out false information or ignoring the real facts — it is fair to ask yourself, why are they doing this? What is their agenda? Who is paying them? Are they also intellectually, morally or financially corrupt? One can and, in fact, is expected to say good things about friends, family members or allies who have been caught in wrongdoing without defending the bad behavior. Those who defend the bad behavior and not just the person, may well also be corrupt.

The U.S. is not generally viewed as a particularly corrupt country (Transparency International lists it as number 16 out of 180 countries on its Corruption Perceptions Index), but, like virtually all countries, the biggest single source of corruption is government spending on programs that do not meet an objective cost-benefit test.

The great curse of democracies is that millions lobby directly or indirectly through some organization they belong to for more government spending for whatever. Politicians buy votes for promising one group of voters to take from another (usually smaller) group of voters and give it to the first group. Or as H.L. Mencken wrote, “every election is sort of an advance auction on stolen goods.” The result is a government that is larger than it should be to maximize the general welfare and economic growth.

Unrestrained corruption eventually kills both the economy and civil society. How many can say they are part of the solution rather than part of the problem?

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