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Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, United States Arts Foundation: Hearings (August 1962): Speech 05

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Remarks of Joseph Prendergast
Executive Director of the National Recreation
Association, at a Public Hearing Scheduled by
the Special Subcommittee on the Arts of the
Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, August
29-30 and September 7, 1962, Room 4232, New
Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C. on
S-741, S-785 and S-1250.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am here at the invitation of Senator Davits of my home state of New York to represent the National Recreation Association, the only nation-wide, non partisan, non-sectarian and non-profit civic organization serving the entire field of recreation.

The Association was founded in 1906 and is dedicated to the service of all the recreation agencies and leaders of the country to the end that every person in America, young and old, shall have an opportunity to find the best and most satisfying use of his expanding leisure time.

In pursuing its purpose, the Association gives aid and counsel to citizens and citizen groups throughout the nation who are seeking to provide better recreation opportunities - including the performing and visual arts - for themselves and their children. It serves the volunteer and professional leaders of the country; and it serves recreation agencies - public and private, local, state and national.

The Association is supported by voluntary contributions through gifts of individuals, through community chest and united funds, and through corporate and foundation grants.

The Association's board of directors is made up of distinguished lay and professional leaders from all parts of our nation. Another group of distinguished citizens serves on our National Advisory Commission. Some 600 outstanding recreation leaders serve on our various national and district advisory committees. These men and women are in touch with local, regional

and national developments. Many, in their home communities or at the state level, are serving on policy and planning boards concerned with the performing and visual arts.

The Association is co-sponsor of an annual National Recreation Congress each fall and it holds eight district recreation conferences every spring which together are attended by some 5,000 recreation board members, executives and other leaders, both volunteer and professional. Discussions of the need for and the importance of the performing and visual arts as recreation have been highlights of all recent meetings.

Some 2,000 federal, state and local recreation agencies, both public and private, are service affiliates of the Association and more than 4,500 recreation leaders are associated with it for service. These recreation agencies and leaders in turn, serve millions of Americans through the recreation areas and buildings they administer.

The Association has a staff of approximately 100 and its 1962 budget is \$943,000. Besides handling some 25,000 requests at headquarters for help from all parts of the country each year it trains recreation leaders, conducts surveys and makes studies for federal, state and local agencies - many related to various aspects of the performing and visual arts. Its 12-man field staff is in constant touch with recreation agencies and leaders in all parts of the country. Since 1907 it has published a series of Recreation and Park Yearbooks reporting on programs in the public recreation field including performing and visual arts programs. It conducts an extensive research program and publishes a large number of publications on all aspects of recreation - many dealing with the performing and visual arts.

In addition, the Association is one of eleven national organizations concerned with performing arts and their recreational and educational

aspects which have been officially invited by the Board of Trustees of the National Cultural Center to participate in the work of that center.

As Executive Director of the national service organization, it is part of my job to be in constant contact with the needs, problems and challenges of recreation at the federal, state and local levels including the performing and visual arts in recreation.

I should also add that since 1959 I have been a member of the Advisory Committee of the Arts of the National Cultural Center which was established by an Act of Congress of September 2, 1958.

With this as a background, I would like to say that I fully support the purposes of the three bills now under consideration, i.e., S-741 introduced by Senator Humphrey to provide for the establishment of a Federal Advisory Council on the Arts, S-785 introduced by Senator Clark to establish a program of grants to states for the development of programs and projects in the arts, and S-1250 introduced by Senator Javits to establish the United States Art Foundation.

I was very interested to note that Senator Fell in announcing these hearings stated that "a special effort will be made to obtain testimony on community cultural activity and needs in cities and states in various parts of the country".

In that connection, I was very pleased to note that in the Declaration of Policy in Section 2 of Senator Javits bill (S 1250) it is stated that "the general welfare will be promoted by providing national recognition of the status of the theatre and other performing arts . . . as a valued means . . . for the promotion of education, national culture, recreation, skill in the arts, and beneficial utilization of leisure time . . ."

I was also interested to note in Senator Humphreys' bill (S 781) Section 1, "that as work days shorten and life expectancy lengthens, the arts will play an even more important role in the lives of our citizens".

These specific references to the important role which the arts will play in the lives of our citizens and the need to promote the performing and visual arts as a form of recreation and as a "valued means" for the beneficial utilization of leisure time are especially significant in view of certain trends in our society.

Although there is no specific mention of the performing and visual arts as recreation in Senator Clark's bill (S 785), I know of his long standing interest in public recreation, both during his years of service as Mayor of Philadelphia and now as U. S. Senator from Pennsylvania. As a matter of fact, Senator Clark will be honoring us this fall by addressing our 45th National Recreation Congress which is meeting in Philadelphia, September 30th to October 3rd.

Permit me to give you a few facts with reference to the growing importance of leisure time in American society today and the growing importance of the performing and visual arts as valued means for the beneficial use of that expanding leisure time.

