2016


Carla Hall

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_71

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_71/51
Waiting For the Ax To Fall

Arts Council Girds for Possible Budget Cuts

By Carla Hall

The National Council on the Arts began its quarterly meeting here yesterday as part pep rally, part defense of the National Endowment for the Arts—the agency it advises—which is now threatened with 50 percent budget cuts, the first in its 15-year history.

“We have to make the strongest case for the least reductions,” said Council member and folk-singer Theodore Bikel. “We don’t fund organizations, we fund them. We give them about 10 percent of their budgets—if that. We disseminate the arts across the width and breadth of this country, and this is a huge country.”

At a meeting marked by the appearances of a potential nonmonocromatic counter-culture/Republican transition leader, the Council wanted to know whether or not the Reagan administration would adopt the 50 percent cut—$88 million—in the NEA budget proposed by David Stockman’s Office of Management and Budget.

Robert Carter, the Reagan transition team head for the NEA, told the Council at yesterday morning’s closed session that the president and White House staff had just been examining the proposed budget for the NEA and a variety of other agencies.

Carter would not speculate on how much of a cut Reagan would finally adopt and hoped the NEA would “do its thing.” Carter said he had also been meeting with the Democratic legislators on budget issues in his role as presidential representative.

The NEA plans a program of reductions, he said. Carter said he had also been meeting with the NEA, “We have told them what we would do, and they are considering our proposal.” Carter said he would not hurt too much. “This is a tough situation, but it doesn’t hurt too much.”

Carter also said he expected the Reagan administration to take budget papers, including those on the NEA, to Camp David with him this weekend for further consideration. Carter would not speculate on how much the final budget would be.

Carter also said he expected to learn the final proposed budget for the NEA on Tuesday.

“They have been telegrams, calls, messages of concern that have gotten to Reagan concerning the endowment cuts,” said Carter after his talk at the Council.

“Key members of Congress and governors have been meeting with him this week. There are some of them who have been talking about the endowment. When Bill Milliken, the governor of Michigan, met with the president this week, I’m sure he didn’t want to waste any time getting to that issue. And I understand that the NEA and other appropriate officials.”

Carter said he had talked to presidential counselor Ed Meese “and other appropriate officials. I told them to take a good look at the endowment before they do anything.”

Resp. Yates, the influential chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee that approves the budget for both the arts and humanities agencies, made an unusual appearance yesterday to have a private lunch with the Council members.

“He said the bill is not in the Congress’s court right now,” said one Council member at the lunch.”

“Told us he ought to proceed at full speed until we know what the situation is. We shouldn’t be intimidated by looming cuts. To me, that means plan your programs as if you had all your money.”

But the NEA plans a closed meeting next week, the Council and agency program heads to discuss priorities in the budget, since it is unlikely that the agency will receive the full $176 million that President Reagan wants for the arts.