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## National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities (1965-1967): Speech 01

Roger L. Stevens

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# NATIONAL FOUNDATION ON THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES

1800 G STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506



National Endowment for the Arts  
National Council on the Arts

April, 1966

## EXCERPTS FROM STATEMENTS BY ROGER L. STEVENS ON THE ARTS

Following are excerpts from statements by Roger L. Stevens on the role of government in support of the arts, the meaning and purpose of the arts, the status of the arts in the United States, the need to stimulate and encourage the arts, the problems confronting the arts, the role of educational institutions in support of the arts and the relationship between art and science. Roger Stevens is Special Assistant to the President on the Arts, Chairman of the National Council on the Arts and Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

### THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS

"We cannot merely buy and sell culture in the market place; it must be fought for, earned, and won. The Federal Government, then, has a commitment and a clear responsibility toward this end. But all of us who will participate in this program must always remember that the role of government should and must be limited. We must help guide, but not dictate. We must assist, but not dominate. We must cooperate, but not demand. The tradition of freedom in the Arts and the Humanities must not be broken, or even encroached upon." (At the University of Oklahoma, Norman, October 24, 1965)

"(There) is a rapidly forming alliance or partnership in the arts which has not existed before in this country, though such a partnership is traditional in every other western nation. We are learning that the arts are a vital part of life and that individuals, governments, educational institutions, and non-artistic enterprises such as business and civic groups, all have a responsibility for cultural progress, especially with the ever

increasing growth of leisure time and the lengthening life span of the individual. The Federal Government is, historically, the last partner to be committed to this alliance. This is as it should be... Though Bills have been introduced into the Congress since 1877 concerning the formation of a National Council on the Arts, congressmen waited for the people to recognize the necessity of the arts before acting." (At the Groundbreaking Ceremony of the North Wing of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, June 4, 1965)

"Lack of government patronage of the arts in America is in sharp contrast to the traditions of Europe, where the arts are considered a necessity of life, and where government support of the arts is closely allied with education. Federal ministries of education and culture, and their corresponding provincial and municipal departments, are permanently in charge of public art support. There is no exception to this rule. Different governmental procedures merely relegate responsibilities to different levels of government. This is, of course, the product of Europe's age-old humanistic tradition... The scope of education did not end within the confines of the school walls, but embraced extramural dissemination of universal knowledge and culture." (At the Dedication of the New College of Arts and Architecture, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, May 15, 1965)

"The Arts, almost from the beginning of civilization, have been encouraged and have survived through some form of collective assistance-- whether individual patronage or State subsidy...there was always someone or some group or some government that realized the quality of a nation can be immeasurably enhanced through the works of its artists. And it is about time we Americans not only realized this, but committed ourselves fully to giving every possible assistance to our artists, both privately and publicly." (At the 1966 Community Arts Fund Drive, Fort Worth, January 6, 1966)

"It is remarkable that this country, from its very founding, has always been concerned that every individual be entitled to a public education, and yet should be so loath to aid the Arts which are such an essential part of creating a fully educated individual. I believe, therefore, that it is in the best interest and welfare of our country, with our ever increasing amount of leisure time, for the government to help make available well rounded programs which will challenge our intellects and make productive use of this new found time." (At The Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, February 27, 1965)

"If 'The happiness of Society is the end of Government,' as John Adams and his friends believed, then it is up to our government today to take the lead in setting a cultural climate, and in fostering educated audiences who will, in turn, demand the services of the finest talent America can produce." (At the Dedication of the New College of Arts and Architecture, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, May 15, 1965)

"Traditional sources of private support are simply no longer able to sustain the Arts at the level of quality which our people are more and more seeking-- and will increasingly seek as the number of leisure hours grows. We have a great new audience to reach and a rapidly growing demand to meet." (To the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior Department and Related Agencies, Washington, March 10, 1966)

"(The National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities) bill is neither the panacea nor merely a pump-primer -- it is, rather, a new beginning and a recognition by the Federal government of the national importance of the nation's cultural development." (At the University of Oklahoma, Norman, October 24, 1965)

"In conferring with artistic leaders of many fields, I find that the two most important tasks to be accomplished in this field are: (1) giving proper recognition to the artist and his place in society; and (2) developing an audience which will appreciate his accomplishment." (To the Platform Committee of the Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, August 20, 1964)

"If government can aid in the recognition of the artist, thereby increasing his morale and desire to contribute to society, and, if the necessary audience can be developed, we can easily be on the road to what President Johnson has so aptly called 'The Great Society.'" (To the Platform Committee of the Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, August 20, 1964)

#### THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF THE ARTS

"For, over the long span of history, the Arts especially have been central to all memorable civilizations. In their abundant variety, the Arts translate into lasting form all of man's imagination, his beliefs, his highest aspirations. Through the

force and beauty, and even the agony, of the artistic process, through its expression of our deepest instincts and emotions, our existence gains vitality and is enriched. Sometimes it even achieves that final order which we term beauty... In their highest form, the Arts and Humanities help us discover who we are, where we are, and what it means to be a human being... What is evident, what is needed most of all, is that we reach out to other people, to learn more about their cultures. We must study their art, their language, their customs, their laws, and their philosophies of life. And we need to discover more about ourselves, to extend our understanding of one another beyond any horizon we are now able to discern... The Arts and the Humanities, if fully nourished and encouraged, may help us distinguish some of those many imperceptible bonds that link our diverse civilizations." (To the National Association of Schools of Music, Chicago, November 27, 1965)

"There will always be unlimited visions for the artist to pursue and his audience to appreciate. Just as the artist has been affected from the time of the Greeks by the impact of the events of the day and has recorded them for posterity, so will the artist of today create great works that will enable future generations to view us through the eyes of the artist." (At The Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, February 27, 1965)

#### THE STATUS OF THE ARTS IN THE UNITED STATES

"We realize both the pitfalls and the challenge -- as well as the glaring urgency underlying the plight of the Arts and Humanities in the United States. We need a nationwide effort, but we must proceed carefully, for we are after quality and not quantity, excellence not mediocrity. We are confronted with something similar to the process of fermentation where, depending upon how you go about it, you can produce either champagne or vinegar." (At the Groundbreaking Ceremony of De Cordova Museum, Boston, September 19, 1965)

"I don't know if our values are dying out in this country, but they obviously are changing. These changes are disruptive, they inevitably cost us something, both financially and emotionally, and they can be extremely painful. What we may have done on occasion is merely cover up the fact of this change by instituting

new values that are neither meaningful nor true. Thus we find ourselves in a situation where the land of the imaginary has been invaded by those proponents of the merely useful, expeditious, functional or practical. It is, as Malraux says, a bastard art that has spread across this land like a rampant plague. But let us grant, on the other hand, that there are some hopeful signs that we Americans also are achieving some depth and refinement in our culture, and the future of the Arts, while perilous at the moment, will be given the attention and nourishment it deserves and commands." (At the Rhode Island School of Design's 82nd Commencement, Providence, June 5, 1965)

"Only recently in the United States, even though we are the most advanced nation in the world in technology, have we reached the point of a swelling national concern for the aesthetics of our natural and man-made environment... There is a wide-spread desire to foster and stimulate the Arts as we have never before seen in this nation, and if my guess is correct, this is only the first ripple in what may become a massive national wave of interest in the Arts." (At the National Electric Sign Association's 20th Annual Convention, Miami Beach, March 15, 1966)

"We have before us, during the remainder of this most incredible of centuries, all the resources and potentialities of high culture in a civilization that, unfortunately, all too often seems frustrated by the mere fact of its unparalleled success. But we are not going to reshape and redefine our American civilization through apathy and fear and negativism. The future will belong to those who are willing to assume responsibility and who believe that our greatness lies not behind us but before us." (At the New Jersey Cultural Center Dedication, Trenton, September 26, 1965)

#### THE NEED TO STIMULATE AND ENCOURAGE THE ARTS

"If we develop and nurture a widespread appreciation for the Arts in this country, there need not be a reason for people ever to be bored, or find too much time on their hands. When one becomes interested in the great artistic works of mankind, one will find the desire to read, to see and to hear the masterpieces so compelling that one will resent only the lack of more time to do so.

The spiritual joy one can receive from becoming acquainted with great minds and their works will more than compensate for the hard work and study necessary to fully appreciate them." (At the Rhode Island School of Design's 82nd Commencement, Providence, June 5, 1965)

"What each of us, in his own way, is striving for is to learn from the legacy of our artistic past, assist and bear witness to the artistic transformations of the present, and pass on to succeeding generations something of the beauty and agony of our time. It is, quite simply, an act of faith." (At the 1966 Community Arts Fund Drive, Fort Worth, January 6, 1966)

"With higher levels of education, stable careers, relative economic security, and increased leisure time, material achievements are no longer the prime motivation in American life, and the interests, tastes and concerns of the people themselves do indeed seem to be changing." (At the Dedication of the New College of Arts and Architecture, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, May 15, 1965)

#### THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE ARTS

"What all of us must remember at this point, whether we are soliciting the Federal Congress for appropriations, or whether we are fund-raising in a community area, is that we must discover new formulas of patronage in the Arts. One of the most immediate problems all of us face nationally is the search for and development of new sources of financing for the Arts. Whether we call it subsidy or patronage or grant or gift, it really means new money-- from Federal and State government, municipalities and communities, foundations, corporations and individuals." (At the 1966 Community Arts Fund Drive, Fort Worth, January 6, 1966)

"While money cannot create art, it can be one of the tools in helping its creation. Talent should not fail to reach its full development because of lack of funds or availability of education." (To the Platform Committee of the Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, August 20, 1964)

"We must generally decentralize the Arts, making them available to more people in diverse areas, and hopefully on a year round basis. At the same time, we must increase the availability of education in the Arts so that we may improve the quality of our audiences. If we achieve this widening and more discerning audience, it will follow that there will be more demand for all of the Arts. To meet this demand, we will have to improve our present facilities and create new ones..." (At the American Educational Theatre Association Annual Convention, Miami, August 25, 1965)

