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1-25-1981

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Mary Jane Smetanka

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Smetanka, Mary Jane, "Reagan Administration: Funding Cuts News Articles (1981-1982): News Article 28" (1981). *Reagan Administration: Funding Cuts News Articles (1981-1982)*. Paper 26.
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19 people received lion's share

Grants go to the 'humanists'

By Mary Jane Smetanka
Herald Staff Writer

Since last July, the North Dakota Humanities Council has approved projects that eventually will bring University of North Dakota history professor D. Jerome Tweton \$17,000.

Tweton's case is unusual. Much of that money is for special research that is part of a national project.

But other people who qualify as "humanists" received large amounts of money during the 1980-81 budget year, too.

"Humanist" is council jargon for anyone educated or skilled in the humanities — subjects such as history, language, law, art history and other social sciences.

Council executive director Everett Albers estimates that about \$120,000 was available to pay humanists for council work. About 300 North Dakotans qualify as humanists.

Most of that money went to 19 individuals who were paid more than \$1,000 each for work on council-funded projects. Payments to those people alone amounted to \$85,000.

Is the council, as one man who has had projects funded charged, "an employment agency for humanists?"

Albers doesn't think so.

"There is a group of scholars who do repeat," he said. "They meet the public well and like it. So it's not because they're preferred customers.

"No humanist gets rich on this program. It's really a labor of love."

However, Albers said the council has been accused of running an "old boy's network" for humanists and the council is trying to involve new people in projects.

Guidelines set by the National Endowment for the Humanities steer the state council. They advise that "scholars in the humanities must be centrally involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of every (council) project." That is to ensure that programs have humanities content, council members say.

The council's application guidelines state that a humanities scholar is someone who "has advanced training . . . and who professionally engages in teaching, writing or studying the humanities."

In practice, local and national endowment officials agree, this means humanists must have at least a master's degree to work on council projects. Although the guidelines say the academic emphasis can be relaxed for people who have distinguished themselves in the humanities, it rarely happens except for artists and writers.

And that limits the number of people who can benefit from the experience and pay of consulting, especially in a state such as North Dakota where the population is small and the pool of humanists limited.

About 70 percent of the state's humanists have been consultants, Albers said. People tend to repeat as consultants because their interest in council-funded projects becomes known, he said.

Grants go to non-profit groups; humanists do not receive grants themselves unless they are part of a group.

Most of their work is helping people plan projects and present programs. They may lead discussions, do research, participate in debate or play the part of a historical character in the Chautauqua.

Humanists receive a flat rate of \$100 a day for work, the same as they received in 1973. Another \$100 a day is tagged donated time, and becomes part of the "in-kind" contributions to the council.

Albers said most humanists who took part in council projects this year made about \$150 to \$200 a year from their work. But some have made thousands from consulting.

"I have had at least two people tell me they're used to (the income) and can't get along without it," said Larry Remele of the state Historical Society.

Tweton, one of North Dakota's foremost historians, said income from council work usually is too small and sporadic for anyone to rely on.

The \$17,000 he will get for work on projects approved by the council this year is income above the \$30,000 nine-month salary he receives as history department chairman.

But his income will not be as high as it appears.

Some of the project money is spread over two years. Tweton is taking leave without pay this semester to work on a project, and has resigned his department chairmanship, further reducing his income.

Tweton said much of the council payments will be absorbed by the salary loss created by his leave. But he admits he is a little "defensive" about receiving so much money from the council.

Albers said Tweton's case is unusual, because \$10,000 of the money he will receive is for a special project and because he is in demand for humanities programs.

"It is my opinion that Jerry Tweton is well worth anything that he's paid," Albers said. "He puts out far more than he's paid for."

The special project Tweton is working on is a history of the carpenter's union in North Dakota. It's part of a national effort to document the history of the Union Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, started when the general secretary of the union asked the NEHL to do something for a labor audience.

Several other people in the state are aiding Tweton, who is coordinator of the state project. He is interviewing carpenters to produce a 120-page popular history of the union and guiding production of video documentaries and radio and slide presentations. Albers said. The project will cost some \$27,875 over two years.

Other projects Tweton is being paid for include This Week in North Dakota History, a series running in weekly newspapers, and the

Centennial Heritage Series, a series of books on North Dakota history scheduled for publication in 1989. Tweton is director of the project.

Tweton also has portrayed Theodore Roosevelt in Chautauqua programs. He said he only recently has begun turning down requests to work on some endowment projects.

"Certain people are logical to go to in certain situations," he said. "I get called a lot on North Dakota history. My problem is I can't say no."

He said he favors relaxing the master's degree guideline somewhat to get different people involved. There are many self-taught people who are qualified and might be able to relate to an audience better than someone with an advanced degree, he said.

Julie Van Camp, a program officer and liaison to state programs for the NEH in Washington, D.C., believes the guidelines should stay as they are.

"Humanities are disciplines," she said. "Just like lawyers and physicians, a person acquires certain types of skills."

"If people really feel they have equivalent expertise, there are alternate ways of proving it. But the humanities are not something people pick up just by reading a few books."

Albers said the scholastic guidelines have become more strictly observed by the council over the years. It's an easy way to see that a person has "at least acceptable standards for a discipline," he said.

The people who got the money

Here's a list of humanists in the state who have been allocated more than \$1,000 this budget year for their work with humanities council projects. Some money may be distributed over two years.

• D. Jerome Tweton of the University of North Dakota, \$17,000 for being coordinator of a project on the carpenter's union in North Dakota, director of Centennial Heritage Series, co-author of *This Week in North Dakota History* and work with the Chautauqua.

• Suzanne Brazell, \$15,000 for 10 months as Chautauqua coordinator.

• Steven Sylvester of UND and the University of Minnesota-Crookston, about \$7,000, and Larry Peterson of North Dakota State University, \$6,500, for preparation and planning of "North Dakota: A Video History."

• William Lubitz of UND, \$5,100 as director of the North Dakota Folk Art Gallery that traveled around the state.

• Gordon Iseminger of UND, \$4,500 for "Gottlieb Bauer," a Chautauqua presentation.

• Clay Jenkinson, \$3,800 for "Meriwether Lewis," a Chautauqua presentation.

• Larry Sprunk, \$5,000 for work on carpenter's union project and a Chautauqua program, "Turkey Track Bill."

• Jean Waldera of Dickinson State College, \$3,700 for "Linda Warfel Slaughter," a Chautauqua presentation.

• Russell Veeder and Michael Soper of Dickinson State College, \$2,000 each for programs on Ukrainian heritage.

• Marilyn Fundingsland of UND, \$1,500 for work on installation and tour of state folk art exhibit.

• Dan Rylance of UND, \$2,187.50 as co-author of *This Week in North Dakota History*.

• Ben Ring of UND, \$1,040 for the KFJM radio program, "Agora of the Air."

Several thousand dollars also went to help pay visiting authors and poets for this year's UND Writer's Conference and other seminars. Those who received more than \$1,000 were:

• Billy Mills of California, \$1,100 for speaking at Fort Berthold Indian Reservation humanities series.

• Denise Levertov, \$1,500; Richard Wilbur, \$2,500; Npozake Shange, \$2,500; Robert Creeley, \$1,500; all guest speakers at the writer's conference.
