

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Martha Stewart: victim of bad politics

While the petty and jealous delight in the temporary downfall of Martha Stewart, a woman who built a billion dollar business from the ground up, maybe we ought to look at what's really going on here. Martha is, indeed, stewing in her own juices, but why? She sold her stock of ImClone before it was announced that an anti-cancer drug, Erbitux, was not approved by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA.) Stewart had a standing order with her stockbroker to automatically sell the stock should the value fall below \$60, which it did.

Erbitux has since been proven to work, so as one columnist has suggested, that if it weren't for the incompetence of the FDA, none of this would have happened. In addition, Stewart saved about \$40,000 because of the trade, which to a billionaire is a drop in the bucket.

Stewart is not even charged with inside trading, which was the original claim, but with obstruction of justice, conspiracy and securities fraud because she told the prosecutors and the world that she is innocent. They are saying she is lying and that is a crime. As Jay Leno said, to the government lying is a crime, unless of course, you are starting a war.

It should also be noted that the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, James B. Comey, is an ambitious attorney who wants to fall in the footsteps of former Mayor of New York, Rudy Guiliani. A good, juicy, celebrity trial is just what he needs. Most attorneys and prosecutors don't think the charges against Stewart have any merit, but the U.S. Justice department has another gripe about Martha Stewart – she contributes generously to the Democratic Party. Well, there you have it. U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft and a totally Republican-controlled federal government can't have a brilliantly successful woman who has moved right up to the economic table with the big boys, continue to be in the money.

The other question to ask is — why hasn't the government prosecuted Ken Lay of Enron and the officers of WorldCom? After all, Martha didn't leave pensioners penniless and cause power brownouts in the state of California, as Ken Lay and his cohorts did. She didn't bring down her company, which employs thousands of people, because she cooked the books or lied to everyone, including the government. Her company was at peak performance under her leadership. If she is not allowed to lead it, what a nice contribution the justice



department will have made to a floundering economy by causing an increasingly successful company to fail, putting many employees out of work, when their only crime was to work for a company led by a controversial woman.

We must remember that Martha Stewart was not indicted for insider trading because after a year of investigating, the U.S. Attorneys office could not prove it. So they have cooked up other crimes just to get her.

"It is politics, not the pursuit of justice, which is driving this case," says a columnist on the internet. "Stewart is well connected politically, but it is to Democrats, who control none of the branches of government at the present time. Her wealth and public persona make her a convenient target for a very political U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Attorneys who see the example of the Guiliani path to fame and fortune."

I rarely watched the Martha Stewart Living show, but I've always been impressed with her incredible knowledge and drive. Kmart, who carries her line of house wares, is backing her and well they should. Many people seem to recognize that she is being railroaded into failure by a bunch of arrogant, politically motivated men in our Justice Department.

Her trial starts on January 18th. If Martha Stewart lands in prison or is divested of her company because of these trumped up charges, we'd better start a revolution. This has happened before under Republican leadership. Why do we choose to live in this kind of dictatorial atmosphere?

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