

2017

Conference Material (1976): News Article 02

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Recommended Citation

Kadis, Phillip M., "Conference Material (1976): News Article 02" (2017). *Conference Material (1976)*. Paper 6.
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Way Cleared For Okay of Arts Fundings

By Phillip M. Kadis

Washington Star Staff Writer

The breaking of a month-long logjam on federal arts and humanities legislation has cleared the way for congressional approval before September legislative and funding deadlines.

In a demonstration of statesmanship that was no less welcome for its elephantine gestation period, House and Senate conferees yesterday swapped and amended provisions of the two sections of their differing bills that had stymied a conference committee for four weeks.

Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., chairman of the conference committee and one of the patriarchs of arts and humanities legislation, was visibly pleased with the results.

"IF THE staff can prepare language on the compromise proposals put forward here and draw up a table showing how they compare with the original provisions of each bill, I think we could come to a conclusion pretty quickly," said Pell in a spirit of accommodation that was not often present during other meetings of the conferees that began in July.

The big dividing issue was Pell's plan to make the existing self-perpetuating state humanities committees accountable to elected governmental authority in each state. Grant funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities are often funneled through the state humanities committees. The House and the humanities endowment has resisted the plan on the grounds that it would politicize an area of federal financial support that should be immunized from governmental interference.

Another issue in contention has been Pell's insistence that parity in federal funding of the humanities endowment and the National Endowment for the Arts be ended in favor of the arts endowment.

At yesterday's two-hour meeting, Rep. John Brademas, D-Ind., another progenitor of arts and humanities legislation and the chief House conferee, "suggested outlines for resolution of the impasse" on the state humanities committee issue in return for maintaining parity between the twin endowments. At least for the next year or two, while the whole question is given further study.

While Pell went through the motions of arguing that the arts endowment deserves more money because it has been, in his view, more successful, Brademas gently twitted him.

WATERGATE, Vietnam and a host of recent social ills indicated that the ethical and moral concerns of the humanities deserved more financial support than the arts, said Brademas, seconded by

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ranking House Republican conferee Albert H. Quie of Minnesota.

Well, if the humanities are educational Congress has not been niggardly, countered Pell. After all, it is now considering a \$36 billion education bill. (The combined arts and humanities authorization would not exceed \$300 million at most)

What about federal funding of the National Gallery of Art? asked Brademas. Or the Hirshhorn?

Both sides were beginning to enjoy the exchanges when Sen. Jacob Javits began to grumble that "everybody will be in trouble if we don't do something soon about this bill." Without approval of the "Arts, Humanities, and Cultural Affairs Act of 1976," both endowments will run out of money by the end of September. An emergency extension of the expiring appropriation would restrict the federal culture patrons to the low appropriations levels of the transitional budget quarter.

"To solve this dilemma," said Javits, "I am willing to consider going for parity in basic funding and deferring the issue for two years." The quid for the quo, he made clear, would be for the House to concede something on the humanities committees.

It was then that Brademas outlined his suggestion or suggested his outline.

Instead of permitting the states to appoint a majority of the members of the state committees, as contemplated in the Pell plan, the states would be allowed to appoint only half of them under certain conditions.

THE CONDITIONS would be that states which opt for making the appointments would be required to kick in state money to match half the \$200,000 annually allocated to each state committee the first year and a full \$200,000 the second and each succeeding year to keep the political appointments on the state committees.

Members of the committees would still be rotated, as in the original House bill to keep the committees from becoming ingrown, and each state would still be mandated to appoint two members to the state committee if it decided not to appoint the full 50 percent.

Quie added that some language would have to be drafted setting qualifications for the appointees, but he agreed with Pell that these need not be restricted to academic pedigrees.

Pell has criticized the humanities endowment and its chairman, Ronald Berman, whose reappointment the senator opposes, for what he views as the overly elitist makeup of the state committees. Too many professors, in particular. Berman has denied that the committees are unduly weighted with denizens of the nation's academic ghettos. High standards, he argues in response to the charge of elitism, are embedded in the disciplines of the humanities. Maintaining standards is not mandarinism.

"We don't want the governor of a state to appoint some political hack to help him win an election," emphasized Quie. "We've seen how members of state arts councils spend their time currying political favor to win appointment to the Federal Council on the Arts," he added.

Brademas said it was not his intention to make the state humanities committees like the state arts councils.

"I have tried instead to respond to your deep feelings about the humanities committees," he said, speaking

directly to Pell. "I have not used the state arts councils as models."

PELL BELIEVES that linking the state humanities committees to the governmental structure of the states would result in greater grass roots support for the humanities, and that this would be reflected in a rapid growth of non-federal contributions to humanities programs. He is convinced that this is what has happened with the arts councils which have developed a constituency that politicians are finding it impolitic to ignore.

Brademas said he shared Pell's views that humanities programs should not be directed by "a narrowly constituted elite." State appointees to the committees should include representatives from ethnic groups and the public at large as well as scholars, he said.

"We need a fellow or two of relatively little accomplishment," said Pell. "We need to help people who are not going to be a Michelangelo or a Shakespeare but who can get turned on to the humanities."

Rep. Peter Peyser, a New York Republican who is a member of the Brademas-chaired subcommittee that oversees legislation on the endowments and who wandered in for a portion of the conference, volunteered that an Enrico Fermi club in his district had won a humanities grant for a grass roots lecture program for the man in the street. But Pell was having none of it. Atypical, he snorted, evoking groans from the committee and a roomful of staff members and on-lookers.

But occasional glints of hostility from partially interred battle axes were hardly noticed in the sunny concord that dominated the meeting.

It was obvious that Brademas and Pell had worked things out privately before the meeting, talks so recent or so confidential that staffers were still pessimistic about the meeting the day before it was to take place.

STILL TO be worked out is a provision dealing with those 11 states that have dual humanities-arts councils.

A proposal for a Bicentennial film and photo portrait of America, introduced by Democratic vice presidential candidate Walter Mondale, was agreed upon at an authorized funding level of \$4 million the first year and \$2 million the second.

Javits said he would have ready at the next conference meeting language on his pet project: a Bicentennial study inspired by John D. Rockefeller of problems facing the Republic in its next two centuries.

Pell's concession to the House on putting the new Museum Services Institute under the Department of Health, Education and Welfare stuck. The Senate's Arts in Education program, to train teachers of the arts in new techniques, goes under the Office of Education instead of the arts endowment.

Next Tuesday, the arts and humanities solons will confer again to tie up loose ends.

Once agreement is reached by the conferees, the full Senate Committee on Labor is committed by its chairman, Sen. Harrison A. Williams, D-N.J., to finally hold a confirmation hearing on the reappointment of Berman to head the humanities endowment.

PRESIDENT FORD nominated Berman last February. Berman's term ended last December.

When Pell announced his opposition to Berman earlier this year, he said the onetime Shakespeare scholar had done an acceptable but not an outstanding job.