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THE WASHINGTON POST
April 8, 1993

NEH Head Selected

U-Pa. Historian Likely Humanities Nominee

By Jacqueline Trescott
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton has selected Sheldon Hackney, president of the University of Pennsylvania, as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, according to White House sources.

Hackney, 59, has been considered the front-runner to head the agency for some time. A prize-winning scholar of Southern history, he holds degrees from Vanderbilt and Yale universities, has taught at Princeton and served as the president of Tulane for six years and Penn for 12.

The humanities endowment is the federal agency intended to serve as a liaison with America's academic community. The White House initially wanted to make a showcase announcement of its choices to head the National Endowment for the Arts and the In-

stitute for Museum Services as well as NEH, according to sources. "We are close but not there," said a White House official of the other two appointments. Observ-



Sheldon Hackney, likely to be nominated to head the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ers of the process said the White House was stalling because it wanted the right racial and gender mix at the agencies.

Hackney could not be reached for comment yesterday. Since his name surfaced some weeks ago, he has been diligently distancing himself from the speculation. "Sure I would love to do it," he told The Washington Post recently. "It is a wonderful opportunity."

If confirmed, Hackney would take over a small agency with 265 employees, a budget of \$177.4 million and enormous influence. In the last fiscal year NEH distributed 2,199 grants totaling \$159.1 million to the country's libraries, museums, colleges and indi-

viduals. (By contrast, Penn supports 20,000 students and more than 2,000 faculty members with a \$1.4 billion budget.)

The issues immediately before any new chairman include the fiscal 1994 budget, which is scheduled for release today; the reauthorization of the agency that Congress must consider before the fall; and the personnel trims that have been ordered by the White House.

Quite often the chairman of the 27-year-old agency helps set the tone for many debates within the academic community. Though NEH was not as embroiled in freedom of expression and First Amendment questions as its sister agency NEA, it has had its share of skirmishes in the last few years.

The last chairman, Lynne Cheney,

spoke out about political correctness and multiculturalism and her critics said she brought her own personal conservative views to appointments and grant-making. Hackney has been a prominent voice on editorial pages on the need for federal scholarship aid for college students.

In an article published by the Philadelphia Inquirer, Hackney tackled the issue of political correctness. He defined it as a "term of derision used to mock the alleged sheeplike conformity of college communities to the latest fashionable orthodoxy prescribed by some political interest group or the leaders of a trendy intellectual movement." He described himself as being in the middle. "There are two warring factions on the contemporary campus battlefields: cultural dissidents to the left and traditionalists to the right. However, the largest camp (in which I include myself) resides somewhere in

no-man's land (excuse me . . . no-person's land), ducking the shrapnel from the PC bombs exploding in the popular press."

A native of Birmingham, Ala., Hackney has three grown children. His wife, Lucy Judkins Durr Hackney, is a member of the board of the Children's Defense Fund, on which Hillary Rodham Clinton once served as chairman.

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