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Museum Services Act (1973): News Article 01

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Tasting Rhode Island clams at dinner at Rocky Point are (l-r) Len Tucker of Albany, incoming president of the Association for State and Local History;

Mrs. Alexander Wall, wife of the current president, and president of Old Sturbridge Village, and Senator Pell, who spoke to the visiting historians.

—Journal-Bulletin Photo

Museums, Libraries Need Aid, Pell Says

Sen. Claiborne Pell last night told members of the American Association for State and Local History that the federal government should give more financial aid to museums, libraries and other cultural institutions.

Speaking at a dinner at Rocky Point to the association, which is holding its annual meeting in Rhode Island this week, Senator Pell said that while museum attendance tripled between 1960 and 1970, "this new popularity should not be confused with prosperity."

Many museum are faltering financially because of increased attendance, he said. "I need not tell you that increased attendance means increased costs of operation. And the same inflation which has hit so hard at the family food budget, has struck just as forcibly at museums' operating costs."

The senator, who is chairman of the Senate subcommittees on arts and humanities and on the Smithsonian Institution, said a recent survey showed that almost half of the nation's museums are operating at a deficit, forcing them to cut corners and operate with inadequate and underpaid staffs.

"I continue to believe that we at the federal level or government should help," he said.

Mr. Pell, who is seeking reelection, said he had introduced the Museum Services Act this year to "authorize a program of grants to museums to help them increase and improve their services."

He said, "We must await congressional action of this museum proposal. These things are not accomplished overnight. They take long and painstaking care. But I do think that this legislation already serves to focus attention on manifest needs."

Referring to his legislation to create the National Foundation for the Arts and for the Humanities, Mr. Pell said, "I remember that when I first introduced legislation to establish for the first time in our country an independent federal agency which would aid in cultural progress, I was accused of being a stargazer, a visionary."

"But a senator, I believe, must sometimes be aware of the stars and of the distant horizon from which they emerge," he added.

The association will wind up its annual meeting with an all-day tour of Newport today.

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(Pell on)
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