Curran, Edward: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (1985): Correspondence 13

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Government and Public Affairs

TO: Chairpersons and Executive Directors of State Humanities Councils
FROM: Federation Staff
DATE: April 5, 1985
SUBJECT: Nomination of New Chairman for the National Endowment for the Humanities

On April 4, President Reagan nominated Edward A. Curran to be chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (see enclosed clipping from the New York Times). Mr. Curran holds a B.A. in history from Yale University (1955) and an M.A.T. from Duke University (1968). From 1968 to 1980 he was headmaster of the National Cathedral School (a private girls' school in Washington, DC). In 1980 he directed Professionals for Reagan-Bush during the 1980 election campaign. In 1982 he was appointed to direct the National Institute of Education, the research branch of the Department of Education; after several months there, he was dismissed by Secretary of Education Terrell Bell. He has served as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps since late 1982.

As earlier stories revealed (see our G&PA memo of March 8), spokesmen for scholarly associations and humanities organizations began expressing concern about this nomination a month ago. These concerns were reiterated by O.B. Hardison, chairman of the National Humanities Alliance, who said "I have nothing personally against Mr. Curran, but his qualifications so far as I know are unrelated to what is required in the job."

According to the legislation establishing the NEH, the chairman is appointed by the President "by and with the advice and consent of the Senate." The nomination will be sent to Robert T. Stafford (R-VT), chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities. Mr. Stafford will in turn submit the nomination to the full Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, chaired by Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT), for review. This committee is likely to call a confirmation hearing to examine publically Mr. Curran's qualifications and intentions for the job. Such a hearing could be held as early as April 15.

However, it is also possible (as earlier reports suggested) that members of the Senate committee could place a "hold" on the nomination. A hold would mean that the confirmation process would be temporarily halted, while written questions from the Senate committee are submitted to Mr. Curran. Should a hold be placed on the nomination, confirmation might be delayed until mid-May. The nomination must be approved by the full Senate.
FY 1986 BUDGET

As news reports today indicate, the Senate Budget Committee has struck an agreement with the White House on a budget resolution for FY 1986. (The budget resolutions of the House and Senate must be reconciled later this year, and the final resolution serves as a guide to appropriations bill expenditures, which ordinarily should not exceed limits established in the budget resolution.) The Senate Budget Committee's proposed resolution includes many cuts, freezes and even elimination of many federal programs. However, it does not propose cuts for arts and humanities funding.

Meanwhile the appropriation process continues. A Senate subcommittee hearing on the NEH budget, for agency witnesses, will be held in Washington on Thursday, April 18 (before the Interior Subcommittee, chaired by James A. McClure, R-ID). A House Interior Subcommittee hearing on the NEH 1986 budget is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23.

During Congress's Easter recess, many senators and representatives will return to their home states, providing an ideal time to meet with them and discuss matters of concern, including the status of state councils in the FY 1986 NEH budget, chairmanship of the NEH, and prospects for reauthorization.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 1985

Humanities Chairman Named

WASHINGTON, April 4 — President Reagan today nominated Edwin A. Curran to be chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, succeeding William J. Bennett, who recently became Secretary of Education.

Mr. Curran's nomination as chairman of the endowment, which oversees Federal spending in the humanities, was not unexpected. The chairman's position itself has often been the focus of dispute among supporters of the humanities and the Government.

O. B. Hardison, chairman of the Humanities Alliance and former head of the Folger Shakespeare Library, was quoted earlier this year in The Washington Post as saying of Mr. Curran's expected appointment, "I have nothing personally against Mr. Curran, but his qualifications so far as I know are unrelated to what is required in the job."

Mr. Hardison could not be reached by telephone this afternoon for further comment, and Mr. Curran, who is now a deputy director of the Peace Corps, would not take any press inquiries today, according to a Peace Corps spokesman.

Mr. Curran, 51 years old, received a bachelor's degree from Yale University in 1955 and a master's degree from Duke University in 1968.

Before his assignment at the Peace Corps, Mr. Curran was a teacher and school administrator and served as director of the National Institute of Education, which is part of the Department of Education.

While at that department, he called for the abolition of the Institute, which led to his ouster by T. H. Bell, then Secretary of Education.