

New York politics

纽约政治

Tarnished Silver

褪去光环的西尔弗

A prosecutor takes on New York state's culture of corruption

一个检查官呈现出纽约腐败文化

The six-million-dollar-man

拥有六百万美元的男人

"CORRUPTION'S such an old song that we can sing along in harmony/ And nowhere is it stronger than in Albany." These lines from "Hamilton", a musical about Alexander Hamilton now playing in New York, got an especially loud laugh on January 22nd. That morning Sheldon Silver, the long-serving and powerful Speaker of the New York state Assembly, was arrested by the FBI and indicted in a federal court on five corruption charges. Each charge could carry a sentence of 20 years.

"腐败是一首如此古老的歌曲，以至于我们可以独自娓娓唱来，并且这里的腐败之风比奥尔巴尼更强。"这些句子来自于"汉密尔顿"，一个有关亚历山大·汉密尔顿的音乐剧 1 月 22 日就在在纽约上演，并反响强烈。那天早晨，长期就职于议会并且拥有强大发言权的纽约州众议院议长谢尔顿·西尔弗，被美国联邦调查局逮捕，并在联邦法庭上被指控五项腐败事实，每项罪名均面临最高 20 年刑期。

According to the complaint, Mr Silver, a Democrat who has served in the Assembly for 38 years and has been Speaker for 21, received more than \$6m from two law firms. This included \$700,000 in "bribes and kickbacks" for inducing "real-estate developers with business before the state" to use a particular property-law firm; \$5.3m from Weitz and Luxenberg, a law firm that handles personal-injury cases.

根据投诉，在议会任职了 38 年并且担任发言人 21 年的民主党人西尔弗先生，从两个律师事务所收受了超过 600 万美元的资金。这其中包括，通过给一个律师事务所介绍房地产商而获得的 70 万美元回扣。以及从一家处理人身伤害案件的法律公司韦茨卢森博格那里获得的 530 万美金。

Among other things, he allegedly directed state grants to a doctor who then referred clients to an unsuspecting Weitz for asbestos lawsuits. Preet Bharara, the prosecutor, said that Mr Silver had amassed "a tremendous personal fortune—through the abuse of his political power". He denies it all. The law firms are not accused of wrongdoing.

在其他方面，他涉嫌直接将州资金支持给予一位医生，而这位医生后来又涉及了石棉诉讼案。检察官普里特·巴拉拉说，西尔弗已经"通过滥用他的政治权利积累了巨额的个人财富。"他否认了这一切，这个律师事务所没有因为任何不法行为而受到指控。

In 2011 Citizens Union, a watchdog, reported that legislators in Albany were more likely to leave office under a cloud than in a coffin. Since 2000, 28 have left in disgrace and four have been indicted. The New York Post reported that Mr Silver regularly sent a \$100 cheque to the campaign fund of a former district attorney. The story goes that if the cheque was cashed, Mr Silver would joke that he knew he was not in any trouble.

在 2011 年，监督者公民联盟，报道说奥尔巴尼的议员活在强权政治的阴影下而不是走向垮台。自 2000 以来，28 位立法者已经引咎辞职并且有四位已经被起诉。纽约邮报报道，西尔弗定期会向前检察官的竞选基金发送一张 100 美元的支票。故事是这样的，如果支票兑现，他会开玩笑说他知道他不会有任何的麻烦。

That cavalier attitude was hardly surprising, given the power he had. Most legislators were firmly under his thumb. He could advance or kill legislation with a nod. Sensible ideas like congestion pricing did not even make it to the Assembly floor. Power in Albany is entrenched in the hands of the governor, the Senate majority leader (usually a Republican) and the Assembly Speaker (usually a Democrat). These "three men in a room" often give their underlings just a few hours to review bills the size of encyclopedias; lawmakers then vote as they are told, for fear of being denied money for their districts.

那傲慢的态度并不奇怪，因为他有权力。大多数的议员们坚定地服从于他。他可以轻松地将立法提前或者扼杀。诸如堵车费这样的明智想法是不可能进入议会议题中的。在奥尔巴尼，权力总是牢牢掌握在参议院多数党领袖（通常是共和党人）和议会议长（通常是民主党）这些执政者手中。“三个人在一个房间里”，经常只会给下属只有小时的时间来审查各式各样的票据，议员们因为担心其所在的区域失去加薪机会而不得不按照他们的指示投票。

The once-obedient rank-and-file of the Assembly at first appeared to stand by their leader, but then abandoned him. On January 27th they announced that a new Speaker would be appointed in February. The Assembly is now in chaos, while lawmakers elbow each other aside for his job. Meanwhile, important budget negotiations simply have to wait.

这个井然有序的议会一开始由他们的领导者建立，而领导者在后来却被议会遗弃。1月27日，他们发表声明称将在二月份选出新的发言人。议会现在一片混乱，议员们互相推诿工作。同时，重要的预算谈判也只能等待了。

The affair has caused some to call for term limits for lawmakers. Such calls have been heard before, but most changes have been token. During his campaign for governor of New York in 2010, Andrew Cuomo vowed to clean up Albany. But his anti-corruption law and an ethics task-force did not go far enough. Later Mr Cuomo went one better, setting up the Moreland Commission to root out public corruption. But he disbanded it last March with, curiously enough, Mr Silver's enthusiastic backing.

该事件也引起了一些有关对国会议员的任期进行限制的呼吁。这样的倡议在之前就已经提出来过电话已经听说过，但绝大部分的改变已经被实施。2010年，在他竞选纽约州州长的期间内，安德鲁发誓要肃清奥尔巴尼。但是他的反腐败法和道德工作推动力远远还不够。后来科莫想到了一个更好的办法，建立莫兰委员会来根除社会腐败。但奇怪的是，在三月份他就在西尔弗的大力支持下将委员解散了。