"We are concerned about large areas of the country where the children and their parents never had an opportunity to see paintings of any quality, where they never hear concerts or see plays, or ballet. We are concerned about the inability of most of our finest artists to earn a decent living through their rare talent. We want to know why most of our cities do not have the enthusiasm necessary to install and support resident theatres, opera and dance companies, and why our painters, authors, and poets cannot find larger appreciative audiences for their works. We are concerned about the methods by which the Arts are administered, publicized, and promoted. And to a very important extent, we are concerned about our educational system at all levels which has not accepted the Arts as an essential part of the curriculum." (At the Groundbreaking Ceremony of the North Wing of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, June 4, 1965)

"We must also find new ways of discovering young talent early and providing the necessary encouragement and education that will contribute to the nourishment and development of such talent. And once these artists have achieved a discipline and a certain measure of professionalism, we must find ways to permit them to work at their art without having to struggle most of the day in a job in which they have no interest merely to gain sustenance." (At the American Educational Theatre Association Annual Convention, Miami, August 25, 1965)

"I believe and hope that talent is going to exist and produce regardless of us. But I think an important part of our job is to create an audience for that talent. For I am convinced that if we had a much greater audience in this country, a number of the artists' problems would be solved." (At the Vision '65 Congress, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, October 22, 1965)

"When...I am asked, 'Are we ready for government subsidy of the Arts?' my answer is that I don't think we are -- unless the public



and Congress can understand that there are bound to be failures in art just as there are in science, which today is granted almost unlimited funds... If the Arts had the same unlimited funds that science has, more experiments in theatre, music, opera and the visual arts could also take place in laboratory fashion. Instead of having to try out an experimental idea on the public, where admission is charged, experiments, and an opportunity to eliminate mistakes could take place beforehand... Just as experiments in science raise the quality of final results, experiments in the Arts would raise the quality of artistic performance in all fields." (At the Banquet Session of the 20th National Conference on Higher Education, sponsored by the Association for Higher Education, Chicago, March 9, 1965)

"The members (National Council on the Arts) have stated repeatedly that the only conceivable long range solution to most of our cultural problems lies in the building of a larger and more discriminating audience, in the improved training of artists in particular art forms, and in the building of pride in our cultural heritage through increasing the emphasis on the importance of Art and artists in our society." (At the University of Oklahoma, Norman, October 24, 1965)

#### THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS

"In this day of ever-increasing leisure, the educational institutions must take the lead in helping our citizens to develop an appreciation of the Arts which will enable them to live a happier life." (At the Banquet Session of the 20th National Conference on Higher Education, sponsored by the Association for Higher Education, Chicago, March 9, 1965)

"If we are to insist on professionalism and excellence and the highest quality in the visual and performing arts themselves, must we not at the same time demand an increase in the availability of a thorough education in the Arts so that we are able to improve the quality of our audience? If we are to achieve this widening and more discerning audience across the country--and we must, for there is no other way of increasing the demand for all of the Arts--we have to develop new and future audiences that are not, to paraphrase Franklin D. Roosevelt, culturally ill-fed, ill-clad and ill-housed. In other words, we must raise our standards and our

collective levels of artistic discrimination. This is especially true in our educational systems, where the battle for wider creditation in the Arts is crucial for all of us." (At the 1966 Community Arts Fund Drive, Fort Worth, January 6, 1966)

"Some of our educational systems deny our most talented students the time, and even the right, to develop his or her artistic gifts while gaining a general education. And, if we hope to develop the aforementioned widening audience of intelligence and appreciation for the Arts, more courses in the Arts must be made available to all students, especially those whose only formal exposure to the disciplines of the Arts may come during the formative years they spend in an educational institution." (To the National Association of Schools of Music, Chicago, November 27, 1965)

"It is just as necessary to develop one's mind in order to appreciate or participate in the classics, new or old, as it is to develop one's physical muscles for sports. Therefore, I think that it is essential to start from childhood, a proper training for appreciation of the Arts. This training should be maintained and developed through adulthood." (At the Annual Meeting of the Historical Book Committee, New York City, December 10, 1964)

#### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND SCIENCE

"There must be an evolving partnership of mutual respect and assistance between the Arts and Humanities on the one hand, and Science and Technology on the other..." (At the University of Oklahoma, Norman, October 24, 1965)

"We must dispense with our current emphasis upon a supposed division of values, which in the final analysis is brutally self-destructive. There cannot be Two Cultures, reputedly locked in mortal combat. Such talk is academic jargon and philosophic non\_sense. We are one people, one nation, one culture--diverse though we may be--participating in the world community of nations. We all realize, or should, that no legislation, no one organization, can produce an American Renaissance. There is no formula that, once discovered and employed, will call excellence into existence. But we do know that a civilization is nourished and celebrated and remembered by the works of its creation. And, so often, those works are brought into existence by both individual and collective effort." (To the National Association of Schools of Music, Chicago, November 27, 1965)