

Editorial

Politics or Education?

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There were a few red faces recently when some Congressmen, poking into the tax-exempt status of some 15,000 charitable foundations, uncovered one which apparently was a conduit for secret Central Intelligence Agency disbursements.

The embarrassment over the unwitting exposure was eventually overcome, and the offending House subcommittee went on to scrutinize the other 14,999 foundations.

But on its rebound from its CIA gaffe, the committee seemed to get its other foot deeper into its mouth. The committee turned to an organization called the Life Line Foundation, terming it more political than educational or charitable, and questioning if it should retain its tax exemption.

Persons outside of Congress also have characterized Life Line as a rather right-wing outfit, and so we looked quite closely at some of the material which the foundation is broadcasting or mailing reportedly to hundreds of thousands of citizens in 47 states.

The material which Life Line sent us after it broke into the news might be atypical. But judging from the sampling, it contains good thoughts. Here, for example, is an excerpt from a Washington broadcast by Life Line not long ago:

Courtesy is the solution for many ills. . . . The pages of history are replete with evidence of the importance of courtesy. Many years ago, a nondescript couple showed up at the office of the president of Harvard University.

"You will have to be brief," the president said tartly. "I'm a very busy man and can give you only a few moments." Not wanting to impose . . . the man and his wife quietly got up and left. They had come to give Harvard millions. Instead, they gave to start a new university in the West, named for the donor—Leland Stanford.

In this day of Khrushchevs and Castros, some unthinking people have begun to equate good manners—or consideration for others—with weakness. Nothing could be more erroneous. The strongest . . . are, as a rule, the most considerate of others.

America is now engaged in a war of ideas with the mistaken enemies of freedom. If we lose this war, there will be no need for a shooting war. . . . But we do not need to lose. We can begin winning. And the place to start is with the individual.

Let's start by convincing Americans that concern for others is a sure antidote for atheistic communism. Let's begin by practicing courtesy. . . .

Millions of Americans, one by one, by showing courtesy and concern for others, can reverse the destructive trend in the world today.

Here ends the quoted excerpt from the Life Line broadcast. Courtesy and anti-communism are combined, and the over-all approach is laced with what some might call ethics and others call Christianity. It is all heady stuff, and who should gainsay it? We don't.

And without buying the whole package of Life Line's output, because its contents have not been fully disclosed to us, we still can more or less go along with the comments of the controversial Texan, H. L. Hunt, who is chief sponsor of this particular foundation.

"If pride in patriotism," Hunt declared, "recognition of internal and external Communist aggressions, and endorsement of financial responsibility are deserving of being called 'extreme,' then Life Line might be so labeled."

Hunt went on to say that if Congressmen set themselves up as arbiters of what is "educational" and what is "political," they are going to end up by tampering with the rights of free expression. We think he has a powerful point there.