

FOUNDATIONS AND THE SCHOOLS . . .

BY CAMILLE WAGNER

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MANY OF US are indebted to David Hawpe for his *Courier-Journal* column (Sunday, Dec. 4) highlighting the Dec. 16 *Forbes* magazine article, "Trojan horse money." However, he might have spent a little more time actually seeking documentation supporting the information given. That he apparently wanted only an opportunity to write a derisive diatribe is illustrated by the fact that he called neither the author of the article nor myself to ask for documentation. He did call the superintendent of Owensboro schools, though the child in question might have attended a Daviess County school.

Unfortunately, instead of seriously considering the main thrust of the *Forbes* article, Mr. Hawpe tried to pass on a rather altered version of a few points from the article. Just for the record, the following words and phrases did not appear in the *Forbes* article: "conspiracy," "a secular humanist subversion of parental responsibility," "Trilateral Commission," "Bildbergers," and "Elders of Zion (who are they?)" These are Mr. Hawpe's own contributions — perhaps he knows something we don't! However, in view of his misrepresentation of the *Forbes* article, I suggest that *The Courier-Journal* publish it and let its readers decide for themselves.

No one has denied that the Casey Foundation funds some very worthwhile programs. It does not necessarily follow, however, that all of the projects it funds are benign. Nor does the fact that UPS's Oz Nelson is one of the chief promoters of KERA — and chairman of the Casey Foundation board — prove that all of Casey's grants are beyond reproach.

Here is the main point I wish to make: Kentucky has pursued and accepted many, many grants from numerous sources — including the Carnegie Foundation, which brought us KERA. Surely no one is naive enough to think that there are no strings attached to these grants. One of these, mentioned in *Forbes*, is the agreement Gov. Brereton Jones signed, which promised to give private medical data on Kentuckians to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to use for its own purposes or to sell. Aside from the complete disregard this shows for Kentuckians, is it even legal?

Kentucky appears to me to be a kept state. We are so tied up in these strings that we have surely lost much of our autonomy. It appears that certain legislation and/or regulations must be passed in response to certain grants which the bureaucracy of various Ken-

tucky agencies has accepted — apparently with little or no legislative oversight. In addition, we must put out millions of dollars to pay for what the foundations do not — particularly after grant money ends. I wonder if anyone in state government knows about all grants we are currently receiving — and what strings are attached.

With this letter, I am faxing copies of the "School Medical Examination Form — Sixth Grade Form," and the "School Medical Examination Form — Initial Entry." You will notice that each specifies that the genitalia are a part of the physical exam. Each is from the Kentucky Department of Education, KDEMIC approved 1671-410, and dated January 1993.

Please note that "All local boards of education shall require" the medical examination, and that a physician, advanced registered nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant or an Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis

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and Treatment (EPSDT) provider may perform and sign for the exam. (The periodic EPSDT examinations require an "unclothed physical examination" [907 KAR 1.034, Section 3 (1)(b)] for Medicaid-eligible children under age 21 [Section 1 (5)].)

Interestingly, each elementary and secondary school shall initiate and maintain throughout the pupil's attendance a cumulative health record for each pupil. "... A follow-up by the proper health or school authorities shall be made on each defect noted and the result shall be recorded." [704 KAR 4:020, Section 3 (1) Comprehensive School Health]. There is, in fact, a surprising preoccupation with the children's "defects."

Owensboro Supt. Bill Chandler states in Mr. Hawpe's article that the exams are given by nurses instead of doctors. The *Forbes* article did refer to a "doctor," though the parent has always spoken of having dealt with a nurse. However, that is not the point. The point is, whether performed by a nurse or a doctor, do these invasive procedures belong in the public school system?

In Mr. Hawpe's article, Supt. Chandler says, "There has never to my knowledge been anything that has been inappropriate, or anyone raising such an issue." However,

Sandy Barbour, School Health Coordinator for the Green River District Health Dept., which administers these examinations, recently said in the *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer* that a visual examination of the genitals is part of the physical exam. She adds that this examination is not done if the child or parent objects. Is the parent even informed of this option? If so, how and when? The *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer* article strangely fails to list that part of the exam when listing the other parts.

In the '93 Owensboro incident, the parent was not allowed in the room with her daughter and was told that the genital examination was necessary. When the mother refused, the attitude and demeanor of the nurse reduced this child to tears.

It is my hope that personnel in many school districts have the sensitivity to omit the genital exams. To do mass genital exams is truly abusing them all to find out if anyone else is abusing any of them. The *Forbes* article mentioned the lawsuit in Pennsylvania over this very thing — 59 little girls were lined up and given mass genital exams. Their parents were not there and not aware of the genital exam — some not even aware of the examination — some having already taken their daughters to their own doctors. Many of the girls were traumatized, sobbing, asking to please not have the genital exam, while they were told they had to have it.

The culprit in Kentucky is the Kentucky Department of Education, which should withdraw the requirement of the offending exam. The KDE should stop its efforts to manage children's health care and concentrate on education instead.

All of this was also going on during Mr. Hawpe's watch at *The Courier-Journal*. Are investigative reporters extinct now? It's not too late for a reporter to do some research on (1) what is happening in comprehensive school health programs, and (2) Kentucky's ties to foundations; how many and which of our state agencies and other state bodies can seek or accept grants, does the grant process include any meaningful legislative oversight, what amount of money must we pay out in order to receive each grant; what is the amount of each grant; is it for something we had intended to do or is it for something into which we were enticed; and exactly what strings are attached. That would be an appropriate response to an excellent *Forbes* article.