Today the average American has more leisure time than working time during the course of his life. Child labor and extensive home chores are things of the past for our children and our youth are going to school for many more years than they formerly did. The average American business and professional man is now retiring earlier from his employment or his career and, with all other Americans, are living longer than ever before. Industrial working hours by the day, by the week, and by the year are being cut from ten or more hours a day, six days a week, 52 weeks a year of the past to an 8, 7, or even 6-hour day, a five or four-day week and a 46 to 50 week year.

No nation has ever faced and mastered the test of mass leisure. We are only now beginning to realize what it means in the negative term of crime and delinquency, of mental illnesses and emotional upsets and we are only now beginning to realize what it means in the positive terms of individual fulfillment and the development of a strong nation, fit in every sense of the word, physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually. The future of American depends upon how wisely we use our expanding leisure time and that time cannot be wisely used, in my opinion, unless participation in the performing and visual arts, as both spectator and performer, is open to all our people.

The public recreation movement in America represents a conscious, cultural ideal of the American people, just as the great system of public education represents such an ideal. It take rank with our systems of public education as a necessary addition to the cultural equipment of the nation. Its supreme objective is the promotion of the nation's general welfare through the creation of opportunities for a more abundant and happier life for everyone.

Recreation is no longer just a sandbox, a wading pool or a slide or two. It now requires vast areas, expensive facilities, complex organizations, trained leadership and large budgets. Its programs include sports and athletics, indoor and outdoor activities, and all the visual and performing arts. The child, the youth, the young adult, the middle years and the years of retirement are all being served by the public recreation movement.

As has been said, the leisure time of the American people is expanding and will continue to expand for an indefinite future. This is true for children and youth, for working men and women, for women who are not employed outside their home and for older adults. At the same time our population is growing rapidly, the urbanization of the country continues, and we have a constantly higher level of living and a rising level of education.

All these factors taken together, have brought about what can only be described as a sociological breakthrough as important in the field of sociology as the military and technical breakthroughs which we've heard about in recent years were in their respective fields.

This sociological breakthrough is of enormous importance to human society, comparable only to that sociological breakthrough of 10,000 years or so ago when man was freed from fighting for his bare existence in a hunting and gathering economy, by the domestication of cattle and the sowing and reaping of grain.

That sociological breakthrough gave some leisure time to some men and civilization began. Today, our sociological breakthrough is giving a great deal of leisure time to most men, and the probability, not just the possibility, of a "golden age" is here.

The field of leisure time cultural activities, a part of the larger field of recreation, is the one that is now growing the fastest. Today, all our schools and colleges are giving our children and youth education in cultural activities as active participants or appreciative spectators. All the former members of high school bands and choruses, of college dramatics and art courses - and there are millions of them with many more millions yet to come - are now beginning to demand opportunities to continue to participate in such activities after they have left their schools and colleges. The development of public recreation programs in these fields and the construction of city centers for the visual and performing arts are under way as never before.

More and more people are now turning to music, to art, to drama, dance and poetry in an effort to find more meaning in life, some outlet that they can enjoy, some means of expressing themselves. They are feeling the need to use their own hands, bodies and minds in a revolt against complete

automation and they want these opportunities for their children as well. They are dissatisfied with what is now being offered.

Just a little while ago, for example, the Iowa Council for Community Improvement asked the question "What are the areas of greatest need for improvement?" Replies from almost 1,500 people of 100 Iowan communities gave first place to "cultural arts and recreation" as the most important area that needed improvement.

One of the leading secondary schools of the country, Phillips Andover Academy, is building an \$850,000 creative art center for its students. This is quite a change from my day at Exeter when only football stadia and gymnasiums were being built. The idea that a boy might prefer painting to football, music to basketball, never entered anybody's head then. What is more, the very concept that it is perfectly all right for a He-boy to enjoy art more than sports, and that he has a right to choose his recreational interests is another indication of the tremendous change going on in this country.

Another indication of that change, again taken only from the New England area, are such major cultural projects at the college and university levels as Dartmouth's Hopkins Cultural Center and Harvard's Loeb Drama Center, the Boston University Art Center and the Jewett Art Center at Wellesley.

In 1959 some 28,500,000 Americans played some type of musical instrument (that's one in six). In 1955 there were more than 1,100 symphony orchestras made up of community neighbors. One-third of all these were in communities under 50,000 population, and 10% were in communities of under 10,000. In 1951 more than 30,000,000 persons, twice as many as in 1941, paid admissions to concerts, opera and ballet. In 1958 there were over 200 professional symphony orchestras and over 250,000,000 music records were bought by Americans.

Americans own 111,000,000 radios and 47,000,000 television sets. Yes, they hear and see many soap operas and westerns - but they also see and hear the Metropolitan ^{Opera}, Leonard Bernstein, Robert Frost, and most of the leading singers, conductors, dancers and actors. They watch Hamlet and Greek tragedies - they see plays by Saroyan, Odets, Tennessee Williams and Maxwell Anderson. The world of the performing and visual arts opens up at the touch of a dial.

