



Trivia Is Triumphant

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LIKE NOT a few other good things, the test of relevance was marked lousy when appropriated by the radicals of the last decade. But a turnabout is on the way.

For the country is being confused, and the public dialogue debased, by phony issues which sound fascinating but have no connection with serious practical problems. Because the test of relevance is being ignored, in other words, the country now systematically avoids the truly hard and important central questions of managing the economy.

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THE MOST glaring case of bogus fuss is the recent blather over the investigation by the Warren Commission into the assassination of President Kennedy.

The investigation produced overwhelming evidence that Lee Oswald, acting on his own, assassinated President Kennedy. That evidence is in no way shaken by the new material. Thus there is no reason for reopening the hearing or even disturbing the public. The whole issue fails the test of relevancy.

A second case in point emerges from the Senate investigation into the domestic activities of the Central Intelligence Agency. The committee has shown that there were grave abuses.

Orders were ignored or deliberately misunderstood; the mail and phone calls of important and ordinary people were illegitimately intercepted.

But that was not enough for the most overrated man in the Congress — Barry Goldwater. Without paying any attention to the detailed hearings, without even bothering to think matters through, Senator Goldwater has flatly asserted that the CIA, acting under orders from the Kennedy administration, tried to kill Fidel Castro. Once again there is big news — almost certainly false — that bears no relevance to the issue of reforming the CIA.

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THE POINT of all this is not that the Warren Commission or the Kennedy administration or the CIA is beyond suspicion and investigation. But if there are to be inquiries, they ought to be relevant to serious practical problems.

As of now, the country is wasting its energy and attention. Trivia is triumphant. In the process it is avoiding the truly difficult problem central to us all, the problem of running the economy in a way that does not make us accept either recession or inflation as a way of life.