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Council of the AFL-CIO (1976): Correspondence 02

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May 10, 1976

Honorable Claiborne Pell, Chairman
Special Subcommittee on the Arts
and Humanities
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

It is my understanding that the Labor and Public Welfare Committee will soon be considering legislation proposed by your subcommittee to reauthorize the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities. At this time I think it is appropriate that I convey to you-on behalf of this Council as well as myself-our appreciation for the great leadership you have demonstrated over the years with regard to the evolving government-arts relationship in our country.

Many of the unions affiliated with this Council represent hundreds of thousands of artists, craftsmen and others who are active in all aspects of the nation's cultural life. Because of this they were involved in the slow, arduous birth of the Foundation and they have watched closely as it has grown to adolescence. They know that much of this growth would have been impossible without your guidance and sympathetic concern. They know, too, that Americans are quick to find fault with the Congress and its leaders but slow to acknowledge their achievements. For this reason, I want you to know that-though you may not always hear it-we are constantly applauding your bravura efforts and achievements.

There are several provisions in the reauthorization bills-both in the House and Senate versions-that give us pause and I have discussed them with Liv Biddle. Regarding these matters, we are quite willing to be guided by your judgement.

There are other provisions which we warmly endorse:

We are pleased that the so-called labor standards requirements that have been applicable to Arts Endowment activities since the Foundation's creation will, at last, be extended to the Humanities Endowment as well.

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We are delighted to see that the Arts Endowment in the future will not be restricted to assisting American artists and their institutions only within the United States but will be free to work with them wherever activities necessary to their growth and development evolve. The Humanities Endowment has never been restricted in this regard and we are glad that the legislation before you treats the Arts in a similar manner.

We are also very pleased that the legislation will require the advice and consent of the Senate on future appointments to the National Councils of the Arts and Humanities. We know you are troubled—as we are—with the makeup of these Councils. Two reports of your subcommittee in recent years have noted the lack of participation in the Arts Council by artists' union leadership. This omission is but one example demonstrating that the Council is not as broadly representative of America's cultural life as one might hope. Membership on these national councils and the manner in which appointments are made touch upon the very heart of what these Endowments are about. Can they properly represent the nation's artists and humanists within the Federal establishment? Will they be able to understand the cultural needs of many millions of Americans who for one reason or another, have been prevented from sharing in our nation's cultural wealth? The answers to these questions lie within the makeup of the Councils.

Recent incidents regarding the Corporation For Public Broadcasting and attempts by the Executive to shape the policies and values of public broadcasting hint at the danger of entrusting the Executive with unquestioned power over the nation's cultural agencies. Many believe that only the advice and consent procedure preserved the independence and integrity of our public broadcasting system. It would serve as a much needed safeguard for our arts and humanities programs as well. I repeat: we are extremely pleased to see this provision in the legislation your subcommittee is recommending.

Again, many thanks for your continuing efforts in behalf of America's artists and the people they seek to serve. I hope you will call upon me at any time you believe I can assist you in your efforts.

Sincerely,

Jack Golodner
Executive Secretary

JG/jmk