

Correspondence

Foundations

To the Editors: It is not "my assumption," as Richard Neuhaus avers ("Foundations and Freedom," *Worldview*, February), nor is it my will, "that anything that escapes going into government coffers is in effect a government expenditure" ("property?").

I believe that the foundations should be "controlled by government officials accountable to and removable by the people" because of the way they obtained and obtain their enormous resources.

The tax laws have exempted both contributions to these foundations and the subsequent earnings of those contributions. If both their contributors and the foundations themselves had paid their taxes, like all the rest of us, most of the funds now spent on projects approved by, and of special interest solely to, a private elite would have gone, instead, for purposes reflecting the public will and designed to promote the public weal—or, at least, for projects for which the American people could hold their elected representatives responsible.

Neither I nor any other "faction of the labor movement" of which I am aware argues that the foundations should be destroyed. But since they accumulated their vast holdings purely by virtue of what amounts to a public largesse, we believe that they should be subject to public control.

In charging that I and the teachers union are "read[y] to shut the [school] system down when[ever] the people and their elected representatives attempt to interfere in its operation," Mr. Neuhaus lapses into mere demagoguery.

The "people [of New York State] and their elected representatives" have given us the right to bargain collectively on a range of matters affecting our terms and conditions of employment. Our strikes, in New York City, have come either (1) because the school board, in its role as employer, had refused to bargain in good faith, as required by the law, or (2) because the board had refused to respect and enforce those

contract provisions to which it had agreed, and had refused even to require compliance with its own policies and with the law.

Our union does not have and does not seek that control over the public schools which Mr. Neuhaus attributes to us. We have quite enough to do simply representing the legitimate interests of our members. We respect the public's legitimate interests and the public's legitimate role. If certain elements in the community had returned that respect, our most bitter strikes—those precipitated by arbitrary punishments and by illegal attacks on the job rights of teachers—would never have been called at all.

Albert Shanker

*President,
United Federation of Teachers
New York, N.Y.*

To the Editors: Among the most important contributions to the American giving impulse and to innovation in humane and cultural services has been the establishment and effective implementation of the philanthropic foundation. I believe that foundations are one of the most important elements in improving the American condition. We must do everything within our power to preserve the freedom of the foundation to make choices as to whom and how and what they will support in the marketplace of ideas.

No matter how many mistaken premises, no matter how many faulty ideas have been propagated with foundation support, the ultimate objective of enriching the opportunity to try new things suited to new times has been well served by the foundation concept. I believe that we must do everything in our power to keep it so. The American foundation, when it works within the law's intent, is one of the most important factors in shaping "the diversity essential to Democratic society. . . ." We must do everything we can to encourage the dissemination of new ideas and to permit them to be tested in social action without further government or private commitment until they are proven.

Jacob K. Javits

United States Senate

To the Editors: I want to continue the very interesting discussion of foundations and American freedoms begun by Richard Neuhaus in "Foundations and Freedom." This is a key problem for those of us concerned about the continuing homogenization of our society and its sharp (indeed increasing) concentration of power. Neuhaus puts his finger on the right issue in speaking about the tradition of voluntary associations and their relationship to the actual practice of freedom in our country—a fact which marveled Tocqueville long ago. But I am less certain than Neuhaus of the one-to-one correlation between private foundations and the multiplicity of powers which break open a society and make the concrete practice of public freedom possible.

So I want to continue the discussion Neuhaus happily began, hoping that others may add their insights in these pages. I want to do this by inquiring into the growing concentration of economic power in our society and its relationship to the business-wise use of (tax-free) foundations to consolidate intragenerational family corporate control. Also, I want to consider the overall practice of foundations vis-à-vis the underwriting of alternate systems of conceptualization and evaluations to the establishment consensus. Put differently, is the distance which Neuhaus seems to assume between "political" Washington and foundations headquartered in New York City, or wherever, really that great? Or is there much more of an "old boy" network between the two which does more to rigidify than to pluralize our social discourse?

First use of foundations to consolidate family business control. Control is the name of the game in the arena of large corporate marketplace. And control can mean as little as 1 or 2 per cent of the voting stock of a particular company. Thus Wall Street insiders have concluded that a family interest group such as the Mellon/Scaiff group of Pittsburgh has gained effective control not just of the Mellon Bank but of Alcoa Aluminum, Gulf Oil, and Westing-
(continued on next page)