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FORMER CONGRESSMAN WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO FOLLOW HIS CONSCIENCE

by

D. Bruce Shine

Whether you agree with Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX) or not, you have to acknowledge he marches to his own tune. Unfortunately, there are too few in Congress today who listen to their conscience instead of the political action committees or refuse special interest money.

Congress has not always been leased out to the special interests, and campaign money hasn't always ruled the day.

Let me tell you about a friend and courageous, honest former Republican Congressman from Illinois who has followed his conscience. His name is Paul Findley, and yes, he's been to Kingsport.

Back in the late 1960's Findley at my invitation came to Kingsport and gave the main address at the Jaycee's annual banquet for Kingsport's "Young Man of the Year". Findley was introduced by then Congressman Jimmy Quillen and spoke for about 20 to 25 minutes. The New York Times carried a wire story on his remarks the next day.

Boots Duke, Gardner Hammond, Frank Gibson and Bill Ring will remember the occasion, for they all attended that night.

Elected to the House in 1960, in a general election campaign costing less than \$20,000, he served until 1983 when he lost his race for re-election to now U.S. Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) because he refused to back off his convictions.

In recent months his autobiography, *Speaking Out*, has been published by

Lawrence Hill Books (\$26.95). It is Findley's fourth book, one of which (*They Dare To Speak Out: People and institutions Confront Israel's Lobby*) was translated into five languages and sold 325,000 copies, but more on that later.

A veteran of World War II with service in the South Pacific, Findley entered the Navy shortly after graduation from Illinois College in his hometown of Jacksonville, Ill.

While in college, Findley read Clarence K. Streit's book "*Union Now*" published in 1939 on the verge of World War II. Streit, a New York Times reporter covering the League of Nations, urged the creation of a union of western democracies to combat Nazi Germany. Streit's "Atlantic Union" would possess common citizenship, a customs-free zone, a common currency, a common defense force, and postal system, thereby creating a political federation while maintaining individual sovereignty. The book was an outstanding success and garnered followers, on the left and the right in this country and abroad. Streit's spent the remainder of his life advancing the concept.

At one point supporters of Streit's "Atlantic Union" concept ranged from Richard Nixon, Barry Goldwater, Nelson Rockefeller, to Estes Kefauver and Hubert Humphrey. Owen J. Roberts, a Supreme Court justice, felt so strongly about Streit's Atlantic Union, that he resigned from the court in the mid-1940's to devote his time to working toward a union of the western democracies.

After WWII, Findley worked as Assistant Editor of Streit's magazine *Freedom & Union*, a publication which still exist and is currently published by The Streit Council, a Washington based think tank dedicated to advancing Streit's ideas. Findley is a member of The Streit Council's board of directors.

Supportive of NATO, an outgrowth of Streit's concept of a common defense force

in this nation and Europe, Findley played an active role among NATO parliamentarians.

Findley, whose background is that of a newspaper publisher, was one of the first Republican congressional leaders in the 1960s to question the wisdom of our involvement in Viet Nam. In latter years he expressed similar concerns about our involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Along with Hubert H. Humphrey, while in Congress, Findley authored legislation, the Famine Prevention Program, to feed those throughout the world in need of food, a major element of America's foreign policy.

It was Findley who led the congressional effort and achieved enactment of the War Powers Act of 1973, which requires the President to seek congressional approval before making war. Unfortunately, presidents have not always adhered to its provisions, including President Obama with his 2010 increase of combat forces in Afghanistan.

It was Findley's concern begun in the 1970's over America's unquestioning support of Israel to the detriment of Palestinian human rights for which Findley will be best remembered. During the past 40 years, Findley has developed friendships with Middle East leaders and has shown by these relationships that not all American political leaders are blind to the need for a balanced American relationship between Israel and the Palestinians.

In 1980 the Illinois' legislature redrew the state's congressional districts, making Republican Findley's district 55 percent Democratic. In 1982, Israel's political arm in the United States, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), made Findley a target for defeat. AIPAC raised hundreds of thousands of dollars from American

Zionists to turn Findley out of office. These efforts were successful. He lost by 1,407 votes, less than 1 percent out of nearly 200,000 votes cast.

Today at 90 at home in Jacksonville Ill., Findley remains a voice, as his autobiography evidences, for those issues for which he believes. Findley's former congressional seat was once held by Lincoln, and like Lincoln Findley can look back upon a life dedicated to the principles he espoused.

Since leaving Congress, Findley's activities have spanned the world providing him with a sphere of influence evidencing that political defeat need not and will not silence men of principle who dare to speak out.

Paul Findley is a hero for those seeking a life of principle to emulate.

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