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## Arts, Humanities, and Cultural Affairs Act (1976): Speech 01

Claiborne Pell

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REMARKS BY SENATOR PELL AT A DINNER HONORING HIM  
AS RECIPIENT OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD  
OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITY PRESSES  
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY - MARCH 25

It is indeed a great honor, and a delight, for me to be the recipient of this award.

And I appreciate very much the remarks made by Mr. Bailey in his presentation.

To a Senator sometimes involved in contumely, crisis and controversy, praise is welcome - especially when it comes from those who are personally respected and admired, and in a setting which is for me both nostalgic of the past and a reminder of today's achievements.

As you know, and as Mr. Bailey has so generously pointed out, I have long been deeply interested in the work and accomplishments of the presses represented by your Association, and represented here at Princeton.

Of all my assignments as a Senator, I can tell you from the heart that participation on the National Historic Publications and Records Commission has been among my most cherished experiences. I wish that I had more time to devote to it,

but I am pleased with the opportunities it has afforded me to contribute in some manner to the development of important research projects - exemplified by the work of this Association.

Let me give you my own tribute by quoting from the writings of Charles Darwin. "The presence of a body of well-instructed men," he once remarked, "is important to a degree which cannot be overestimated." I feel in that presence this evening.

And I stand ready to assist in your efforts in any way I can. I believe that there is more that we can do at a federal level to make the wisdom to be derived from the past more meaningful to our people.

As many of you know, I have expressed by disappointment in the current leadership of the National Endowment for the Humanities, because I do not believe the impact of its programs to benefit our country is as strong as it was some years ago. There has been, in my judgement, a narrowing of focus - and a resultant limiting of potentials. To paraphrase

a bit in this case, the body of well-instructed men and women is not making its collective voice heard as clearly and enthusiastically as it was ten years ago - when I was starting this program in the Senate with such high hopes.

Not long ago, I was chided in the newspapers for some of my criticisms. It was suggested that if the father does not like the child, who will defend it? But by the same token, it could be said that if the father does not speak out once in a while, the child may have some problem differentiating right from wrong.

In all seriousness, my hopes remain strong. And it seems to me that we can work together to strengthen this important program and to bring hopes which we can share together, closer to realization.

I realize that the Humanities Endowment is studying now how it may be of more assistance to the University Presses and their publications. Publications are indeed essential to research. The Dark Ages were dark because there was so

little dissemination of knowledge. Knowledge and the wisdom which comes from it were locked in cloistered confines away from general use.

We have a new mission today, it seems to me - to make more available new sources of knowledge and wisdom, so that they serve to enlighten us, not just a few of us - but as <sup>all of us</sup> a nation.

The studying of a problem can be helpful - but I have seen too many government studies come to naught. I have sometimes thought that that gentleman of ancient Rome, Quintus Fabius Maximus, must have been adept at studying - for he was called "cunctator," the delayer.

I prefer to think of myself as a man of action. And I would like to act with you so that the excellence in your own work can have the widest possible impact and benefit.