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Humanities, Arts Task Force Formed

By Ruth Dean

Washington Star Staff Writer

Screen actor Charlton Heston was named to head a panel representing the arts on a newly formed Task Force on the Arts and Humanities, the White House announced yesterday.

The president also named as co-chair with Heston, Dr. Hanna H. Gray, president of the University of Chicago, representing the humanities, and Dr. Daniel J. Terra, ambassador-designate for cultural affairs, representing the federal government. Heston said he hoped the task force could hold an introductory meeting here in two weeks, depending, of course, on how he can mesh gears with his co-chairmen.

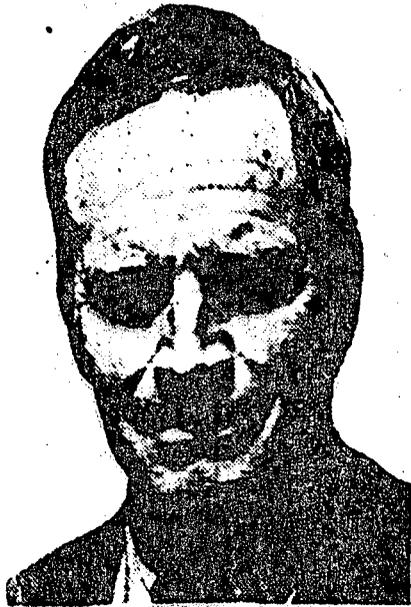
In a written statement launching the new task force, President Reagan expressed his "deep concern for the arts and humanities in America" and characterized the nation's cultural institutions as "an essential national resource (that) must be kept strong."

On the eve of House appropriations hearings on the administration's request for a 50 percent cut in the National

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WASHINGTON
STAR

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Charlton Heston

Heston to Represent Arts on Panel to Form Task Force

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Endowment for the Arts 1982 budget, the president said.

"While I believe firmly that the federal government must reduce its spending, I am nevertheless sympathetic to the very real needs of our cultural organizations and hope the task force will deliver to my desk by Labor Day a plan to make better use of existing federal resources and to increase the support for the arts and humanities by the private sector."

Named as vice-chairman of the new commission is W. Barnabas McHenry, of New York, counsel for the Readers' Digest Association, and one of the prime movers behind the task force idea as a way of attracting more corporate and private sector support to the arts and humanities.

Prior to yesterday's announcement, there was speculation the administration favored restructuring the endowments under a public corporation plan similar to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in order to attract more corporate giving. Such a plan would require congressional action to change the endowments' present character.

There was an indication this might be considered in yesterday's White House announcement of three areas for task force focus: the possibility of increasing support to state and local programs, increasing the role of non-government professional judgment in award making and "the desirability of converting the endowments into public corporations."

Heston said he "didn't know enough yet" about the CPB-model idea to comment.

The actor's view of the task force's role is of "examining the endowments for the arts and human-

ities in such a way that they might be made to function better, and maybe slightly more economically, if they have to do with less (funding)."

Heston said he thought the point of the task force "is not figuring how to save money, but how to serve the arts and humanities in the country, with increasing reliance on the private sector."

As president of the American Film Institute (a post he may have to relinquish to avoid conflict of interest since the AFI receives part of its support from the arts endowment), Heston says he has seen private support of the arts on the increase.

The actor, who once served on the National Council on the Arts, said he felt "kind of gratified" that after all the concerns being concentrated on funding in Congress and reduction in public spending, that "this is the first group asked" to deal directly with the endowments.

"We hope to recruit highly qualified men and women" for the 30 or so members of the task force, he said, "and usually these are the people who can give you only a day here or there, so we're prepared to deal with that contingency."

"We'll take the mountain to Mohammed," he said. "For instance, if it would be more convenient to Beverly Sills for us to sit down for an hour with her to hear her views on the arts, rather than have her put her hand up in a room of 30 people, we'll go to her."

He said he cited Sills just as an example of the flexibility with which the task force expects to conduct its undertakings, but if she's asked, "I hope she'll serve." The White House is choosing the participants on the panel, he said.

"Most of the people," he added, "I know personally, like Franklin Schaffner, the film director. He's also on the arts council. And Margo Albert — she's married to Eddie Albert — who's served on the board of the Center Theater Group (in Los Angeles). We want to balance all the arts."

Some of the names of those who are being men-

tioned as possible task force members are Sills, Albert, artist Robert Motherwell, librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin, Kennedy Center chairman Roger Stevens, philanthropist David Packard, former U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain Walter Annenberg and beer tycoon Joseph Coors.

Heston said the task force would be headquartered here in Washington, perhaps in an office in the Executive Office Building.

The task force's task "is not to find new chairmen for the endowments" when the terms of the present chairmen expire in the fall, said Heston. McHenry, when reached in New York, concurred that the task force will not be "a search team for new chairmen." But he added, "I wouldn't be surprised if our opinion isn't asked on this."

Gray was not available for comment but issued a statement through the University of Chicago news office. Gray said she shared "the president's belief in the significance of the humanities" and said she felt the task force should address itself to strengthening support for the humanities and "help determine those areas where the impact will be greatest."