

THE FOUNDATION MACHINE

(By Edith Kermit Roosevelt)

WASHINGTON.—The appointment of Alan Pifer, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to head a special education group for President-elect Nixon raises anew the problem of Congressional oversight over policy-setting, tax-exempt foundations.

Pifer is seeking to set educational priority and to win Presidential blessing for a strong policy center for higher education "close to the summit of the Federal Government." This would provide a channel for a tight, interlocking directorate of giant foundations, corporations and New York-Washington political law firms to exert an increasing monopoly over American cultural life.

But the road ahead is not as smooth as the "philanthropoids" might wish. They must cope with increasing resentment over their attempt to dominate the educational scene—some of it by professional educators as in New York City. There is no question, too, that the public has become aware that behind lofty claims of disinterested public service, there exists a politically motivated foundation machine—an Eastern Establishment mafia determined to brook no interference in its affairs.

In an attempt to dampen and control this mounting criticism, Pifer suggested in the Carnegie Corporation's annual report that foundations set up an independent commission to recommend forms of public accountability. This commission would serve as a lightning rod to deflect criticism to the point where it becomes manageable by the foundations themselves. It would ensure that no outside body that is free of ties to the big foundations could properly exercise objective oversight over their activities. From such a haughty citadel, foundation publicists could brand us "anti-intellectual" and "crackpot" any objective, honest attempt to delve into their supposedly philanthropic operations.

Even now the Carnegie Corporation is facing protests from parents whose children are exposed to the textbooks financed by the foundation under its "Project Read." This project provides programmed textbooks for schools, particularly in "culturally deprived areas." An estimated five million school children throughout the Nation are using the material in the programmed textbooks produced by the Behavioral Research Laboratories, Palo Alto, Calif.

This writer has gone over these textbooks in the "Reading" series financed by the Carnegie Corporation and authored by M. W. Sullivan, a linguist. These foundation-funded books reveal a fire pattern that amounts to an incitement to the sort of arson and guerrilla warfare that took place in Watts, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. On one page in the series we find a torch next to a white porch. The caption reads invitingly, "a torch, a porch." Further along, there is a picture of a man smiling while he holds a torch aloft. The caption beneath it reads: "This man has a t—rch in his hand." The children are required as an exercise to insert the missing letter to fill in the word torch. The next picture shows the burning torch touching the porch, with a caption, "a torch on a porch." Thus, the children are led in stages to the final act that suggests itself quite naturally. The picture of a burning house is shown with a caption that predicts: "This shack will burn up." The next picture in the series shows a hand moving the hands of a clock to twenty-five minutes past one, while this same shack is being devoured by flames. The message is plain: an example of a man who deliberately commits the criminal act of setting a home on fire.

Tragically, these young children are being indoctrinated with a pattern of anti-social ideas that will completely and violently alienate them from the mainstream of American middle-class values. Other pictures in the Carnegie-funded, supposedly educational texts include a comparison of a flag with a rag, the ransoming of an American soldier in a Chinese prison, a picture that shows people kneeling in a church to say their prayers beside a picture of a horse being taught to kneel in the same way, a reference to a candidate elected to public office as a "ruler," a picture of a boy stealing a girl's purse, and another boy throwing pointed darts at a companion whom he uses as target practice.

Understandably, the Carnegie-financed books are causing concern to local law-enforcement officials, many of whom have to cope with riot or near-riot conditions. Ellen Morphonios, prosecutor for Florida in its attorney's office, and a chief of its Criminal Court Division, said recently: "It's a slap in the face and an insult to every member of the Negro community, saying that the only way to communicate with Negro children is to show a robber or violence. It's like subliminal advertising. If this isn't subversive and deliberately done as part of a master plan . . . Only a sick mind could have produced it."

Repeated instances of this type of anti-social activity obviously constitute a strong argument for removing the tax-exempt status of these educational foundations, and for curbing their activities by Federal regulations and Congressional oversight.