Programs in the performing and visual arts should be concerned with two groups - spectators and participants - yet these two are really only one. They are like high and low tides, they ebb and flow into each other. The best participants are those who have had their interest stimulated, and curiosity aroused, by watching, looking and listening. On the other hand, the best spectators are those who have had some training in the art and know what to look for and appreciate. This spectator-participant relationship is of great importance in the cultural arts. Only a great audience can see a great performance.

Public recreation departments in various sections of the country are rising to such challenges. I cite a city with a new children's theatre with seating for over 500; a city that offers a free weekly concert of various types of music throughout the fall, winter and spring; a county that has developed a youth symphony orchestra; a city that sponsors student concerts; a city that brings in art exhibits, has a string orchestra class for children 9 to 15; a symphony orchestra and a community playhouse; a city with a modern dance program for children and adults; a city with a creative arts program where children can develop skills in music, dancing and painting; a city with a teen theatre - the list could go on and on. A climate is thus being created in our cities in which individuality can flourish and find creative

expression. America is preparing for a Renaissance in the cultural arts.

Participation in the performing arts as a form of community recreation has grown remarkably in the past decade and has made the performing arts an essential part of community recreation planning, organization and program. A 1960 survey of the 2,000 recreation agencies which the National Recreation Association serves revealed that community recreation programs of the country included 165 different types of musical groups ranging from informal singing to symphony orchestras; 39 drama types covering the field from drama stunts to festivals; 35 dance types from ballroom to ballet; 15 opera and 6 poetry types.

The Association's 1956 yearbook reported the following recreation activities in the field of the performing arts:

Music - 307 cities sponsored choral groups; 294, instrumental groups; 33, opera groups; 123, orchestral groups.

Drama - 245 cities sponsored children's theatres; 258, festivals; 188, little theatres; 241, pageants; 390 presented plays other than little theatre or children's theatre; 296, puppet and marionette groups.

Dance - 240 cities reported sponsoring ballet or modern dance and 535, folk or square dance.

Set out in Exhibit A attached hereto are the number of governmental units (cities, counties, towns, villages, and school and park districts) reporting recreation programs in the visual and performing arts in the Association's 1961 Recreation and Park Yearbook.

It might also be mentioned here that in 1959 in connection with its work within the National Cultural Center, the National Recreation Association was in contact with more than 90 recreation, community, civic and other similar non-profit groups and organizations on the local, state and national levels in the field of the performing arts.

All the cities and organizations just mentioned, and many more, are very much concerned with legislation with reference to the performing and visual arts which you are considering, and I know they and the millions of Americans they serve support the three bills now before your Committee.

Speaking of the National Cultural Center, may I express the hope that the proposed Federal Advisory Council on the Arts (S 741), the program of grants to States for the development of programs and projects in the Arts (S 785), and the United States Arts Foundation (S 1250) will work very closely with the National Cultural Center so far as the performing arts are concerned.

I do not have any specific amendments to recommend at this time with reference to Senate bills 741 or 785 but, since the Declaration of Policy of Senate Bill 1250 refers to the importance of the performing and visual arts with reference to recreation and the beneficial use of leisure time, I would like to suggest the following amendments to the Bill to make sure that that declaration is properly implemented so far as recreation and the beneficial use of leisure time are concerned.

1. Insert the words "and recreational" in line 16 of page 2 between the words "educational" and "groups";
2. Insert the word "recreational" in line 4 of page 3, just after the word "educational";
3. Insert the word "recreational" in line 23 of page 4, just after the word "educational";
4. Insert the words "and recreational" in line 13 of page 5 between the words "educational" and "groups";
5. Insert the words "meeting standards prescribed by the Foundation" in line 13 of page 5 after the word "groups";

6. Insert the words "or recreational" in line 9
of page 10 between the words "educational" and "group".

Exhibit A

The Performing and Visual Arts as Recreation.

Set out below are the number of local governmental units (cities, counties, towns, villages, and school and park districts) reporting recreation programs in the visual and performing arts in the 1961 Recreation and Park Yearbook of the National Recreation Association.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of Units Reporting</u>
<u>Visual Arts</u>	
Art Shows	1,141
Clay Modeling	1,224
Ceramics	1,059
Drawing	998
Leathercraft	1,293
Metalcraft	894
Needlecraft	829
Painting	1,067
Other Graphic Arts	261
Paper Craft	1,332
Photography	310
Plastics	689
Sculpture	228
Weaving	1,051
Woodwork	942
<u>Performing Arts</u>	
Ballet	370
Band Concerts	1,337
Choral Activities	514

Exhibit A

<u>Performing Arts (continued)</u>	<u>Units Reporting</u>
Community celebrations	1,263
Community Theatre	444
Creative Dramatics	439
Festivals	542
Folk Dancing	864
Informal Instrumental Groups	346
Modern Creative Dancing	428
Motion Pictures	1,024
Music Shows	474
Orchestral Concerts	373
Pageants	332
Puppets and Marionettes	388
Radio and T V Shows	340
Rhythmic	503
Social Dancing	1,747
Square Dancing	1,539
Storytelling	1,044