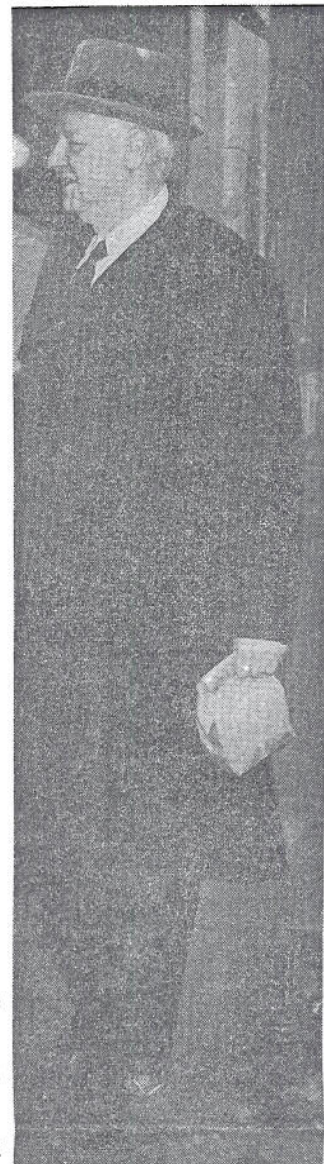


THE BILLIONAIRE

WHO JUST DOESN'T LIKE LUXURIES



H. L. HUNT: At 79, he's waging a one man war against Communism with his billions.



He
Brown Bags
His Lunch

By Max Hastings
London Express Service

DALLAS — It's not so very many months since the release of an improbable, and not very highly-acclaimed film named "Billion Dollar Brain," about a Texan oil millionaire who employs his wealth to found a secret army for the overthrow of the Communist regime in Russia.

I was still uncertain which film I was watching when I went to lunch with a Texan named H. L. Hunt, who just happens to be a billionaire. He also just happens to be devoting an enormous amount of time and energy to preventing the Communists from taking over the world.

It's not easy to say how much money and resources Hunt is putting into his fight against communism, because it is a little difficult to discover just where his activities begin and end.

But at the age of 79, having started with a few thousand dollars and creating an empire that encompasses canned foods, real estate, cotton, timber and — of course — oil, Hunt admits that his sole surviving ambition is to do what he can to "try and halt the progress of Communism and Communist infiltration into the free world."

'Completely Phony'

Hunt is still annoyed that the British Empire was liquidated "after our Government poured four or five billion dollars into Britain to try and help to save it, and that money merely ended up supporting Socialism."

He feels that the Ford, Rockefeller and other charitable foundations are "trying to destroy our republic," and that the War On Poverty is "completely phony."

Hunt, one should explain, does not believe in giving money to charities, or rather, it's reported that he only

gives to those which he controls. His first love is a radio program called "Lifeline," which is carried by a number of stations around America, and is devoted to stressing the dangers of Communism.

He is the author of such a volume of anti-Communist literature that it proved quite difficult to carry a selection out of his office unassisted. And he is now taking keen interest in a plan he formulated called "Youth Speakers For Freedom."

These are young people, preferably under 21 ("they make much more impact when they're young"), who travel around the country reminding America of the menace of Communists taking over "our cities and counties."

Confuses Supporters

Hunt is a man who sometimes confuses his supporters almost as much as his enemies. He voted for John F. Kennedy in 1960 ("I knew Kennedy's father was pretty much to the right, and I thought Jack would go as far to the right as his father wanted him to be"). Hunt then switched to Barry Goldwater in 1964, and now says in 1968 that he thinks George Wallace is "a real good man."

He feels that "tried and proven anti-Communists should be appointed to fill all posts" in the Government and he doesn't believe "there is any possibility of co-existence between Communism and the free world."

Hunt thinks that if Senator Joseph McCarthy, of anti-Communist notoriety, were still in the Senate, "we wouldn't be in the mess we're in now."

But, to cheer one up, he adds that he has his doubts about the advisability of a preventive war to halt the spread of Communism: "I doubt if war is required," he says. "It is a little too fatal."

Face to face, one could not say that Hunt looked very dangerous. Sitting in his office on the 29th floor of a brand

new skyscraper here, he just seems to be another white-haired, balding, slightly deaf old man, who rambles a lot before he can get to the point.

But it's quite amazing what you can accomplish with a billion or two behind you. Hunt has some 3000 people on his payroll, and shows no sign of diminishing energy with his years — he still works 10 hours a day and often six days a week.

His personal life is frugal. His is much the most spartan office in the building; bare, save for a picture of one of his sons who made a vast independent fortune at an early age, but has now been ill for several years.

Hunt drives himself to work every day in a modest sedan, bringing his lunch with him, and he prefers ready-made clothes.

Really, he admits, he simply doesn't like luxury. His only self-indulgence is a house copied from Mount Vernon, George Washington's home in Virginia — rebuilt several sizes larger — in which he lives with his wife and the younger of his 10 children.

But, characteristically, he even bought that for a bargain \$48,000 during a real estate slump.

Likes Plain, Simple Life

Hunt likes life plain and simple. He prefers plain food, thinks the Reader's Digest is the finest publication in America, and that welfare payments to the poor are robbing people of pride in accomplishment.

"I don't care about money for money's sake," he says, "but if one has the ability to make it, there's nothing wrong with doing so. I haven't got any hobbies or particular pleasures — I gave up playing golf 40 years ago."

Fortune magazine says Hunt is the third richest American after Paul Getty and Howard Hughes, but Hunt doesn't seem to mind too much about the finer distinctions.

"Back in 1948," he says, "Life magazine ran a cover story on me with a

caption 'Is this the richest man in the world?' I guess all the women in the world thought I must be unmarried because for the next few weeks I was sitting at home dealing with 2000 letters a day; people sending their life insurances, and pictures of nieces who had to have operations to stay alive and . . ." Hunt lost interest in his memories.

"The Government is wasting tax money," he said. "It is just throwing away oodles of money on foreign aid and welfare and things that don't do anyone any good."

"I'm not a very good anti-Communist," he mused, "not well enough informed — I don't have files or anything. I just get a lot of information from former FBI agents. Of course, the recent riots were Communist-inspired. Many of these social workers are just completely impractical."

'Birchers Not Effective'

"Would I say the Supreme Court were Communists? No, that would just end up in a round of name calling, and you'd go away and report that I think everyone in the Government is a Communist."

"Would I invade North Vietnam? I just think we should take the proper steps for the conduct of this war, and you can draw your own conclusions about what those are. . . ."

I left Hunt as he said that he didn't think the John Birch Society was very effective in the fighting against Communism:

"They're just rivals of our 'Lifeline,' which does far more good. But the president of the Birchers is one of the most astute anti-Communists in the country. . . ."

This is a man who has achieved commercial success beyond the dreams of avarice by his own unaided efforts. It seems almost incredible that when he looks under his bed every night, it is not for mice.