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Berman, Ronald: News Articles (1976): News Article 06

Phillip M. Kadis

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Some $28 million spent on programs operated through volunteer state humanities committees in the past four years was matched by $30 million from private individuals, corporations, foundations and other institutions, he said. Throughout this period, there has never been a single accusation of fiscal mismanagement against any state committee, Berman said, although more than 3,500 projects in 5,000 communities were funded. Even though the 'bedrock' assets of the disciplines known as the humanities are scholars and research institutions and collections, about 80 percent of endowment funds go into programs making the humanities available to all sectors of the public, Berman said. Only 20 percent of the funds are earmarked for production of humanistic knowledge, he said.

WAXING ELOQUENT, Berman asserted that the nation 'owes its being to thinkers and leaders who were truly great humanists, exercising public responsibility with a deeply conscious reference to history and philosophy.'

The term 'humanities' in the contemporary search for the public good are -- as they were years ago -- the humanities, the instruments of judgment, Pell said.

In short, the humanist concluded, "the arts are not visible but the humanities are more substantial."

Pell asked Berman what he thought of the idea of breaking up the twainship in funding of the arts and humanities endowments, permitting each to go its own way.

"I think the union ought to be maintained indefi- nitely," Berman replied, because of its advantages. They share administrative staffs and actively complement each other. Think of it as a ship, he suggested. "In addition to a highly visible canvas sail, it needs a good deal of ballast."

Pell commended the endowment chairman for his "articulate" defense of the humanities. But he was not persuaded that the endowment couldn't win wider interest if the state committees were opened up to appointments by elected state officials. Unlike the state arts councils, the humanities committees are self-perpetuating after initial appointments are made in Washington by the National Endowment.

PELL HAS proposed that state humanities councils be created in the same way they are in the arts, with equal state grants going to each state council to be matched by state funds.

The Senate practice, he said, "carries with it the problems of appointment by some Federal offi- cials of a chosen people within the state who must pay very close attention to Washington culture."

"It is like a laying on of hands, and the appointed chairman similarly lays his hands on others," Berman said. He preferred to characterize the practice as a "responsible delegation of power."

Pell, taking Pell, to open the selection process up to people thrown up by the state's own people. Berman said, indicated that he shared Pell's views.

"Any light being shed by the humanities committee in my state of Indiana is being hidden under a bushel," he said. Brader- mas said it seemed strange to him that no committee was created in his state.

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Public officials were involved in choosing committee members and public funds are involved.

Berman said present committee members are volunteers, preventing development of another layer of bureaucracy.

But he did not close the door on political appointment of committee members.

TWO PANELS then testified before the joint committee on supporting the Pell program for state councils and the other opposing it.

A compromise, according to some observers, might provide for ap- pointment of state committees by state officials without requiring the committees to be restructured along the lines of the arts councils.

Pell wants the composition of the state committees to be broadened with labor representatives and others from the community at large, and he wants state governments to take a greater interest in humanists programs. Berman wants to avoid what he feels is unnecessary bureaucraticatization at the state level even if he has to give up some measure of control. The outlines of a deal appeared on the horizon at the close of yesterday's session.

But the basic problem remains. A few clowns can turn out an awful lot of press releases.

Rep. John Brademas, chairman of the House subcommittee, indicated that he shared Pell's views.

"Any light being shed by the humanities committee in my state of Indiana is being hidden under a bushel," he said. Brademas said it seemed strange to him that no committee was chosen in his state.

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