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MEMORANDUM

February 23, 1984

TO: Senate
FROM: ADC
RE: Chris White's Resignation at RI Arts Council

The situation at the RI State Council on the Arts has just gone from bad to worse. Chris White, the director, was fired by Dan Lecht last Monday. The papers will say she resigned due to her pregnancy but she was fired pretty much on the spot and left the agency on Tuesday.

I gather that Chris in desperation to get rid of Lecht had gone to Lila Sapinsley to urge her to take Senate action to block his reappointment to the Council. Lecht got wind of this and, with two council allies (Ernie Falciglia and Pat Nero) at his side, walked into Chris' office and fired her.

Lecht's current term on the Council ends at the end of this month. Council members normally are expected to take a one year leave before they can be reappointed. However, Lecht has succeeded in being reappointed to another three year term which will start on March 1st. He is a close friend of the Governor's and seems to have carte blanche to do whatever he wishes with the arts council.

Not only has he been reappointed but it is very likely that he will be re-elected Chairman. The Council elects its own officers and Lecht has been stacking the council with friends.

One hopeful note is that Rowena Stewart and Rhett Jones (Black Studies at Brown) have just been appointed to the Council. But the tilt is still heavily toward Lecht allies. For example, the governor's receptionist was just put on and her only claim to arts expertise is that she is a supper club singer!

Lecht has now fired two directors (the other was Diane Disney). The acting director is Iona Dobbins and it is likely that she will be named full-time director without a search.

It is ironic and regrettable that our own arts council suffers so badly from the politics that you built into the system. The Assembly of State Arts Councils has come to regard RI as kind of a joke.

Lecht is the problem and I see no way for you to help correct it.