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Berman, Ronald: Memoranda (1975-1984): Memorandum 05

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United States Senate

MEMORANDUM

This document is TOP SECRET

Much of it hasn't been released, and it contains names of people who have asked that their names not be publicly linked with this issue.

I send it along for your eyes only, because I think it gives you an idea of the scope of this issue, and why the Senator feels it is so important.

We are holding the GAO report in reserve. It is not a bombshell but does support a mediocrity of administration to go along with mediocrity of leadership/

The Pell Position

1. Impact. The impact on the country of the Humanities Endowment is far less than the Arts -- despite some successes in program areas (The Adams Chronicles). This is just the reverse of the situation when the enabling legislation for Arts and Humanities was being developed. Humanities leaders had the clearest and most articulate voice. It took the addition of the Humanities to bring the Arts along -- and into legislation.

Why is impact so lacking? One main reason involves State programs

In Arts -- from beginning, State Arts Councils were established. Appointed by governors, emanating from States -- getting funds from State legislatures (A total of only \$4 mil. for all States ten years ago -- now more than \$60 mil.) State Arts councils bring the Arts to the grass roots. All groups in the Arts if non-profit are eligible. And the State Councils have been responsible for rapid growth of Community Councils -- from a handful, to over 750, growing all the time -- again at Grass Roots.

In Humanities -- State committees operate in all States. Their leaders are appointed by Berman. They in turn appoint their committee members. It is a laying on of hands. State Committee program is limited -- it prescribes State "themes"; many humanities groups outside of specific theme areas are not eligible for funds in a given year. State committees get not a penny in State funds... there is no community humanities movement (as in the Arts.)

In sum -- The Humanities State program is Washington-based, limited, primarily academically oriented -- NEH says it is to be led by "academic humanists" -- gets no State funds, does not enlist involvement with State legislatures.

No wonder, it is lacking in impact -- and this is the program Berman defended absolutely all last summer. Mounted major campaign.

A result: Arts Endowment has 50 potential critics in the States -- it is a yeasty situation, good for constructive change. Berman has 50 friends in the States -- no opposition. They are all his people.

All this lends substance to great uneasiness about Berman for another four years. It lends substance to charges that he is egocentric, arbitrary, does not brook criticism, runs a one-man show, gives relatively little power to his Council -- his 26 private-citizen advisors.

In sum again -- all this lends substance to a serious questioning of both his JUDGMENT and his ABILITY to conduct a broad-based program which can have a major impact on improving the quality of life.

In sum: Lack of proper safeguards -- lack of monitoring of programs --
lack of accountability... Questionable practices all through.

THE GAO REPORT

A two-month study -- an indication of some serious administrative problems.

In 1974, GAO did a routine study of Humanities. It found:

	Late Expenditure reports (required from grantees to detail use of Fed. \$\$\$)	Late Narrative Reports (Required to tell how \$\$\$ are spent)
1974	60	93
1975	273	291

This three to four-fold increase, despite GAO recommendation to improve a year earlier.

NEH does not withhold funds in cases of late reports, and renewal requests.
(Berman is reported to be changing this rapidly.)

A list of grantees late in submitting reports is prepared only once a year.
Thus reports can be up to a year late, before being pinpointed.

Monitoring procedures governing cash advances to grantees appeared very lax.

For large cash advances -- over \$100,000 -- similar laxity appeared.
No itemized monthly budget for the grant period is required,
and no itemized monthly expenditure report in cases of large grants. GAO implies that can benefit greatly when they have more cash than immediately needed -- the Govt. loses because no longer has interest coming on unspent \$\$\$.

A spot check showed one grantee got \$100,000 plus an added \$50,000 when no use had been made of the first \$100,000. The file showed no explanation of approval of the added \$50,000.

Only in November, 1975 -- after initial Pell criticism -- did Humanities begin a study of national needs in Humanities and the impact of the present program... They are thus only starting to examine something they should have had ongoing all along.

In these circumstances, how can they argue their impact is good, bad or indifferent?

State Programs: No guidelines for accountability required. Very lax monitoring... Can be continued from year to year without full report on programs and results each year.

THE CRITICS

In the States: Most vocal critics, but representing and speaking for others, are Texas and Missouri.

Critique: NEH and Berman in particular is unbending, unwilling to compromise, conducts a limited and elitist and exclusive program. 11 States have combined Arts and Humanities Councils -- Berman has shunned any connections with the Humanities side of these.

In a
nutshell!

Donald Hornuth, State Senator in North Dakota, writes: "The Arts Councils commitment to public participation is strong with many programs initiated at a local level. It is not academically dominated. A recent jump in the State appropriation from \$10,000 to \$67,000 indicates recognition by the State of the values of the art program. None of these attributes are to be found in the Humanities program.

Among groups: Many groups -- outside the large, prestigious Ivy-League-type institutional base -- are excluded or receive little help. Examples: The American Association of State Colleges and Universities. They feel Berman is arbitrary and difficult, that he is not interested in the grass roots. The Community College people indicate similar disenchantment.

The Folk Arts Constituency -- a growing grass roots group, concerned with indigenous American culture. Berman, they find, arbitrary, cold, indifferent.

The University Presses. They have had long-standing problems with Berman. He is now "studying" their needs. They find Berman tricky, untrustworthy, bent on feathering his own nest.

(I believe we could find witnesses to testify here in all these areas. The main thrust would be that the Berman program is narrowly elitist, and not getting out to the people.)

