

1975

## Berman, Ronald: Memoranda (1975-1984): Correspondence 13

Livingston Biddle

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### Recommended Citation

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*Confidential*

*LB*

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Memo for the Senator

From: LB

Dec. 3, 75

*may*  
*tray*

Met this afternoon with Joe Hagan and Bob Kingston, Deputy Chairman of the Humanities Endowment. They were probing to see if there were any possible areas to develop for a modus vivendi with Berman.

They asked if there might be any possible compromise you would consider on the State-based Humanities issue. I said we would always be open to their approach, but that the more you had studied the matter the more convinced you had become that your concepts were the right and proper ones for the welfare of the future of the program. They said that the questions of how the present committees are appointed, and their representative attributes to reach all involved levels of participation, from academic to labor to business to the interested citizen, were very much on their minds -- and that they wanted to improve all this. I did not ask for any specifics, and said that I would not want them to test separate details with me (as if I might seem to concur with one detail, it might place you in an awkward position later down the road.) I suspect that they will work with the Republican side (which would be normal) -- and that means Greg Fusco -- to come up with a plan for you to consider. At this point I believe Sen. Javits will hold firm in any way we believe best. Remember he has never been overly fond of the Humanities, and in the old, old days was very skeptical about their joining the team. I haven't heard of any top educators in NY trying to influence him. Fusco and I get along extremely well, and I will continue to be open and candid with him on the basics of all this, but of course would check with you on things which we might want at a given time to keep to ourselves.

Hagan and Kingston are still trying to convince themselves that in the long run (given a favorable Audit report, given some sort of acceptable compromise which they believe is possible on the State issue) all will be worked out, and Berman will stay in office. They asked in a number of indirect ways if I might not see some possibility for this. I simply said that at this time you felt that Berman had done a passable job, but not an exceptional one, etc. There is no argument against this. It is a matter of your judgment @- your basic judgment as Chairman, and as I've said I think it is unassailable, correct, and respected by all I've talked to... We need no audit disclosures to sustain this position... My feeling is that very few top Humanists would challenge this position, and I think I should stress this point when I talk with Goldwin next Monday, but without using names such as Robert Lumiansky's of the American Council of Learned Societies to indicate to whom I've talked, as whatever I say will be immediately reported back to Berman, as we know from experience.

Hagan and Kingston both gave me the feeling that they consider the State issue not as important as the possibility that you will decide to break with the principle of Endowment parity, and might even consider splitting the two Endowments. I know Berman is terrified that this could happen -- he is vulnerable on both scores. I felt implicit in what Joe and Kingston were saying that my hunch was correct as to the Berman constituency: they will support him and his reappointment if they think he can get them the money; they could turn against him as their leader if this were not the case.

Now for a new development, which is attached.

It includes: a letter to you from Berman

a copy of a GAO letter, pertaining to one of their routine reports on both Endowments in Aug. '75.

I am a little surprised that this letter was not mentioned to us, or even given to us -- when we first talked with the GAO. But it is a matter of their interpretation of an investigation of the kind you requested -- none has ever been done of the Humanities of the kind we have asked for. There was one done on the Arts during my time with Roger; it took months, but didn't turn up much as the program was so new.

Hagan and Kingston, however, are obviously hoping for something like this letter they have produced from GAO as the final result of the present investigation.

The GAO letter raises some questions -- of a comparative nature between the two Endowments. There is some criticism of both sides -- and since I have this letter from GAO I will ask -- informally -- for some clarification from the Arts, so as to be prepared if this comparison is to enter into our considerations. I say, informally, as I don't think, right now, we should officially involve the Arts.

Berman, however, seems bent on doing this. I have the as a result of reading carefully his letter to you distinct feeling that if he feels he may be discredited or impugned, or less, he will try to discredit the Arts. I have seen him behave in this fashion previously -- once in a highly ~~dis~~ questionable and to me dishonest manner, really outrageous behavior in my view. I can go into these specifics, but have not done so as I didn't want to intrude personal views at the start of things.

I believe we should reply to Berman's letter, but in a very brief way, and have drafted a reply for your approval.

The plot thickens. I feel a lack of propriety somehow in

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Berman's involvement of the Arts Endowment in his letter to you.  
And I find a certain phoniness in the tone of his letter.

Incidental Intelligence:

Paul Berman, whom years ago I was responsible for hiring and who has run the so-called shared staff between the two Endowments since 1967 stepped by for a visit. He is looking for a job. He feels that the shared staff has outlived its usefulness, that both Endowments could run their own shows at least as economically as with the present shared staff arrangement. I know that some studies are in progress on this question, and that Nancy when I was still there didn't want them pursued too strenuously with Ron Berman in trouble... But Paul Berman was quite emphatic, and would be in a position to give some authentic background, if that seems desirable to us as all this further develops.