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WALL STREET JOURNAL

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Asides

In There Pitching

We wrote the other day about the grief that the last chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities got from Senator Claiborne Pell, chairman of the Endowment's Senate oversight subcommittee. Senator Pell thought NEH was too "elitist," and wanted to give out more money in small grants so people like "mom and pop store operators" could study the humanities. Now we've come upon further evidence that the subcommittee does not intend to relax its stance as active guardian of the nation's arts.

It seems that the banquet speaker at the last annual meeting of the Association of American University Presses was Livingston Biddle Jr., staff director of Senator Pell's subcommittee. According to Publishers Weekly, Mr. Biddle closed his address with a ditty set to the tune of "Friendship." He sang, "If you ever need a grant, call on Pell. If you ever need a subsidy, ring my bell. . . ."

This news prompts us to add a special wish of good luck to Dr. Joseph Duffey, about to become NEH's new chairman and take up the burden of protecting the Endowment from the insistent demands of pork barrel politics.

It's an Ill Wind

New York City this summer has been the victim of a power blackout, massive looting, bombings by Puerto

Rican terrorists and a series of vicious murders committed by a still-at-large maniac who calls himself "Son of Sam." Given that much bad fortune, it was a small relief to see an outpouring of public-spiritedness from unexpected places.

The latest good citizen is Mr. Carmine Galante, who's been called the most powerful Mafia chieftain in the country. According to The New York Post, Mr. Galante has a daughter around the same age as the 20-year-old woman who was "Son of Sam's" latest victim, and so is specially angered by the killing spree. Also, it turns out, the organization of which he is executive is losing money because of the murders: The mob provides various goods and services to the city's bars and discotheques and they've been losing the trade of young people frightened to go out. Finally, the unusually large number of policemen abroad searching for leads has put something of a damper on the mob's normal activities.

So, the Post reported, the call went out from Mr. Galante's cleaning store to his associates: Find "Son of Sam."

Unfortunately, the FBI was not suitably touched by this act of generosity. Agents picked up Mr. Galante the next day on a subpoena ordering him to testify to a grand jury investigating criminal infiltration of legitimate economic enterprises. Leaving him to speculate, perhaps, on ingratitude towards the business community.