

Lay loot bought the White House

By Greg Palast

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When the feds swoop down and cuff racketeers, they also load the vans with all the perp's ill-gotten gains: stacks of cash, BMWs, whatever. Their associates have to cough up the goodies too: lady friends must give up their diamond rocks. Under the racketeering law, RICO, even before a verdict, anything bought with the proceeds of the crime goes into the public treasury.

But there seems to be special treatment afforded those who loaded up on the 'bennies' of Ken Lay's crimes. If the G-men don't know where the tainted loot is cached, try this address: 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Ask for George or Dick.

Ken Lay and his Enron team are the Number One political career donors to George W. Bush. Mr. Lay and his Mrs., with no money to pay back bilked creditors, still managed to personally put up \$100,000 for George's inaugural Ball plus \$793,110 for personal donations to Republicans. Lay's Enron team dropped \$4.2 million into the party that let Enron party.

OK now, Mr. President, give it back – the millions stuffed in the pockets of the Republican campaign kitty stolen from his Enron retirees.

And what else did Ken Lay buy with the money stolen from California electricity customers? Answer: the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Just before George Bush moved to Washington, Kenny-Boy handed his hand-picked president-to-be the name of the man Ken wanted as Chairman of the commission charged with investigating Enron's thievery. In a heartbeat, George Bush appointed Ken's boy, Pat Wood.

Think about that: the criminal gets to pick the police chief. Well, George, give it back. Dump Wood and end the "de-criminalization" of electricity price-gouging that you and Cheney and Wood laughably call "de-regulation." Give us back the government Lay bought with crime cash.

And while we're gathering up the ill-gotten loot, let's stop by Brother Jeb's. The Governor of Florida picked up a cool \$2 million from a Houston fundraiser at the home of Enron's former president long AFTER the company went bankrupt. Enron, not incidentally,

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obtained half a billion of Florida state pension money – which has now disappeared down the Enron rat-hole.

And Mr. Vice-President, don't you also have something to give back? In secret meetings with Dick Cheney in the Veep's bunker prior to the inauguration and after, you let Ken and his cohorts secretly draft the nation's energy plan – taking a short break to eye oil field maps of Iraq. Let us remember that the President's sticky-fingered brothers Neil and Marvin were on Enron's payroll, hired to sell pipelines to the Saudis. The Saudis didn't bite, but maybe a captive Iraq would be more pliant.

So, Mr. Law and Order President, please follow the law and give up the Energy Plan that Mr. Lay bought with other people's money.

When I worked as a racketeering investigator for government, nothing was spared, including houses bought with purloined loot. Let there be no exception here. It's time to tape up the White House gate and hang the sign: "Crime Scene: Property to be Confiscated. Vacate Premises Immediately."

Greg Palast is an internationally recognized expert on electricity deregulation and power company racketeering. Co-author of the United Nations guide to power industry regulation, Palast's investigation of Enron won Britain's prize for top business story of the year in 1998 (with Antony Barnett of the Observer). Palast investigated Enron's influence on the Bush Administration for BBC Television's newsmight and his expose of Ken Lay's manipulation of the California power markets and litigation won a 2004 Project Censored Award from California State University at Sonoma's Journalism School. Palast's book, the New York Times bestseller, "The Best Democracy Money Can Buy," includes a summary of his investigations on Enron: "California Reamin': the real story of deregulation and the power pirates."