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HEARING ON THE NOMINATION OF EDWARD A. CURRAN, OCTOBER 2, 1985

W I T N E S S L I S T

Edward A. Curran
Chairman Designate
National Endowment for the Humanities

PANEL I

Professor Theodore J. Ziolkowski
Dean of Graduate School
Princeton University

Dr. William Schaefer
Executive Vice-Chancellor
University of California - Los Angeles

QUESTIONS FOR EDWARD A. CURRAN

(1)

The 1965 act which created the National Endowment for the Humanities defines the term "humanities" as including, but not limited to, the study of the following: "language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life."

- Would you comment on this definition.
- How do you define the term 'humanities'?

(2)

You have not been a member of the national humanities community up until this time in the sense that your views on humanities issues are not widely known and have not been discussed in a public forum. I hope that we can establish your views on many issues facing the humanities in the course of this hearing.

- In this regard, have you published your views on the humanities and if so where? In publications for the general reader? In newspapers? Specialized journals?

- If you are confirmed as Chairman, will you write and speak in support of the humanities?

(3)

The NEH's enabling legislation which I had a hand in drafting asks the Chairman of the Endowment to "develop and encourage the pursuit of a national policy for the promotion of progress and scholarship in the humanities."

- What does this mandate mean to you?

- (4) - Is the work of the National Endowment for the Humanities central, peripheral or irrelevant to the national life of the United States? (If answer is not "central", then: Will you work to alter the place of the NEH or maintain the status quo?)
- (5) - Do you consider yourself a strong advocate for the humanities?
- (6) - How would you characterize the type of leadership you will bring to the Humanities Endowment? How does this differ from the leadership of former chairmen?
- (7) - Over the next four years, what would your highest priorities for the National Endowment for the Humanities? Please state these in order if possible.
- What administrative changes will you make when you become Chairman, now that you have had time to study the organization of the agency. (Curran nominated April 5, 1985)
- (8) - Now in connection with your tenure as Director of the National Institute of Education..... Were you fired from your position there?
- Please tell me the circumstances which brought this about.
- Can we be assured that you will not attempt to abolish the NEH in a manner similar to what you tried to do at NIE?
- How can we take these assurances when you told members of this very same committee at your confirmation hearing to be Director of N.I.E. that you were convinced "that the federal government can play an essential role by

CONTINUE →

(8)
contd.

providing leadership in the examination of important national education issues through the support for research and the dissemination of findings of such research"?

This does not sound like someone who just a few months later wrote the President to recommend that the N.I.E. be abolished because it is "unnecessary" and "wastes money".

~~- At N.I.E. you were accused of trying to implement a "right-wing education research agenda." Is there a conservative agenda for research in the humanities and, if so, how would you try to implement it as Chairman?~~

(9)

- What was your next position after leaving the National Institute of Education? (Peace Corps, Deputy Director)

- Are you on the payroll of the Peace Corps at this time?

- Please describe your duties as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps? Are your duties primarily administrative or policy-oriented or both?

- What specific areas has the Director, Loret Ruppe, asked you to handle? Be specific.

~~- What in your duties at the Peace Corps has prepared you to chair the National Endowment for the Humanities?~~

- Have you been reporting to work at the Peace Corps on a regular basis over the past 5 months?

- Can you cite examples of your contribution to furthering and promoting programs of the Peace Corps?

(10)

Back to your views on the NEH.....

- How familiar should the Chairman of the NEH be with research standards, scholarly methodology and new developments in the humanities disciplines?

- What experience do you have working with humanities scholars - specifically at universities, research libraries, museums and in other scholarly settings?

(10)
contd.

- Do you feel qualified to make decisions about research and scholarship in the humanities? For example, do you believe there is sufficient NEH support for research and writing by scholars?

- Do you anticipate policy changes in funding for the various divisions of NEH? What kind of commitment will you make to the Fellowship Program?

