

The American people have been taken hostage to a broken system.

Dylan Ratigan

Host of "Morning Meeting with Dylan Ratigan" on MSNBC

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It is a system that remains in place to this day.

A system where bank lobbyists have been [spending](#) in record numbers to make sure it stays that way.

A system that corrupts the most basic principles of competition and fair play, principles upon which this country was built.

It is a system that so far has [forced](#) the taxpayer to provide the banks with the use of \$14 trillion from the Federal Reserve, much of the \$7 trillion outstanding at the US Treasury and \$2.3 trillion at the FDIC.

A system partially built by the very people who currently advise our President, run our Treasury Department and are charged with its reform.

And most stunningly -- it is a system that no one in our government has yet made any effort to fundamentally change.

Like health care, this is a referendum on our government's ability to function on behalf of the American people. Ask yourself how long you are willing to be held hostage? How long will you let our elected officials be the agents of those whose business it is to exploit our government and the American people at any cost?

As hostages -- was there any sum of money we wouldn't have given AIG?

Why did we pay Goldman Sachs and all the other banks 100 cents on the dollar for their contracts with AIG, using taxpayer money, while we forced GM and others to take massive payment cuts?

Why hasn't any of the bonus money paid to the CEOs that built this financial nuclear bomb been clawed back?

And more than anything else -- why does the US Congress refuse to outlaw the most anti-competitive structure known to our economy, one summed up as TOO BIG TOO FAIL?

It has become startlingly clear that we as a country, and I as a journalist, had made a grave error in affording those who built and ran those banks and insurance companies the honorable treatment of being called capitalists. When in fact the exact opposite was true, these people were more like vampires using the threat of Too Big Too Fail to hold us hostage and collect ongoing ransom from the US Government and the American taxpayer.

This was no unlucky accident. The massive spike in unemployment, the utter destruction of retirement wealth, the collapse in the value of our homes, the worst recession since the Great Depression all resulted directly from these actions.

Even with all that -- the only changes that have been made, have been made to prop up and hide the massive flaws on behalf of those who perpetuated them. Still utterly nothing has been done to disclose the flaws in this system, improve it or rebuild it.

Last fall was an awakening for me, as it was for many in our country.

And yet, our Congress has yet to open its eyes, much less do anything about it. In fact conditions have never been better for the banks or worse for the rest of us.

Why is this? Who does our Government work for? How much longer will we as Americans tolerate it? And what, if anything, can we do about it?

As we approach the anniversary of the bailouts for our banks and insurers -- and watch the multi-trillion taxpayer-funded programs at the Federal Reserve continue to support banks and subsidize their multibillion bonus pools, we must ask if our politicians represent the interests of America? Or those who would rob America of its money and its future?

As a country, we must demand that our politicians stop serving those whose business models are based on systemic theft and start serving those who seek to create value for others -- the workers, innovators and investors who have made this country great.

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