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National Endowment for the Humanities: Council Reappointments (1984): Correspondence 13

Barbara Engel

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UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER

Department of History



July 10, 1984

JUL 16 1984

Senator Orrin G. Hatch
Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources
U. S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

JUL 19 1984

Dear Senator Hatch:

I am writing to urge that the Committee on Labor and Human Resources conduct an extensive and thorough review of the credentials of the President's nominees to the Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The proposed list of seven fails to meet the high standards for scholarship and excellence that has characterized NEH from the outset. Two of them (Cresimore and Taylor) are not scholars; and at least three (Allen, Schall, Laxalt) cannot be considered humanists. Not one of them is primarily grounded in any of the four key disciplines--history, philosophy, English and foreign languages--that comprise the humanities. They thus fail to fulfill the requirement that council members "provide a comprehensive representation of the views of scholars and professional practitioners in the humanities."

It is difficult not to suspect that the slate of nominees represents an effort to politicize NEH. More than a commitment to the humanities, the nominees seem to share a commitment to the "right-to-life" movement. If this list is indeed an effort to politicize NEH, then it violates the essential mission of that institution.

As a humanities scholar occasionally called upon to referee grants for the National Endowment for the Humanities, I feel especially concerned about this matter. The guidelines for awarding such grants rightly stress the need for excellence in the proposed projects, yet no similar concern for excellence is evident in the selection of nominees to the Council of the NEH.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Engel".

Barbara Engel
Associate Professor