

Intellectual Dishonesty Breathtaking in its Audacity

Clinton Administration has Sweeping Disregard for the Rule of Law

by Representative Bob Barr

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When I served as the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia (1986-1990), I once spoke with one of my colleagues from another state, who recalled for me a conversation he had with a defendant he prosecuted. The hapless defendant offered as an excuse to the U.S. attorney that "everyone knew what we were doing was wrong, but no one told us it was *jail* wrong." It didn't work. The defendant received a lengthy prison term.

In recent weeks, I have recalled this story many times. For example, on March 3, I watched Vice President Gore try to explain why a law that prohibits "any person" from soliciting campaign funds on or from federal property, did not apply to him raising money from his office in the Old Executive Office Building. The story came to mind again, less than a week later, as I read that the White House Communications Director, Ann Lewis, tried to explain how the First Lady's Chief of Staff, Margaret Williams, was immune from the reach of that same federal criminal law prohibiting "any person" from soliciting or receiving funds on federal property, when she took a \$50,000 campaign check in the White House itself.

Last week, when I read a letter from Ms. Ronnie Edelman, the Principal Deputy Chief of the Department of Justice Terrorism and Violent Crimes Section, explaining that the Second Amendment to our Constitution, which guarantees the "right of the people to keep and bear arms" against government infringement does not apply to a single citizen of this country, [Editor's Note: See page 74] the U.S. Attorney's story of the hapless defendant came flooding back to mind. And, just the other day, I read in the



newspaper that Norma Cantu, head of the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, continues to strong-arm state officials to use race-based affirmative action programs that were last year explicitly ruled unconstitutional by a federal Court of Appeals in a ruling left standing by the Supreme Court of the United States.

Where are the U.S. Attorneys of yore when we need them? Where are public servants who will have the backbone to stand up to such inane reasoning and state simply but forcefully that the law is the law, and that the words of our Constitution and the opinions of our federal Courts actually mean something?

These incidents — involving blatantly illegal fundraising activities, an utterly preposterous interpretation of the Bill of Rights, and flagrant circumvention of a lawful court opinion — illustrate with sad clarity the sweeping disregard this administration has for the rule of law.

I have seen nothing like it in my lifetime. It bespeaks an intellectual dishonesty breathtaking in its audacity. It reflects an in-your-face attitude akin to the playground bully who, having neither the brains nor the time to argue the facts, stands upright, hands clenched at

his sides, and says: "Yeah? Go ahead and make me." In the playground, the stakes were important only at the time and only for a fleeting moment. In the real world now, the stakes are as big as our country and reach into every community, home and family in America.

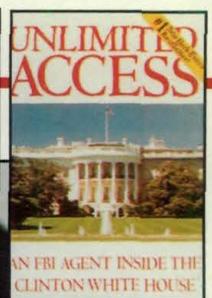
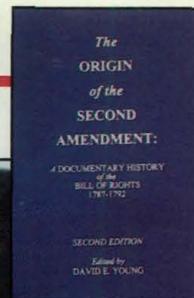
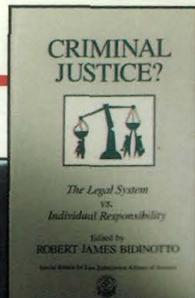
The problem presented by this disregard for the rule of law goes far beyond politics. The fact is, when high government officials, those tasked with enforcing the laws of this land, tell the American people, "the laws do not apply to us," or "the Constitution does not mean what it says when we want it to justify something else," or "don't worry about a court order that prohibits us from doing what we want to do, and if you don't do it too, we're going to cut off federal funds," what they are really saying is that there is no rule of law. There is only whatever we want to do, whenever we want to do it, and you'd better get out of our way when we want to do it.

This is situational ethics taken to the extreme. We're already seeing it in the frequency with which public figures lie, and in the frequency with which students cheat. And pretty soon we're going to start seeing it manifest itself in more deadly ways.

We may see it when a military officer cuts corners, and as a result, soldiers under his or her command die, because they were never told that the officer leading them cheated years before at a service academy but was not dismissed because clever lawyers and "political correctness" dictated that the cadet stay in school; and every reference to disciplinary proceedings surrounding the cheating was expunged from the records.

We may see it when our government's military or trade secrets are compromised to our adversaries, because their agents were granted

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