A sad state of the arts

Since September, six new performing centers and concert halls have opened across the country. Meyerhoff Hall in Baltimore cost $52 million, which was provided by the city and a $10 million gift from a local philanthropist. Peoria, Ill., dedicated a new $64 million civic center, designed by architect Philip Johnson and paid for with private donations.

The performing arts center in Eugene, Ore., cost $26.7 million, which the city raised from a restaurant and entertainment tax. In that sense, the current crunch in the face of structural defects was predictable. Still, it’s unfortunate that the shutdown came when hopes were high that new professional management and new leadership on the board of trustees would reverse the center’s economic fortunes.

Although the Boston Symphony Orchestra managed to better its own centennial fundraising goal last year and the Museum of Fine Arts has successfully cultivated younger donors, Boston is basically a nickel and dime town in a nickel and dime state as far as the arts are concerned.

Nineteenth century patrons excluded the population at large from their board rooms and ran arts organizations like private clubs. This old-guard legacy has lingered on too long. The assumption that someone else would pick up the tab has hurt fundraising efforts and the credibility of many cultural institutions here.

Over the last decade, state government here has finally acknowledged that the arts are important to the quality of life and the economic climate of the state and increased funding levels from $1.7 million to $5.5 million in the past five years. The state has lost about $10 million from Reagan Administration cutbacks at the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities. But, more important, there is still hesitation. "It’s a political issue," Latimer commented. "It’s not just a financial issue."

Take a break

I take strong exception to Kenneth Rosen’s Nov. 20 op-ed column, “Time to end the Blue Laws.” I don’t believe that short-term economic gains compare to the possible long-term implications for quality of life. I repeat the suggestion that Sunday will come to feel like any other day, that our competitive marketplace mentalities will be kept perpetually pulsating.

While many find little meaning in traditional religious observances, Sunday has remained a day to pull back from the regular hectic pace for a day with one’s family, a leisurely brunch with friends, a slow walk through the Arboretum or unclogged city streets. I wonder if we need to be more competitive -- to some extent -- as successfully as now.

Where were blacks when Bradley ran?

David Nyhan’s Nov. 7 report on Thomas Bradley’s candidacy for the California governorship is the best one I have read in a long time. But to suggest that it was “lost ... on the day he was born” is overlooking it, overrating the impact of the racial issue. Bradley and his staff ran a highly skilled and sophisticated campaign, one that took cognizance of the racial factor — just as a female gubernatorial candidate would have to take heed of the sexist factor — and isolated it as successfully as circumstances allowed.

After all, Bradley lost to the

Soviet leader Yuri Andropov named to Presidium

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Many people in Boston are without food as a global problem associated with food scarcity. However, there are efforts being made to address this issue. For instance, the Boston Globe is devoting space to the problem of hunger. The article also highlights the need for coordinated efforts among various organizations to tackle this issue. The Globe's coverage of the hunger problem is significant, as it helps raise awareness and encourages action to combat hunger in the city.

Robert M. McConnell, Westerminster