

5-10-1976

Council of the AFL-CIO (1976): Correspondence 01

Jack Golodner

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Council of AFL-CIO Unions for Professional Employees

815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 Phone 202/638-0320

May 10, 1976

Honorable Harrison Williams, Chairman
Labor and Public Welfare Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Williams:

This Council is supportive of the work of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities and urges that you support continuation of the agency for an additional four years as called for in legislation coming before your Labor and Public Welfare Committee this week.

I would like to call to your attention two provisions of this bill which we believe are vital to the future integrity of the Foundation and the welfare of America's artists.

The legislation recommended by the Subcommittee on the Arts and Humanities proposes that members of the National Councils on the Arts and Humanities will, in the future, be appointed with the advice and consent of the Senate. We believe this is an excellent suggestion. It is essential that the 26 member councils be truly representative of the cultural life of our nation and that the selection of Council members reflect input by the legislative as well as Executive branch.

Recent incidents involving the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and attempts by the Executive to shape the policies and priorities of public broadcasting indicate the danger of entrusting one branch of the government with an unsupervised appointment power over the nation's cultural agencies. Many believe it was only the advice and consent procedure that preserved the independence and integrity of our public broadcasting system.

Two reports by the Senate Subcommittee on the Arts and Humanities and two by the House Select Education Subcommittee have indicated that in recent years the Arts Council has not been as representative of the arts in America as one would hope. For example, though the

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performing arts are highly organized, no leader of an artists' union has been a member of the Council in the past six years. And, though a desire to involve American working people in the cultural activity of our society has motivated much of the support for the Arts and Humanities Foundation, no representative of the American labor movement serves on either the Arts or Humanities Councils.

Use of the advice and consent procedure with regard to the National Arts and Humanities Council will, we believe, serve notice that these councils are not to be treated as the province of an elitist few or the rubber stamps for a narrow segment of our diverse cultural life. In addition, it would serve as an indication of the importance Congress attaches to these growing agencies and their programs. We hope you will support this provision when it is before your Committee.

The second provision of this legislation which we hope will have your endorsement is that which applies basic labor standard requirements to grantees of the Humanities Endowment. These standards have always governed the activities of the Arts Endowment and it is time that the Humanities Endowment similarly concern itself with minimal economic protection for the artists it indirectly employs in its programs.

Sincerely,

Jack Golodner
Executive Secretary

JG/jmk



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Jack Golodner Executive Secretary