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They said, "How dare you spend our taxpayers' money on this trash!" They all objected to taxpayers' money being used for a piece of so-called art work which, to be quite candid, I am somewhat reluctant to utter its title. This so-called piece of art is a deplorable, despicable display of vulgarity. The art work in question is a photograph of the crucifix submerged in the artist's urine.

This artist received $15,000 for his work from the National Endowment for the Arts, through the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art. Well, if this is what contemporary art has sunk to, this level, this outrage, this indignity—some may want to sanction that, and that is fine. But not with the use of taxpayers' money. This is not a question of free speech. This is a question of abuse of taxpayers' money. If we allow this group of so-called art experts to get away with this, to deface us and to use our money, well, then we do not deserve to be in our present situation.

That is why, Mr. President, I am proud of the Members, who in literally a matter of minutes—over 20, about 25—joined me in signing a strong letter of protest to the Endowment. Here is a picture, and the title is "Piss Christ." Incredible.

To add insult to injury, after this group of so-called art experts picked this artist for this $15,000 prize—of taxpayers' money; we paid for this, taxpayers paid for this—people, taxpayers, are being outraged and angered, and they should be angered at us, unless we do something to change this. If this continues and if this goes unrectified, where will it end? They will say, "This is free speech." Well, if you want free speech, you want to draw dirty pictures, you want to do anything you want, that is your business, but not with taxpayers' money. This is an outrage, and our people's tax dollars should not and must not be giving it the dignity. And after this piece of trash and this artist received this award, to make matters worse, the Awards in Visual Arts, this wonderful publication was put together, and who was it financed by, partially? By none other, than the National Endowment for the Arts. What a disgrace.

They not only see this garbage, they can say we did not know he engaged in this filth, but then they see us to distribute it through the Nation and brag about it and allow their names to be used, instead of calling and saying, you get our name out of that.

Mr. President, we better see to it—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I might be permitted 2 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. D'AMATO. The purpose for which the Endowment was established, and I quote, "to support the survival of the best of all forms that reflect the American heritage in its full range of cultural and ethnic diversity and to provide national leadership on behalf of the arts." I submit this is a distortion of those purposes. It does not reflect on the full range of cultural and ethnic diversity; rather, it is a perversion of those principles. If people want to be perverse, in terms of what the Endowment is supposed to be, so be it, but not with my money, not with the taxpayers' dollars, and certainly not under the mantle of his great Nation. This is a disgrace.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter to the National Endowment for the Arts be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

Mr. HOW SOUTHERN, Acting Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President, I have recently learned of the Endowment's support for a so-called "work of art" by Andrea Serrano entitled "Piss Christ." We write to express our outrage and to suggest in the shortest terms that the procedures used by the Endowment to award and support artists be reformed.

The piece in question is a large and vivid photographic print on canvas of a recently exhibited work in the guise of a traditional sculpture of the crucifix submerged in the artist's urine. This work is shocking, abhorrent, and completely undeserving of any recognition whatever. Millions of taxpayers are rightfully incensed that their hard-earned dollars were used to honor and support Serrano's work. There is a clear flaw in the procedures used to select art worthy of taxpayers' support. That fact is evidenced by the Serrano work itself. Moreover, after the artist was selected and honored for his "contributions" to the arts, this work was exhibited at government expense and with the imprimatur of the Endowment.

This matter does not involve freedom of artistic expression, but involves the question whether American taxpayers should be forced to support such trash.

And finally, simply because the Endowment and the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) did not have a direct hand in choosing Serrano's work, does not absolve either of responsibility. The Endowment and the SECCA with taxpayer dollars promoted this work as part of the Awards in Visual Arts exhibition, reasons enough to be outraged.

We urge the Endowment to comprehensively review its procedures and determine what steps will be taken to prevent such shameful treatment in the future.

We await your response.

Sincerely,

National Endowment for the Arts

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Presiding Officer. The Senator from New York.

Mr. D'AMATO. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, several weeks ago, I began to receive a number of letters, phone calls, and postcards from constituents throughout the State concerning Federal art work by Andrea Serrano. They express a feeling of shock, of outrage, and anger.

The Senate of the United States of America, in Congress assembled,

Note: There are blank spaces in the text where paragraphs are missing or not clearly visible.
May 18, 1989

Lott, Jesse Helms, John McCain, Arien Specter, Steve Symms.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the Senator from New York is absolutely correct in his indignation and in his description of the blasphemy of the so-called artwork. I do not know Mr. Andrea Seranno, and I hope I never meet him. Because he is not an artist, he is a jerk.

