

Feb. 4, 2004

Response to National Review: Not Published

To The Editor:

The Heinz Endowments fully expected public scrutiny of our foundation to increase with the presidential candidacy of John Kerry, husband of Howard Heinz Endowment Chairman Teresa Heinz Kerry. But we did not expect such a reputable Web magazine as *National Review Online* to show such disregard for facts in reprinting Competitive Enterprise Institute Fellow Christopher Horner's column that implies our funding is somehow being used to secure nonprofits' support of Sen. Kerry's campaign ("*Playing Ketchup*," Jan. 28).

About the only thing Mr. Horner got right in his innuendo-laden column is his statement that "a quid pro quo involving a tax-exempt organization would be impermissible at any time." In fact, it would be a grave breach of legal and ethical standards.

One would expect a columnist implying such a serious allegation at least to observe the most basic rule of journalism, which is to check his facts with the target of his accusation before publishing it. Mr. Horner never did that, which suggests he did not want the facts to get in the way of his specious argument. Had he bothered to contact us, here is what we would have told him:

- Two independent boards oversee The Heinz Endowments, a pair of foundations created by Howard Heinz and his sister-in-law, Vira I. Heinz. An array of conservative, moderate and liberal viewpoints are represented on those boards, whose members ensure that foundation staff adhere to the highest ethical and legal standards, including those barring foundations from political activity, lobbying and self-dealing.
- The foundation supports a variety of programs, many of which would be championed by conservatives – charter schools, faith-based programs, projects to promote parental responsibility, and initiatives using market mechanisms to promote better environmental stewardship.
- The Endowments funds specific projects operated by the Tides Center of Western Pennsylvania, as do most of Pittsburgh's major foundations, including several conservative foundations. They support Tides for the same reason we do, which is that it provides management oversight and support to projects that are not mature or permanent enough to merit the formation of a separate nonprofit. Projects that we have supported through Tides include programs to test the employment skills of high school students, advance renewable energy and retain young people in Pittsburgh—hardly an extremist agenda.
- The Heinz Endowments is a separate and distinct organization from the Heinz Family Foundation, which has as its primary mission to support the Heinz

Awards, an annual program honoring the late Sen. John Heinz. The quarter-million dollar grant that Mr. Horner alleges went “to a group represented on the League of Conservation Voters board,” which he cites as his primary evidence of possible influence peddling, was in fact a Heinz Award to an *individual*, Peggy Shepard, who was selected by an independent jury for her work to promote children’s health in Harlem.

- The Earth Island Institute is not a “repeat beneficiary” of Heinz funding. In fact, it has never received funding from the Endowments and, as far as I can tell, only once received funding from the Heinz Family Foundation—a \$1,000 grant that 1999 Heinz Award recipient Peter Matthiessen, one of the nation’s most respected writers on environmental topics, requested be deducted from his own award amount.
- The Endowments’ support for Environmental Defense is based on that organization’s ability to deliver results for our region. We actively seek out grantees who strive to solve problems by bringing disparate stakeholders to the table and working to develop mutually acceptable solutions. It’s a commonsensical approach that we think is quintessentially American. Using just such an approach, Environmental Defense has worked with us to reduce pollution in our region’s rivers, improve local air quality, promote emissions trading, and help launch the H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics and the Environment.

As a newspaper editor, I never let my columnists file a column without first checking their facts with the people they were criticizing. Christopher Horner’s misleading article illustrates why that’s important, and not just as a matter of basic fairness. Ideological disagreements are fine, but they are no excuse for poor reporting.

Sincerely,

Maxwell King

*Maxwell King, president of The Heinz Endowments, is the former editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer.*