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Duffey, Joseph: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (September 9, 1977): Memorandum 01

Livingston Biddle

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Enclosed is a Memorandum outlining the Conference agreement on State Humanities programs, which indicates that Senator Pell's basic concepts prevailed.

Also enclosed: a copy of the Statement which will appear in the Conference Report on this subject.

As you doubtless know, the Conference Report interprets the legislation. In this case, a strong statement of purpose seemed desirable and Senator Pell was responsible for gaining its approval.
Memorandum to:

Mr. Aloysius A. Hazewski
President
Polish American Congress

From: Livingston Biddle
Staff Director
Senate Special Subcommittee on
Arts and Humanities

September 2, 1976

The hearings on the nomination of Ronald Berman to serve as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities are scheduled to begin on September 15th.

It seems likely that Dr. Berman would be the only witness called on that day, with a later day for the expression of other views. However, I will verify all this with you early next week.

Enclosed is some background information on this issue, including a statement expressing the views of Senator Pell.

I am enclosing the latest Humanities Endowment annual report which shows a concentration of grants in the northeast with relatively very little support for the Humanities in the South, for example. If you look at the Senior Fellowships, the most prestigious awarded by the Endowment, you will find more than 50% concentrated in just a few States (Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts -- New York, getting by far the largest share.)

It can be noted that the average size of Humanities grants is over $50,000 -- while on the Arts side, where we feel that the impact nationally has been far greater, the average grant is less than $25,000. The Arts program is reaching out into communities far more than the Humanities. This is of great concern to Senator Pell.
Just this week, on Wednesday evening, the long Conference between Senate and House on the reauthorizing legislation for the Arts and Humanities program concluded. The legislation will continue the program for another four years.

The State Humanities Program issue was a particularly thorny one. The House members had been greatly pressured to maintain the existing structure with little change. At present Berman gives Endowment support to the various committees on Humanities he has established in every State, one per State. These committees are presently self-perpetuating. They deal with limited themes. There is very little room for support for small groups -- historical societies, ethnic groups, etc -- as each State committee focuses exclusively on "issues of public policy" and thus concentrating on the social sciences rather than giving a broad range of options for other areas of the Humanities.

The Conferenees corrected these defects to a considerable extent, thanks almost entirely to the efforts of Senator Pell.

But we did not achieve our full purpose to mandate a Federal-State partnership to benefit the Humanities -- as the Arts programs have been benefitted by this partnership. The Arts have much larger State programs, and they are in the mainstream of the political and democratic processes in their States. They reach out to small groups with the variety of all the Arts.

Perhaps the principal benefit of the Arts State programs is that they decentralize control of the Arts from a Washington base. On the Humanities side there is right now no such decentralization -- Berman has fought against any involvement with State governments... There is a real danger in this which I see increasing daily -- that is of one-man control over a program which, although relatively small, can have a great deal to do with the future quality of life and the potentially strong moral and ethical values which the Humanities represent.

Senator Pell's statement puts all this into focus.

In essence, the Conference agreement gives the States an opportunity to participate now in state Humanities programs, if they wish to participate with some state funds (as the Arts do). A sliding scale for State matching provides some incentives. And the Chairman of the Endowment is directed to make help make this come to pass.

One big question is this -- Is Berman the right man to lead in this respect? Is he the right person to carry out these Congressional wishes? It's only 20% of the program, but the
State program -- as Senator Pell believes so strongly -- can reach the grass roots.

To Senator Pell, this is all a matter of deep principle and his own convictions.

His views have been widely distorted in the press, sometimes viciously, in what we have to believe is part of a well-orchestrated campaign.

I will be in touch with you, as soon as I have more information -- but did want to get this much to you now...

My very best regards,

[Signature]

[Name]
State Humanities Programs

The Senate-House Conference on reauthorization legislation for the Arts and Humanities programs for the next four years has concluded. Perhaps the most controversial area was the differences between Senate and House bills regarding State Humanities Programs.

At present programs in the separate states are conducted by committees established by the Federal Endowment for the Humanities in Washington. They have no relation with State governments, receive no support from the States. Their members stem from a Washington appointive source. The membership is self-perpetuating and they have no uniform guidelines.

(In contrast State Arts programs are conducted by State agencies, established in law. In ten years State funding for the Arts has increased fifteen-fold -- from $4 million to $60 million. In addition, over 1,000 community arts councils have been developed. These State programs support a great variety of projects at the grass roots level. They are a major decentralizing force. And they are a major balancing force in a true Federal-State partnership. The fifty State leaders who owe allegiance to their own States, not to Washington, prevent Federal domination and control.)

The Senate bill sought to establish the same kind of partnership between the Federal government and the States, as had proved so eminently successful for the Arts. There was immense pressure from the Humanities committees and from Dr. Berman,
Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to reject involvement by State governments. Dr. Berman called the Senate bill "completely unacceptable."

The House bill, while containing some provisions to ensure more accountability by the State committees, would have permitted them to continue with only minor State involvement.

The Conference agreement provides incentives for the kind of Federal-State partnership envisioned in the Senate bill. In brief, the agreement provides for State participation and a 50% membership on the entity for the Humanities in the State involved, when the State desires to contribute to the program. Participation is phased in with regard to State funding. The formula is approximately 25% of the federal contribution in the first year, 50% in the second, and a sum equal to the federal contribution in the third year. States desiring to participate would immediately have the opportunity of appointing 50% of the membership. Each State is guaranteed at least $200,000 in federal funds.

Furthermore, the Endowment Chairman is directed to encourage State participation, and to work on establishing the benefits of the partnership and making them effective. State programs are also broadened to include all aspects of the Humanities, thus overcoming an objection that they are presently far too limited and deal only with "issues of public policy." At present small groups seeking help in the states are not eligible for support, unless they are willing to devise a program with a public policy issue theme. This present program, established by Washington, has prevented help at the state level for ethnic programs, for example, local historical societies.
As the hearings for Ronald Berman, as Chairman of the Humanities Endowment, take shape -- to decide if he is to be reappointed for a second four-year term -- a major question arises:

Is the individual who has termed "wholly unacceptable" the concept of State involvement in the Humanities -- the proper person to carry out the new legislation approved by the Congress?
State Humanities Programs

The purpose of the Conference agreement is to encourage and stimulate the development of a Federal-State partnership in the broad cultural areas of the Humanities, so that this partnership may be increasingly beneficial to our people in each State. The Conferees have taken note of the dramatic growth of the Federal-State partnership with respect to the programs of the National Endowment for the Arts, exemplified by a 15-fold increase in annual State funding for the Arts in ten years -- from $4 million to $50 million -- and by the development of more than 1,000 community arts councils. The Conferees agreement envisions the development of similar challenges and opportunities for the Humanities Endowment.

The Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities is directed to help encourage State participation and to work more closely than in the past with State governments and State officials, so that the values, particular to the Humanities, can enter the mainstream of our democratic processes and make a more vital contribution to American life.

The Chairman is urged to study State needs in the Humanities with State leaders, so that these needs can be met in the broadest sense, through programs representing the full scope of the Humanities, and through programs which will be addressed to a multiplicity and variety of worthwhile projects. It is the position of the Conference that the 20% of the total funding allocated to the States is of deep importance in bringing the values of both the Arts and the Humanities into local communities and to groups whose needs may be relatively modest, but who have potentially great significance.