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Richard Carlton Jr.

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The American Film Institute

Date July 3, 1975

To George Stevens, Jr.

From Richard Carlton

Subject Meeting: Michael Straight/Bob Wade -- July 1, 1975

I want to give you my impression of the meeting which Michael Straight had asked for relative to the "4%" and the implications thereof. I took no notes at this meeting, but I can give you a fairly well-rounded picture of what took place.

Harry McPherson and Chuck Rittenberg attended the meeting as requested and it got underway in an informal manner with Michael Straight reading aloud the letter I had sent him establishing the AFI "disclaimer" -- which Michael confirmed was accurate. He asked at the beginning if we had any particular points of view as a basis for the discussion. We reconfirmed that we were there to listen and then to discuss. . . and on that basis, Straight produced his memorandum of May 29, 1975, headed "Questions Raised by S. 1802" -- copy of which is attached. Since it takes seven full pages, we barely had time to scan it and to relate to it from time to time thereafter. . . but it did not provide a formal basis for conversation -- more a touch-point.

The meeting lasted approximately an hour and a half and rambled quite a bit as you might expect. Straight's concern appeared to be one of having some kind of position to take vis-a-vis the Arts Council when it meets in the latter part of July. He referred again to the "explosive" aspects of a line item which removes from the purview of the Arts Council the disbursement of some funds appropriated for the NEA. He inferred that some members of the Arts Council (if not all) would resist this kind of legislation and, therefore, he felt that it would be desirable to have a joint NEA/AFI point of view which would ameliorate the harsh aspects of removing substantial monies from the direct control of the Council and the Chairman.

Bob Wade appeared to be less concerned about the "political" aspects of the proposed legislation and made several references to this being an opportunity to "get rid of the albatross" -- namely, the AFI.

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If I could break down the elements of the general discussion, it would be into two main areas: 1) the basic understanding of what is meant by a 4% appropriation -- that is, 4% of what?; with or without matching funds; with or without approvals by the Public Media Panel; with or without responsibility for reporting to the NEA on expenditures; and a whole series of peripheral questions which flow from these elements; and 2) a general discussion regarding the philosophy of the relationships between AFI and the NEA vis-a-vis continuity of funding which includes relationships with the Public Media Panel, relationships with the Arts Council, with a variety of contemplations as to how a modus vivendi can be arrived at which would satisfy all of the parties -- that is, the AFI, the NEA (and its Council and Panel), and the Congress.

Toward the end of the meeting, Bob Wade made a very direct pitch to have AFI come up with a solution to the problem. . . and I firmly but politely reminded him and Michael Straight that we had made it clear at the outset that it was not our problem and that we were more than willing to review with them some avenues of mutuality. . . but that we could, theoretically at least, sit back and wait for something to happen since we have no basic objection to being the beneficiaries of some form of increased funding with continuity. Wade's response to that was that even though we do not have the ability or the authority to lay out a modus operandi for the NEA. . . we do have a joint responsibility with NEA to appear at the hearings in the fall. . . and that it seemed to him that we would be better off if our position at that time was in concert with NEA. Thus, he tried to place the ball squarely in our court by telling us that it would be to our advantage if we could come up with a solution to this vexing problem which would be acceptable to NEA so that both organizations could jointly present an implementation program to the Committee hearings thus having a reasonably good chance to assure that the legislation will be written in a manner least likely to create problems thereafter. Michael Straight supported that view and urged us to come up with something which could be reviewed at the next meeting.

Harry McPherson made the point several times (and strongly) that there is a great deal of disenchantment on the part of AFI Trustees and these approaches which go nowhere. I suggested at one point that it might be worthwhile to make a concerted, serious effort to draw up an Outline of Responsibilities which would attempt to set forth the role of AFI vis-a-vis the NEA and the Public Media Panel. The purpose of doing this would be to set forth the guidelines and parameters so that it would be unnecessary for detail review of AFI budgets and programs provided they are within the framework of the document to be created. Then, all that would be necessary would be for NEA to act as a conduit for monies based on the 4% --

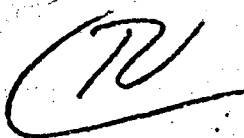
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leaving open many of the unresolved questions regarding matching and so forth -- but at least establishing a pattern which would greatly reduce the ongoing role of responsible overseer currently being played by the Public Media Panel and the NEA. The reaction to this was at least as satisfactory as any other element of the discussion -- although there was some cynicism as to whether such a document could really be created. My response to that was that if one tenth of the time and energy that goes into the hearings and the reviews and the proposals was to be spent on an approach to a serious definition of roles, that progress could be made and that it could be set forth in such a way that the two organizations could live with it. . . leaving open the possibilities of changes or amendments from time to time as needed.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Straight asked all of us to give serious thought to putting some suggestions into writing. . . although he did not ask for this as documentation to be sent over to him. I believe that what he was getting at was that we could go beyond the talking stage to look at something more concrete the next time around. The feeling was left that Straight and Wade would do the same thing -- which would be a step beyond the May 29 outline which simply raises questions and provides no answers.



RC:em

Attachment

cc: Harry McPherson
Charles Rутtenberg