(11)

~~Under William Bennett's leadership, NEH did not comply with the requirements of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission to submit agency hiring and employment goals. I view this not as a matter of partisan policy but of legal compliance.~~

~~- Would you continue Bennett's policy or would you recommend that NEH comply with the EEOC requirements?~~

(12)

- What is your view of the Endowment's division known as General Programs - previously known as "Public Programs" and a name I preferred?)

- How would you make the humanities more accessible to the public - this being a major part of the Endowment's mission? *R*

(13)

~~- The Chairman of the Endowment is given final veto power over the awarding of grants. When would you use this veto power and not follow the recommendation of the peer review panel?~~

→ - Given your background in secondary school education, do you feel that you could adequately judge the value of a research proposal on grounds other than ideology or the sound of the title?

- What would be the most important criteria to be used in reviewing NEH grant applications?

- (14) - How much influence should the Chairman of the Endowment have over decisions made by state humanities councils and how should that influence be exercised?
- How would you, as Chairman, react to a project funded by a state council that you viewed as objectionable or improper?
- (15) - Do you believe there should be a closer and more formal relationship than at present between each state humanities council and its state government?
- (16) - What is your view of the requirement in the law that a minimum of 20% of NEH funds be distributed to the state humanities councils? Is this figure too high? Too low? Or about right?
- Should the state councils have greater or lesser independence from the Endowment in Washington?
- (17) - What role do you see for NEH in promoting the humanities perspective on contemporary public policy issues - such as the ethical dimensions of social issues (like the right-to-die and abortion) and the historical background on American foreign policy issues?
- (18) There has been considerable controversy about the qualifications of individuals who have been nominated to serve on the National Council on the Humanities. I for one have not been entirely pleased with the stature and distinction of some recent appointees.
- What would be your policy on this?
- Would you seek out and recommend to the White House individuals who are of the highest caliber? There are many distinguished Republicans whom I have yet to see considered.

(19) - How would you deal with a senior staff member who brought internal agency criticism directly to the National Council on the Humanities or to the Congress or to the White House without consulting you first? (like Curran at NIE)

(20) I have been very disturbed to hear of NEH grants being withheld from groups and individuals who may have spoken out from time to time against Endowment policies.

- Do you believe that such individuals and groups who exercise their rights of free speech should be punished by not receiving their grants?

(21) - If you are confirmed as Chairman, how do you intend to assure that NEH staff is kept at the highest professional level? Would you find it awkward to be less academically qualified than many of your senior level subordinates?

Would you consider hiring an individual to head the NEH Research, Fellowships or Education Division who did not have a doctoral degree?

QUESTIONS FOR DR. ZIOLKOWSKI AND DR. SCHAEFER:

1. In the eyes of the academic community, what are the qualities that a Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities should possess?

Do these qualities you describe have a special importance now to the higher education community?

2. What would be your priorities for the NEH over the next 4 years?

3. Our recent committee report on the reauthorization of the NEH describes "advanced scholarly research" as the "bedrock" of the humanities. Would you please comment on this assertion. Do you agree or disagree?

Questions to be submitted for the Record and answered in Writing:

1. Do you support former NEH Chairman William Bennett's suggestion that the literary curriculum of the schools should consist primarily of the classics of Western literature?

If your answer is yes, given the diversity of students in elementary and secondary schools today, isn't it appropriate to take a broader view of literature that responds to this diversity?

2. If you are confirmed as Chairman of NEH, do you intend to continue the summer institutes and seminars for college faculty and elementary and secondary school teachers?

3. What are the humanities needs of higher education? How can the Endowment best respond to those needs?

4. What in your view were the causes of the decline in enrollments in the humanities in the 1970's? What are the strengths and weaknesses of American higher education?

5. Please define the phrase "secular humanism".

6. If you are confirmed, what steps will you take at NEH to assure that the process of awarding grants, administering programs and making "Chairman's Grants" are protected from politicization?

7. The granting of indirect costs as part of a NEH grant award has to my mind often exceeded reasonable limits. What is your view to the recent Committee recommendation that the indirect cost rate be limited to 35% in the future?