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State Humanities Committees (1979-1982): Correspondence 21

Jean S. Calhoun

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THE OHIO
PROGRAM
IN THE
HUMANITIES



AUG 17 1979

10 Pleasant Ridge Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43209
(614) 236-6878

July 31, 1979

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Associate Director

Judy R. Garel
Program Officer

Melody Stastny
Secretary

Mrs. Betsy K. McCreight
113 Fairfax Drive
Huntington, West Virginia 25705

Dear Betsy:

I have polled the Ohio Committee on the proposed new OMB funding formula. The committee members unanimously prefer this to the present formula, but we have some strong provisos. It is our collective sense that any formula that gives greater weight to population is fairer to the big states. Therefore, the OMB proposal looks good if one assumes that the principal criterion for allocation will be the population factor. We are apprehensive, however, about the formula in that it gives the chairman extraordinary discretion. Coupling federal funding with state appropriations seems a potentially sinister new development. It could work one of two ways: federal funding could be reduced as state legislatures begin to support the program; or, states, where state legislatures have made appropriations, could be doubly rewarded by the federal government choosing to reward this initiative. Either way, it could put the programs in a terrific bind.

Each state program operates in a unique political climate, and not all programs are going to be equally able to affect the political process in their states, even if they make heroic efforts to do so. What bothers me is the danger that we are going to have to start thinking so much more about politics and so much less about the program, the humanities, and the people we serve. I have seen this happen in other federal education programs. The Endowments were set up so as to insulate them from the pressures of politics, and with good reason, given the proper concern we should all have in keeping intellectual freedom alive, well, and free from political influence. Programs that venture to treat unpopular and controversial subject matters are not calculated to win friends in state legislatures, nor should they be.

Admittedly, all of this is speculative, but I am fearful of giving the chairman so much power. The possibility for the programs being the subject of favoritism is great, and there may be some very serious drawbacks in this formula that, at first, looks so appealing.

Mrs. Betsy K. McCreight

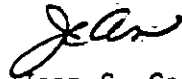
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July 31, 1979

Betsy, this is literally my last day as a member of the Ohio Committee. It's been a great experience to be a founding mother of the humanities program, especially because I have met so many terrific people both in Ohio and throughout the United States these past few years.

With best regards,

Sincerely,



Jean S. Calhoun
Chairman

JSC/jsw

cc: Charles C. Cole, Jr.