Individuals: Hannah Gray, Provost of Yale and Mrs. Rockefeller came to see you before Steve's tragedy... Robt. Goldwin, at the White House, told me these were the only two out of 26 Council members who voiced criticisms and that they had some praise as well for Berman's work.

I have since spoken to Dr. Leslie Koltai, Chancellor Superintendent of Los Angeles Community College. He is a critic.

THE CRITICS (Continued)

Dr. Koltai said there were first and second class Council members in Berman's set-up. He said Berman was secretive, cold, non-receptive, elitist, and that the relations with his staff were not good.

HE SAID HE HAD NOT BEEN CONTACTED BY GOLDWIN -- nor had two other Council members whom he identified as critical:
Dr. Leslie Fishel, President of Heidelberg College in Ohio., and
Dr. Arthur Peterson, Chairman of the Dept. of Politics and Government at Ohio Wesleyan.

Also: Hans Rosenhaupt, President of Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation at Princeton.

Rosenhaupt contacted us on his own.

He characterizes Berman as mediocre -- a far cry from predecessors Keeney or Edgerton to a lesser degree. He underscores Berman's ego -- says he gives little heed to his Council. He says Berman has a "Louis XIV attitude."

The Woodrow Wilson Foundation has severed its earlier relationships with the Endowment, and has charged that the Endowment is not making good use of its funds. (He said he would be willing to testify.)

In sum again -- overlooking program criticisms for a moment, all views we are receiving which criticize Berman present an almost unanimous character assessment.

Elitist, indrawn, seeking self-power, arbitrary,
and uncompromising... NOT THE LEADER FOR THIS PROGRAM.

Confidential

The Pell Position on Ronald Berman, Chairman of National Endowment for the Humanities

As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Arts and Humanities since its inception in 1964, and as sponsor and Senate originator of the federal program to encourage the development of both the arts and the humanities, Senator Pell bases his assessment of the Humanities Endowment on over ten years of experience.

He finds the Humanities Endowment's programs are relatively lacking in impact. He considers this conclusion especially valid in terms of both a comparison with the impact on the nation of the National Endowment for the Arts, and with the momentum initially engendered by the Humanities community in mustering strength and enthusiasm for the concept of federal help for the humanities more than a decade ago.

Senator Pell believes that the Arts Endowment is fulfilling its mission and its potentials in making the arts available to all sections of the country. There has been a rapid growth of the arts in the past ten years. Much of this is attributable to the catalyst role of the Arts Endowment, Senator Pell believes. Ten years ago the States were appropriating approximately \$4 million for the arts -- today that figure has increased almost 15-fold, to close to \$60 million.

The Humanities State-based program stems from Washington. The Endowment Chairman appoints the State chairmen, who in turn constitute State committees and staff (paid).

In contrast State Arts Councils are appointed by State governors. They also have paid staffs, but these come from State-originated selections.

Format of the Humanities State programs stems from Washington direction.

Format for State Arts programs is determined by the States.

Pell feels the Humanities programs in the States -- at grass roots level -- tends to be limited and less democratic than the Arts comparisons.

Pell proposed liberalizing the State humanities programs and making them similar in structure to those in the Arts... Berman and the Humanities Endowment strongly opposed this proposal.

Pell attributes the growth, and appeal of the arts to greatly expanded audiences -- i.e. their impact -- to the success and remarkable growth of the State programs in a decade's time.

He feels Berman's opposition to similar concepts for the Humanities indicative of limited leadership abilities.

Pell notes these results over a ten year span: limited grass-roots support for the humanities; no enthusiastic State-originated movement stemming directly from State wishes and State planning; a failure to attract more than limited support from State legislatures for the concept of the humanities; a lack of awareness of the program in Congress where the people's wishes are manifested; and an excessive dependence on the part of the Endowment on academia, both at State committee and national levels.

Pell also notes that ten years ago, when the Humanities program was being considered in Congress, along with the arts, it was the Humanities constituency who provided the best and most enthusiastic leadership for legislation -- who had the most imaginative ideas for the use of federal funds, who were most instrumental in persuading the Congress on the benefits to accrue to the Nation through greater and more vigorous emphasis and concentration on the Humanities.

Pell believes that the voice of the Arts has demonstrably outstripped the Humanities over the ten year span of the two Endowment's lives.

He has praised the earlier leadership of the Humanities Endowment -- under Dr. Barnaby C. Keensy and Wallace B. Edgerton. He finds that the program has faltered in its national impact in recent years under the Berman chairmanship.

He rates Berman's chairmanship as adequate and passable -- but not of exceptional quality.

He believes that only an individual of exceptional proved ability should be reappointed to head either the Endowment for the Humanities or the Endowment for the Arts.

He makes a clear distinction between appointment of a Presidential nominee and reappointment -- between nomination and renomination, he finds that Berman's record is of insufficient merit. And he is therefore opposed to the candidate's confirmation, on the leadership level relating to both overall program and policy.

As an administrator, Pell similarly believes that Berman's record is only marginally passable. This finding is based on a GAO report, requested by Senator Pell.

Among other findings, it indicates:

- a. a lack of adequate reporting from the States and their committees;
- b. a lack of adequate follow-up on the final reports required of grantees, with late reports running up to a year;
- c. a lack of fiscal accountability at the State level;
- d. a lack of monitoring on expenditures made by large grantees;
- e. a lack of follow-up on audit reports calling for the recovery of federal funds.

These are Preliminary & unofficial but given to me before report is made final