

At the service of the 1 percent

On news channels, in the print media, on radio talk shows, and in the everyday conversation of ordinary Americans, the subject of economic inequality is being discussed with a frequency that only a year ago would have been unthinkable. Most astounding of all, capitalist excess has now become a campaign issue among Republican presidential candidates.

Perhaps the dynamic is reaching critical mass.

For the past 30 years, more and more of our elected officials have taken our votes and then gone to Washington to aid and abet the agenda of the super rich. They have passed laws that directly benefit the top 1 percent and corporations and have blocked or watered down any suggested plans to regulate the wretched, immoral and unpatriotic excesses of their moneyed patrons. As a result, the social and economic mobility of the middle class has stultified. No wonder Congress has an 11 percent approval rating; it has become a parliament of whores, serving its "johns" on Wall Street, its motto articulated by former Sen. John Breaux: "My vote's not for sale — but it can be rented."

Since the Reagan era, politicians in both parties have promoted policies that have led to, and now codify, the control of wealth by the very few, people who "rent" our government and for whom the word "public" is an epithet. Roads? Schools? Police? Medicare? Social Security? Why would things like these interest people who live in gated communities with their own security and maintenance forces, who travel in their own private airplanes and who control businesses "too big to fail?"

Judge Louis Brandeis said it best: "You can have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, or you can have democracy; you cannot have both." Before voting in November, go to opensecrets.com to see if your representative is "for rent."

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