Let us examine exactly what this bird did. It got $15,000 of the taxpayers' money through the so-called National Endowment for the Arts. If they have no more sense than that, it ought to be abolished and all funds returned to the taxpayer.

What this Seranno fellow did, he filled a bottle with his own urine and then stuck a crucifix down there. Jesus Christ on a cross. He set it up on a table and took a picture of it.

For that, the National Endowment for the Arts gave him $15,000, to his honor and amaranth. I say again, Mr. President, he is not an artist. He is a jerk. And he is taunting the American people, just as others are, in terms of Christianity. The Senator from Utah has the right to say so.

I am not going to call the name that he applied to this work of art.

In naming it, he was taunting the American people. It was an attempt to create Indignation. That is all right for him to be a jerk but let him be a jerk on his own time and with his own resources. Do no dishonor our Lord. I resent it and I think the vast majority of the American people do. And I also resent the National Endowment for the Arts spending the taxpayers' money to honor this guy.

This program, supported by the National Endowment, is administered by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art. They call it SECCA. I am sorry to say it is in my home State.

Mr. Seranno's selection, this photograph and other works were exhibited in several cities around the country with the approval and the support of the National Endowment.

Horsefeathers. If we have sunk so low in this country as to tolerate and condone this sort of thing, then we become a part of it.

The question is obvious. On what grounds, if any, do you think somebody who would engage in such blasphemy and insensitivity toward the religious community deserve to be honored? The answer to that he is does not. He deserved to be rebuked and ignored because he is not an artist. Anybody who would do such a despicable thing—and get $15,000 in tax money for it—well, it tells you something about the state of this Government and the way it spends the money taken from the taxpayer.

So no wonder all of the people calling my office are indignant. The Constitution may prevent the Government from censoring the press, News—laughably, I will describe it as—"artistic expression." It certainly does not require the American taxpayers or the Federal Government to fund, promote, approve, or condone it. None of the above.

Mr. President, the National Endowment's procedures for selecting artists and works of art deserving of taxpayer support are badly, badly flawed if this is an example of the kind of programs... if they fund taxpayers' money.

I have sent word to the Endowment that I want them to review their funding criteria to ensure such absurdities does not happen again. The preliminary report we got from one person with whom we talked was sort of "Down, boy, we know what we are doing.

Well, they do not know what they are doing. They are insulting the very fundamental basis of this country. I say again I resent it.

Mr. COATS addressed the Chair.

Mr. COATS. I think the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. Coats pertaining to the Introduction of S. 1057 are located under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

THE SHAMIR PLAN FOR ELECTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Mr. METZENBAUM. Mr. President, the State of Israel has been the focus of abundant study, commentary and criticism over the past 1½ years. Israelis have been told in every manner imaginable that they bear responsibility for the violence in the occupied territories. Israeli security forces have been compared to everyone from the Nazis to the Khmer Rouge in their attempts to restore order in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

What the world continues to ignore is the fact that Israel is at war. The State of Israel is faced with almost impossible alternatives regarding its relations with the Palestinians. Too many of Israel's neighbors, with the exception of Egypt, continue in their determination that there should be no State of Israel. I will not take up my colleagues' time with reviewing the strategic plan for Israel that has been faced over the years. One only has to look at a map to understand this situation.

Most Senators are already well aware of the critical geographic problems that limit Israel's diplomatic and security options.

Mr. President, even with the majority of its population and industry crammed into a narrow corridor 9 miles wide, Israel has offered a major concession to West Bank and Gaza residents. Israel has just taken a big risk in the search for peace.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has produced a viable, realistic plan which includes Palestinian self-rule and a vehicle for negotiations on a permanent solution. The Shamir plan represents an accommodation of both the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This is an attempt to identify responsible negotiating partners within the Palestinian community, and to give them the credibility to speak for their people.

The plan is intended to be a flexible vehicle for dialogue—not a diplomatic straightjacket.

Upon implementation of the Shamir plan, free democratic elections will be held in the territories by secret ballot. These elections will be open, free and fair. Practically, that if this plan is put into effect, it will represent one of the first truly free plebiscites in the Middle East.

Has anyone ever heard Mr. Arafat or any other Arab leader, for that