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July 28, 1989
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Arts Supporters Denounce Helms

Senator's NEA Amendment Causes Unease on the Hill

By Elizabeth Kastor
Washington Post Staff Writer

When Sen. Jesse Helms took to the Senate floor Wednesday night and called for a sweeping ban on federal funding of art that is "obscene" or "denigrates" beliefs or people, he was doing just what art supporters in the Senate had hoped he would not—publicly raise a fiery issue they wanted to avoid until they reached the relative privacy of a House-Senate conference committee.

"It's one of those statements which is impossible to disagree with," Sen. Jim McClure (R-Idaho) said yesterday of Helms's amendment to the Senate interior appropriations bill, which was quickly accepted on a voice vote by the handful of senators present. "That's why I'm sure it was accepted by both sides of the aisle and nobody wanted to debate it." McClure said he had hoped a more moderate position could have been adopted.

Helms's amendment was greeted by widespread condemnation in the arts community and a good deal of unease on the Hill. The appropriations bill, which was passed by the Senate Wednesday night, could go to the House-Senate conference committee next week.

See NEA, B8, Col. 3



A scene from "Lazar" by Gavrilo Gnatovich.



Gore

Nina Andreyev

By David Remnick
Washington Post Foreign Service

*The most intolerable people are pre-
celebrities.*

—Entry in the notebook

Nina Alexandrovna Andreyev: open window. The tour buse morning to and from the cza the road, and the townspeop pleasure as they swam in the muddy Romanovs used to bathe. On Kominte though, it was quiet. The shops were northern light was high and brilliant. and fragrant of jasmine and gasoline. She had become a famous woman.

Approved was the proposal to eliminate a rule allowing any three members of an Elks lodge to reject, or "blackball," a prospective member. Some said that rule made it harder for blacks to join the organization.

Under the new rule, a two-thirds majority of a lodge's members could approve a new member.

In St. George, Utah, a woman who was rejected for Elks membership filed a sex discrimination lawsuit in 1987 that is still pending.

Elks membership policies were subject to "undeserved criticism" during the February 1988 confirmation hearings for Stephen M. Reasoner of Jonesboro, Ark., now a federal judge, said retired Air Force Lt. Col. Hal Detrick of Jonesboro in submitting the resolution.

Reasoner resigned from the Elks and Masonic lodges after Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) accused the organizations of discriminating against women and blacks.

Passage of a resolution to do away with the "three blackball" rule was urged by the Lompoc, Calif., Elks lodge after two black applicants were rejected. The California attorney general's office is investigating possible civil rights violations as a result of that vote.

While the Elks do have some black members nationally, several California lodges threatened legal action if rules were not changed to allow more minority representation in the group's 2,300 lodges.

In his research, he found an unpleasant, erratic, spoiled and sometimes brilliant man. "I think all his life he was striving for power and this is what must have attracted him to the discipline of someone like Nietzsche. The play doesn't deal so much with his political views, but he was an early and convinced fascist. . . . On the other hand, you see, he was a great artist, and suffered, I would imagine, from the alienation an artist must feel in this society to this day."

But in the end, given just the slender chapter of Pound's life playwright Tom Dulack has illuminated, Hurst says the play is more about racism and the audience. "There is a respectful silence about the question of antisemitism. It is not fashionable anymore to be an antisemite. It is still quite fashionable to be a racist in other ways," he says. "And Thomas put the line in there on purpose. . . . In the second act when I say to the black military policeman who has bought [an English language] dictionary 'You have decided to learn a

NEA Funds

NEA, From BI

Helms (R-N.C.) took his action after the House had cut \$45,000 from the NEA budget, the exact amount of two highly criticized NEA grants to the Winston-Salem, N.C., Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) and Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA). The Senate Appropriations committee had retained the cut and banned SECCA and ICA, which funded work by photographers Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe, from receiving NEA support for five years. Serrano's photograph of a crucifix submerged in urine and Mapplethorpe's pictures of homoerotic and sadomasochistic images are at the center of the controversy.

Arts advocates now have begun lobbying committee members, as well as hoping that Rep. Sidney Yates (D-Ill.), a longtime friend of the arts, will protect their interests. "I think it's wrong and unfortunate," Yates said of the Helms amendment yesterday. "The communists tell their artists how they must think and how they must perform. Is that what we want too? I don't think so. I think the Senate's action was clearly unconstitutional. It sets up impossible standards for administration."

