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A Salutary Reform

Justice William O. Douglas has now belatedly resigned the presidency of the Albert Parvin Foundation which since 1962 has paid him approximately \$12,000 annually in lieu of expenses. The Parvin Foundation's assets consisted initially of a first mortgage on the Hotel Flamingo in Las Vegas and subsequently, until a few months ago, of shares of stock in the Parvin-Dohrmann Company which owns three Las Vegas casinos.

The mere recital of these facts makes it clear that Justice Douglas should never have entered into a relationship with the Parvin Foundation. Although the foundation's program of university fellowships for students from underdeveloped countries is meritorious, nothing could justify a judge in associating his name and the aura of his office with any individual or organization involved in the Las Vegas gambling community.

Justice Douglas's association with Mr. Parvin and his foundation has some similarities with that of former Justice Abe Fortas with Louis Wolfson and his foundation. In both instances, the judges should have refrained from entering into a relationship with the sponsors of these foundations simply on grounds of propriety.

But sound practice requires more than a minimal regard for appearances. Outside associations which do not involve dubious connections may still be distracting, time consuming or productive of needless controversy. Thus, it is a questionable practice for Justice Douglas to serve as chairman of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, Calif. Although this association is much less objectionable than his connection with the Parvin Foundation, the Center does in effect take sides on highly controversial public issues.

Anyone who serves on the Federal bench surrenders the right to engage in the arena of public controversy or in the business world. This self-denying ordinance had long been taken for granted, but in the light of recent disclosures an explicit code of conduct for the judiciary may be useful.

Chief Justice Warren has summoned the Judicial Conference's administrative committee to meet today to consider such a code, which would be written and enforced by the judges themselves. Chief Justice Warren reportedly favors a prohibition of outside employment other than teaching, writing or lecturing on general legal subjects. If these standards are adopted, the unfortunate developments of recent days will have led to a most salutary reform.