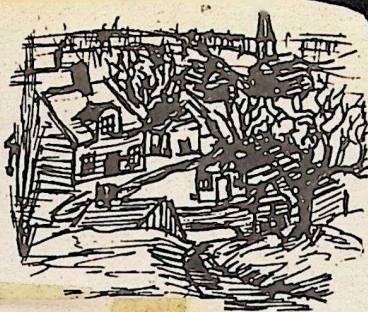


Village
View
by Andrea
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What are the economics of running for political office? Does this question affect us on a local level or is it of concern only to the wealthy and to large corporations?

The answer may lie in another question -- in true Yankee fashion -- who do we want to run the country?

Until the last year or two it's seemed political contributions were far removed from ordinary people; recent publicity about evils of political influence, however, has brought home to us all the unpleasant reality -- money makes the mare go.

Where, then, do our responsibilities lie? Should we, as Americans, take more interest and action in financing political candidates? It's apparent, if we want good government, and if we want government of, by, and for the people, we must.

Last year your federal income tax return offered an opportunity to donate \$1 of your tax to the party of your choice.

Again this year your tax return offers a similar opportunity to support a political party's candidate.

What's the idea? The instructions clearly state your tax will be neither increased nor decreased if you check this box.

Your federal government is attempting to create a fund for candidates to use for campaign purposes so they won't depend on contributions from special interest groups, but will, instead, be able to act, vote, and consider fairly, for the benefit of all the people instead of just the few.

This sounds like a pretty good plan. If we all help someone get elected, he's obligated to work for all, not just those with enough money to spare to support his campaign. Make sense?

Inasmuch as it won't cost us taxpayers any more to participate in this joint effort, it seems worth the effort of checking the box.

New laws require full disclosure of sources of political campaign funds. This is a safeguard against pressure groups exerting undue influence on elected officials.

This year's tax returns encourage political campaign contributions another way. If a couple uses the short form and files a joint return, up to \$25 for campaign contributions may be deducted.

The contribution will cost them nothing: it goes out one time, and is regained as a deduction from adjusted gross income. Single people using the short form may deduct up to \$12.50.

Most homeowners use the longer form, 1040,

because they have deductible real estate taxes, interest on home mortgages, and so on. Political campaign contributions are also now deductible in full. It's something to remember when you feel a candidate deserves your support.

The candidate need not be running for President of the United States; he can be running for Governor, the Legislature, County Commissioner, Selectman or Dog-Catcher.

In any case, he's probably going to have to spend money to get elected. Newspaper advertising, radio spots, bumper stickers, badges and buttons, all cost money. Printing flyers and mailing them does too.

Not many people are able to win elections, even on local levels, simply by taking out nomination papers and getting fifty or seventy-five signatures of registered voters.

Our town is too large to permit everyone to know each candidate well-enough to decide who will do the best job unless each one has the means and opportunity to reach the voters.

The only way a candidate can reach a large number of voters is to communicate through media such as newspapers and radio, and distribute pamphlets through the mail.

You can help at little or no cost to yourself. If you know someone running for public office and you hope he gets elected, write a check, large or small, and mail it to him with a note.

It probably won't give you great leverage at Town Hall -- or at the White House -- because a lot of your friends and neighbors are going to be doing the same thing. What it will do is help insure we get better public servants.

If you are thinking of becoming a candidate for public office, you'd appreciate some help with the costs of getting your name and message before voters, wouldn't you?

If you were running, it would give you a real lift if your friends and acquaintances, people you are hoping to serve and help, backed your campaign, wouldn't it?

A good candidate isn't the easiest thing to find; public office isn't a job everyone would want. Most candidates, really dedicated to doing a good job, hesitate to ask for contributions for campaign purposes.

If it were you, would you want to ask your friends for help? You'd most probably feel, now, of all times, is a time you'd most dislike asking for money.

Nevertheless, you'd need it. If someone with a lot of money contributed generously, you'd feel indebted to them; if you won the election, you'd owe them favors.

That's what this is all about.

The way to avoid that sort of pressure on

lected officials is for each of us
rt the candidates we believe will best serve
the country, the state, the Town of Barnsta-
ble.

Now that our income tax laws allow deduc-
tion of this expense, it's up to each of us
with a preference for a particular candidate
to contribute to that person's political cam-
paign.

It doesn't matter whether your favorite
candidate hopes to serve in local government
or at a higher level. Campaign contributions
for Selectman are just as eligible for deduc-
tion from income taxes as are contributions
to Presidential campaigns.

Local candidates are people we know; we
vote for people we believe can do the job in
the office for which they are running. It may
not be easy to decide whether one person or
another will make a better Governor, but it's
not as difficult to determine who you'd like
elected Selectman.

If good government is our aim, if capable
people are to win elections, and if those
people are to be free from pressure of spec-
ial interests, then it behooves each of us
to back the candidate of his choice, so that
person isn't beholden to any one person or
group of people.

If you've got an opinion about somebody
who's running for office, talk about it. And
do something about it. If you believe your
candidate is good, then HELP.

Put your money where your mouth is.