NEA acting chairman Hugh Southern said yesterday, "The [Helms] amendment would have a chilling impact on artistic expression and on the willingness of organizations which receive government assistance, whether directly or indirectly, to provide a forum for any work deemed to be at all controversial or out of the mainstream. . . . The ambiguity of the standards used in the amendment would make it impossible to implement it in any fair and consistent manner."

Sens. John Chafee (R-R.I.) and Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) have voiced opposition to the amendment; other senators and representatives are opposed to both that amendment and the five-year ban; and a number of arts supporters on the Hill and elsewhere have said they cannot imagine that the Helms amendment would survive the conference committee. But the issue has become so hot, even Yates and his supporters may not be able to perform the variety of political miracles some are hoping for.

"There are strong feelings," said McClure, ranking minority member of the Senate Appropriations interior subcommittee, "and unless the conferees maintain a pretty hard position on a number of these things, there's likely to be an effort in another way to cripple the endowment, which I would hate to see." McClure said further action could come as a rider to other legisla-

tion, or next year when the NEA comes up for reauthorization.

The political sensitivity of the debate is such that the National Republican Congressional Committee has attempted to turn it into a partisan issue. After the House voted to cut the \$45,000, the committee sent press releases to media in 21 congressional districts; the releases claim the Democratic representatives opposing the cut had voted "in favor of federally subsidized obscenity."

"I can guarantee that during the upcoming campaign," NRCC Co-Chairman Ed Rollins said in one release, "Congresswoman [Nita M.] Lowey will be asked why she failed to register her outrage at such taxpayer-financed obscenity when she had her chance. The way she voted was truly obscene."

Lowey said she had written to the NEA to express her displeasure with the two grants but believed they were "a mistake" that should not be dealt with through the allocations process. And as for the press release: "I think that is absurd," she said.

As the storm around the NEA has grown, several compromises were offered in attempts to quiet the outrage. The \$45,000 cut was suggested by Yates as a means to avoid harsher measures proposed by Rep. Dick Arme (R-Tex.) and others. McClure suggested, and the Senate adopted, a \$100,000 study into the NEA's grant procedures for similar reasons. "I had hoped the study would divert some of the anger away from the endowment," McClure said yesterday. Helms's action also elicited comment from Christina Orr-Cahall, director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, who last month canceled the exhibit "Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment" in order, she said, to avoid being pulled into the political battle or endangering the NEA. The Corcoran was fiercely criticized for its cancellation, and the exhibit is now on display at the Washington Project for the Arts.

"I think our decision helped the situation in that I think it gave some of the friends of art in Congress time to maneuver and to take the least painful way out," said Orr-Cahall, who condemned the Helms amendment as well as the ban of SECCA and the ICA. "But this is what we were saying. We were the messenger, saying, 'This is coming.' There isn't any point in shooting the messenger."

Edward H. Able, executive director of the American Association of Museums, called the amendment "reckless and dangerous and draconian" and said of Orr-Cahall's comments: "I hope Tina can also see she did nothing to stop it. [The cancellation] certainly generated a lot more media attention to the subject. And I haven't seen any negative reaction from those down at WPA, nor have I seen the D.C. police down there raiding the place and closing it up."

Dance

'Beauty Comin' Awake

By Alexandra
Special to The Was

It's curious, and frustrating, that a prodigious "Sleeping Beauty" wonderfully old-fashioned as that which the dancing now at the is so mistrustful of splashing fountains, stiff wigs and care-ized courtiers, this out for the big mima- tations between go- have been cut, red- fied" to make room- ing. Luckily, even- quite ideal, the dar- superior to that of an- ny that has danced "I- recent years that the- telling almost doesn't

Wednesday night, seemed to have rec- somewhat stilted dancing was warmer, more generously e- Prologue's fairies we- delectable.

Tatyana Terekho- day's Princess Aurora who responds to auc- agement, and she go- Terekhova is a small dancer big, and, like t- ballerinas, makes the

Toasters,

Ska revivals have co- but if the Toasters ha- with it, we might be c- er. While too many sh- ing today seem un- beyond the jumpy i- characterized the Brit- the early '80s, the Toa- work by combining the- ic energy with an up- world beat sensibility.

Wednesday night at the New York club ban- mastery of big British- the good-naturedly apo- Trouble," highlighted