

A PROFUSION OF NASTY ADS.

Here they come! I don't much care ...

by Vic Berez

The Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* seems to have totally opened the door to no-holds-barred “freedom of speech” when it comes to politics. I can understand the argument of the Court’s majority, it makes some sense. Personally, I’d have preferred another approach, differentiating between the real *We the People* of the United States and the artificial “persons” we call corporations, unions, PACs, NGOs, etc. [And perhaps, also differentiating between *speech* and *money*.] Now, some of the usual *crazies* are advocating a Constitutional Amendment to correct this perceived wrong. Even if there is a *wrong* and an amendment was the best long-term answer, it would take years to make it happen. Let’s get real!

I have two thoughts on all this. First, I truly doubt that most American corporations will be willing to take a direct part in electioneering. Remember, few elections are run-a-ways. Therefore, whichever side a corporation takes will offend about half the voters. That’s no way to improve sales and profits! Yes, corporations will funnel some money into channels which address issues they’re concerned about. Those channels ... lobbyists, trade associations, PACs, whatever ... will have a bit more money to buy TV time and newspaper ad space. So this ruling may help keep alive for a few more years a dying media industry. But, as we saw in 2008 ... the media gets pretty saturated with political and issue ads, and you can’t get much nastier. Besides, the future of political advertising may be on the Internet where money is much less important. So I’m not very worried about American corporate (or union) money making things much worse.

Foreign-controlled corporations taking part in the American political process is another matter. They are certainly not *beholdin’* to American voters, and could be fronts for America’s enemies. President Obama in his *State of the Union* message seemed to think the Court opened the door to that. Justice Alito shaking his head (and supposedly mouthing “not true”) seemed to differ. In any case, Congress and the Administration need to make sure that not one nickel of foreign money gets into our domestic political squabbles – and I can’t imagine that the Supreme Court would have any problem with a hard-line on this issue.

My second thought is more nuanced. The *Supremes* have spoken, and this ruling will be the *new normal* for the foreseeable future ... so, let’s learn to navigate it. Maybe the Internet is an appropriate analogy. That new medium is wild and free and scary. The prospects for taming and/or controlling it, without ruining it, are miniscule. But, most people are learning how to use the Internet responsibly for their own purposes, while avoiding the pitfalls that lay in wait. It’s not unlike the way our medieval ancestors navigated the forests of Europe ... filled with wolves and robbers and perverts (like the Internet) and other scary things. Simply said, people have always adapted and learned to take control of their lives ... Americans are especially good at it.

In the new age of political advertising, it seems the scary thing is the bad guys (corporations, unions, whoever) buying an election. Well, I’d like to state unequivocally that nobody can buy an election if we the voters refuse to sell it. That’s the answer. Refuse to sell your American birthright. Don’t be *True Blue* (or *True Red* for that matter). Don’t believe everything you see or read. Use your intellect to evaluate the candidates. Use your vote to put the candidate that you believe will best represent *you* in office. Take control of your life, and we together will keep control of our government ...

... which is as it should be.