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## National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities (1965-1967): Speech 06

Claiborne Pell

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REMARKS OF SENATOR PELL  
REPERTORY THEATER MEETING  
DECEMBER 17, 1965

All of us here today are aware that there has been a growing desire on the part of our citizens for greater exposure to cultural excellence. This desire, of course, is closely related to the increasing availability of leisure time in an era of growing prosperity.

Last March, the Rockefeller Fund published an extensive study, 2 years in the making, entitled "Report on the Performing Arts: Problems and Prospects": Briefly, this report found that despite an unprecedented cultural boom, the arts are in trouble and must have increased support by government, business, foundations and the public.

I am proud to say that I have had something to do with ensuring such support is given to the arts by the first group---the government. What we are here to discuss today is support by the second group---your support, the support of business.

As you know, in September Congress passed and the President signed our bill establishing a National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities. I believe that this bill is of historic significance to the cultural progress of our country. Almost alone among the major governments of the world, the United States until recently has displayed

relatively little concern for the development and encouragement of the artistic and cultural resources of its citizens.

The Arts and Humanities Foundation to my mind is the first major step towards developing a comprehensive and well-coordinated program of support for the arts and of implementing it and making it meaningful.

Just as government concern and participation has heretofore lagged in the encouragement of the performing arts, so has the contribution of business been less than might be desired. Of all corporate contributions to all causes only 3 or 4 per cent goes to the arts. Nationally, only a few more than one-half of all corporations give anything to the arts. Hopefully, just as the government has turned over a new leaf in this direction, so too will our business and industrial community.

Experience has already shown that the two go hand in hand. Probably the best example to demonstrate that governmental assistance serves to stimulate private funding for the arts is contained in the four year history of the New York State Council on the Arts. During its first year, back in 1961, the Council operated with a budget of \$450,000, over 70% of which was supplied by its state appropriation,

the remaining 30 per cent coming from private sources. During its fourth year, the ratio was entirely reversed with almost 75 per cent of a larger budget coming from private funding and the remainder from the state.

Many business men feel that the only endeavors ~~in~~ in which they are able to invest are those which show promise of giving a return. I submit that support for the performing arts will do precisely this. Several years ago Charles Wilson said "What's good for General Motors is good for the USA." That may have been true, but the opposite was also true--- what's good for the USA is good for General Motors. And in our own bailiwick, what's good for Rhode Island is good for Rhode Island business.

In the past few years one of the things I have tried very hard to do has been to encourage new business to locate in Rhode Island. I am sure that you can imagine many of the questions the businessmen I spoke to asked me about my state---about the taxes, about the labor supply, about the political situation. But I wonder if you can also imagine how many of them asked me also about the educational and cultural life of Rhode Island. It was the proximity of URI and the general educational and cultural community of Rhode Island that was one of the factors that decided

United Nuclear to settle in our state. In fact, I have become convinced that the richer the artistic and educational climate, the more attractive an area is to new business.

A perfect example of this is the case of Stratford, Ontario. In 1953 this Victorian town in Canada opened a Shakespeare Festival. In the dozen years since there has been a drama of economic rejuvenation that has reached into every aspect of the community's life. 32 new industries have come to the city and now employ 3000 of Stratford's total industrial work force of 4700. Unemployment is down to 2.1 per cent, each year tourists attracted by the festival leave behind \$5 million. Throughout all these years theater and business have remained intertwined. The influx of new industry---and the flow continues----has led to scores of new service industries. All in all Stratford is enjoying an unprecedented economic boom.

The trend towards permanent resident theater companies is mushrooming throughout the country. But all too often it is forgotten that a solid, permanent company can only rarely be expected to be self-sustaining. As Howard Taubman, drama critic for the New York Times recently said "whatever the cost, an adult, exciting theater is not an ornament, but a necessity in a civilized community." All too often support is

forthcoming for a theater project at the beginning with the expectation that after the first season it will be self-sustaining. This is just not the case---a theater needs continuous backing. No one expects a library or a museum to be self-sustaining. NOR should anyone expect serious theater to immediately get on such a basis. IN fact, it has been said that if a theater gets by without a defici, its sponsors, instead of drawing comfort from this <sup>feat</sup> fact, might well wonder whetehr it is doing all it should for the drama and for the community.

The Christmas Festival at the Albee Theater has proven that when the business community gets behind a project, it will be a huge and immediate success. In this case the question "Is culture the business of business?" has certainly been answered in the affirmative. The Trinity Square Playhouse has added another dimension to our community life. I would hoep that this aspect of our cultural development would also become the business of business.