

Cash Buys Congressional Obedience

TO PARAPHRASE a catchy ad slogan; "If you don't own a congressman, get one. You'll enjoy doing business with special interests."

This takeoff slogan is not being advertised commercially but it is being practiced with big money. Washington reporters say campaign financing is the crucial source of votes and power. The same may be true of legislators, on a smaller scale.

Distributing literature, soliciting votes by telephone and making speeches in civic clubs in support of candidates will gain the officeseekers' appreciation. But it is people with open purses who can demand and get congressional obedience.

Candidates and officeholders who can obtain healthy campaign funds are saved from the costs of seeking election and often their bank accounts grow for personal purposes. Recently, there was speculation about what ~~referring~~ congressmen would do with sizable leftover campaign funds. None mentioned returning the money to the donors.

It is now known how many differ-

ent groups there are that solicit or provide cash contributions for candidates. Last year, it was reported 157 organizations with varying amounts of money joined together to perpetuate deficit spending and protest budget cuts.

Early this month, the president of the 1.6 million-member teachers union, the National Education Association, declared that group would wage an all-out political drive in 1982 "because there can be no educational excellence without political power."

Environmentalists are amassing a \$2.5 million campaign to elect allies to Congress. Similar groups are doing likewise.

A spokeswoman for the National Women's Political Caucus, backer of the defeated Equal Rights Amendment, says that group will pour \$3 million into 1984 political races to elect ~~their~~ congressmen.

The political action committee of the 12,000-member National Association of Home Builders is raising \$2 million to attract attention to its de-

mands for more help for the housing industry.

Politically potent lobby groups keep careful scores on how congressmen vote and allocate their funds accordingly. They may contribute to re-elect those who vote their way and help opponents of those who do not. This is one way to buy votes.

A number of these political lobbies publicize their score sheets, including Americans for Democratic Action, Americans for Constitutional Action, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the AFL-CIO, and others. Their score sheets may serve as "buyers guides" for smaller organizations that can't afford to do the research.

An observation attributed to G.K. Chesterton says it well: "We are past the point where being a capitalist is the only way of becoming a politician and we are dangerously near the point where being a politician is the quickest way of becoming a capitalist."

Congressmen may orate, but money talks!