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In There Pitching

We wrote the other day about the grief that the last chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities got from Senator Claiborne Pell, chairman of the Endowment's Senate oversight subcommittee. Senator Pell thought NEH was too "elitist," and wanted to give out more money in small grants so people like "mom and pop store operators" could study the humanities. Now we've come upon further evidence that the subcommittee does not intend to relax its stance as active guardian of the nation's arts.

It seems that the banquet speaker at the last annual meeting of the Association of American University Presses was Livingston Biddle Jr., staff director of Senator Pell's subcommittee. According to Publishers Weekly, Mr. Biddle closed his address with a ditty set to the tune of "Friendship." He sang, "If you ever need a grant, call on Pell. If you ever need a subsidy, ring my bell. . . ."

This news prompts us to add a special wish of good luck to Dr. Joseph Duffey, about to become NEH's new chairman and take up the burden of protecting the Endowment from the insistent demands of pork barrel politics.