Special to The Courier-Journal

... DISTORTIONS ABOUT MEDICAL TESTS

RECENTLY I devoted a column to an unfortunate *Forbes* magazine article about Kentucky. In the space above today, we are publishing a response from Camille Wagner, of Parents and Professionals Involved in Education, who says I didn't seriously consider the main thrust of that *Forbes* piece.



DAVID HAWPE

Odd. I thought that's exactly what I did.

I've been in journalism since the sixth grade, when I became editor of *The Scout News* at Charles D. Jacob Elementary School.

Although I have clearer memories of the schoolyard softball field than I

do of the precise journalism instruction I got back then, I do remember being told that the headline describes the story.

In *Forbes* the overline said, "Big foundations are imposing their private agendas on state governments. How? By thinly disguised bribery." Below that the headline read: "Trojan horse money."

Now here's what I said: "The article's thesis is that private foundations are taking over — that they're overrun by social engineers who want to buy control of public policy."

You decide whether I was fair.

Meanwhile, since Ms. Wagner didn't think I was clear enough the first time, let me add this:

That *Forbes* article's thesis is bunk.

The writer, I believe, is reflecting the concerns of a small minority of conservative parents who fear that society is imposing repugnant values on innocent children — and that KERA is one example.

Sure, public education does involve a transfer of values. But the irony is that KERA empowers parents to participate fully in that exchange, in a more meaningful way than ever before. Each individual school is made accountable. Each is operated by a council with elected parent members. And social services are delivered through a family resource center, located right there in each school.

The whole point is to promote as much parent awareness and parent participation as possible, and to arrange for parents to do more than bake cookies and chaperone field trips.

The *Forbes* piece suggested that

real power is exercised covertly, by foundations that give money to the state for public programs.

And Ms. Wagner argues that "no one is naive enough to think that there are no strings attached" to the private foundation grants that the state has pursued and accepted, "including the Carnegie Foundation which brought us KERA."

That's just a monumental misreading of history. Or worse.

Foundation grants are minuscule, contrasted against state outlays. Besides, the Carnegie Foundation did not "bring us KERA." Rather, KERA grew out of a long, arduous grassroots effort to improve elementary and secondary education in Kentucky, nurtured by Gov. Martha Layne Collins, endorsed by Gov. Wallace Wilkinson, and protected by Govs. Brereton Jones and Paul Patton. The General Assembly created and funded the program, in an open and inclusive process. The debate over implementing and improving it continues, in a more or less responsible way.

Occasionally something like the *Forbes* article crops up, but not often.

In her letter today, Camille Wagner describes Kentucky as "a kept state." She argues, "We are so tied up in these strings that we have surely lost much of our autonomy."

What strings?

"Foundation grants are minuscule, contrasted against state outlays. Besides, the Carnegie Foundation did not 'bring us KERA.' Rather, KERA grew out of a long, arduous grassroots effort to improve elementary and secondary education in Kentucky. . . ."

She offers a copy of the medical examination form that was mentioned at the beginning of the infamous *Forbes* piece. She repeats the story of a state-required student medical exam that allegedly was mishandled three years ago in Owensboro. The child's mother (unnamed) is said to have been shocked because the doctor intended to include a genital examination that is "required by the Department of Education as part of an "intrusive program" that was "bankrolled by a private foundation."

I asked Jim Parks at the Department of Education about the medical exams that are required for children in Kentucky's public schools.

He points out that the document in question "is the form distributed by the department to schools and the medical community as a guide to the exams." Notice the word *guide*.

And, "The Kentucky Administrative Regulation which sets forth procedures for the required physicals references the form by name, but does not require any specific medical

procedures."

The form for the physicals that kids take "has been in effect for many years."

No foundation with suspect values dreamed up this form, or imposed it on Kentucky kids.

After I sent it to him, Jim Parks showed the form to several top policy makers in the department, all of whom have long experience in school administration, some of whom are parents of children who have had one of the required exams in recent years. Jim reported that, while the option of a visual genital exam apparently has been included for many years, probably decades, "no one is aware of any complaints or controversies about this being included as part of the examination or any questions being raised about the way medical professionals conduct the exam."

The department, showing more equanimity than I would have, is re-examining the issue in the backwash of the inflammatory *Forbes* piece, but as Mr. Parks said, "Apparently this is another case of a long-standing practice that has been performed responsibly by school and medical professionals — and understood and accepted by parents — being called into question by ideologues suffering from Big Brother paranoia."

Terry Vance, the department's school health consultant, explained in a post-*Forbes* memo that the Academy of Pediatrics in Kentucky supports this school physical exam form, which is "consistent with every physical examination form, regardless of where the form originates."

Ms. Wagner says she hopes "many school districts have the sensitivity to omit genital exams." She believes that doing "mass genital exams" amounts to "truly abusing" all children, in order to find out whether "anyone else is abusing any of them."

Well of course there are no "mass genital" exams. Kentucky school physicals are done individually, and are subject to parental control. Any not done that way would fall outside the rules.

And will some conservative Christian pediatrician please call Ms. Wagner to explain that there are sound reasons for medical professionals to look at all parts of the body during a physical exam? And that the line on the state form doesn't mean nurses or doctors are going to give sixth grade girls a pelvic exam?

Meanwhile, I suggest the state apply for a foundation grant to study the impact of rumor and innuendo on public policy.

Mr. Hawpe's column appears Sundays and Wednesdays in *The Forum*.