

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ARLON LINDNER ETHICS COMMITTEE HEARING

ETHICS  
COMMITTEE  
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THE NEED FOR SOBER COMPASSION

*Contempt for man and idolization of man are close neighbors. But the good man too, no less than the wicked, succumbs to the same temptation to be a despiser of mankind if he sees through all this and withdraws in disgust, leaving his fellow-men to their own devices, and if he prefers to mind his own business rather than debase himself in public life. Of course his contempt for mankind is more respectable and upright, but it is also more barren and ineffectual. . . .*

*But there is also an honestly intended philanthropism which amounts to the same thing as contempt for mankind. It consists in judging the man according to his latent values, according to his underlying soundness, reasonableness and goodness. . . . With forced indulgence evil is interpreted as good. Baseness is overlooked and the reprehensible is excused. For one reason or another one is afraid to give a clear "no" for an answer, and one ends up by acquiescing in everything.<sup>1</sup>*

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer.  
(Lutheran Pastor  
killed by Nazis)