

CREATING USA CYCLING by Les Earnest

In 1993 I initiated the reorganization that produced USA Cycling (USAC). However my proposal, which provided democratic representation of the membership was modified through collusion between commercial interests and the USCF staff so that a majority of the USAC Board would represent commercial interests that constituted less than 1% of the membership.

Through a parliamentary maneuver, I got an amendment on the ballot that would restore democracy but in another thoroughly crooked transaction the written arguments supporting the undemocratic proposal were distributed to the voters while my arguments were withheld. At the annual meeting the confused electorate foolishly adopted the bylaws supported by the commercial junta.

In subsequent years I made several attempts to fix this problem but each time the USAC staff somehow made ballot formatting "mistakes" that further confused the electorate and allowed the commercial junta, then led by Mike Plant, to retain control. In early 1999 Plant called a Board meeting with a secret agenda in which the commercial interests attempted to consolidate their power by removing members' voting rights and putting the Thom Weisel on the Board of Directors. Weisel is a San Francisco investment banker who had organized the USA Cycling Development Foundation as a "charitable nonprofit corporation" and then used it as a political action committee to take over USAC.

However they did this in an illegal manner, so I decided to sue. Happily I was able to get Andrew Rosen in Colorado to handle the case. I put up most of the money but also formed a Fund for Cycling Reform and solicited donations via the Usenet newsgroup rec.bicycles.racing, which I had organized a few years earlier. We eventually won that suit on appeal, which resulted in Weisel and his henchman being removed from the USAC Board.

In my opinion much of the responsibility for this mess is attributable to the U.S. Congress, given that their "Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act" grants national governing bodies for Olympic sports, such as USAC, monopoly control of access to international competition but imposes no requirement for democratic representation of the participants. Thus, inasmuch as there is some serious money to be made in international competition since pro athletes have been admitted to the Olympics, it pays for commercial interests to organize takeovers of these "charitable nonprofit corporations" that oversee their business interests. Getting that fixed will be a serious challenge in that changing laws that are supported by groups with big bucks is extremely difficult in our current form of government. Nevertheless that is one of my goals.