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They said, "How dare you spend our taxpayers' money on this trash?" They all objected to taxpayers' money being used for a piece of so-called art work which, to be quite candid, I am somewhat reluctant to utter its title. This so-called piece of art is a deplorable, despicable display of vulgarity. The art work in question is a photograph of the crucifix submerged in the artist's urine.

This artist received $15,000 for his work from the National Endowment for the Arts, through the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art. Well, if this is what contemporary art has sunk to, this level, this outrage, this indignity — some may want to sanction that, and that is fine. But not with the use of taxpayers' money. This is not a question of free speech. This is a question of abuse of taxpayers' money. If we allow this group of so-called art experts to get away with this, to defame us and to use our money, well, then we do not deserve to be in office.

That is why, Mr. President, I am proud of the Members, who in literally a matter of minutes — over 20, about 25 — joined me in signing a strong letter of protest to the Endowment. Here is a picture, and the title is "Plies Christ." Incredible.

To add insult to injury, after this group of so-called art experts picked this artist for this $15,000 prize — of taxpayers' money; we paid for this, we attempted to explain away the outrage, and they should be angered at us, unless we do something to change this. If this continues and if this goes unrectified, where will it end? They will say, "This is free speech." Well, if you want to see speech, you want to draw dirty pictures, you want to do anything you want, that is your business, but not with taxpayers' money. This is an outrage, and our people's tax dollars should not be giving it that dignity. And after this piece of trash and this artist received this award, to make matters worse, the Awarus in Visual Arts, this wonderful publication was put together, and who was it financed by, partially? By none other, than the National Endowment for the Arts. What a disgrace.

They not only see this garbage, they can say we did not know he engaged in this ilk, but then they see fit to distribute it through the Nation and brag about it and allow their names to be used, instead of calling and saying, you get our name out of that.

Mr. President, we better see to it —

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I might be permitted 2 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. D'AMATO. The purpose for which the Endowment was established, and I quote, "to support the survival of the best of all forms that reflect the American heritage in its full range of cultural and ethnic diversity and to provide national leadership on behalf of the arts." I submit this is a distortion of those purposes. It does not reflect on the full range of cultural and ethnic diversity; rather, it is a perversion of those principles. If people want to be perverse, in terms of what it does, that is there, but not with my money, not with the taxpayers' dollars, and certainly not under the mantle of his great Nation. This is a disgrace.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter to the National Endowment for the Arts be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

U.S. SENATE

Mr. HUGH SOUTHERN,
Acting Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Southern:

I recently learned of the Endowment's support for a so-called "work of art" by Andrew Serrano entitled "Piss Christ." We write to express our outrage and to suggest in the strongest terms that the procedures used by the Endowment to award and support artists be reformed.

The piece in question is a large and vivid plastic image of Jesus urinating on a crucifix. The Endowment funded this work with taxpayer dollars, and we must question whether American taxpayers should be forced to support such trash.

There is a clear flaw in the procedures used to select art: the degree of taxpayer support. That fact is evidenced by the Serrano work itself. Moreover, after the artist was selected and honored for his "contribution" to the Endowment, his work was exhibited at government expense and with the imprimatur of the Endowment.

This matter does not involve freedom of artistic expression, but the question whether American taxpayers should be forced to support such trash.

And finally, simply because the Endowment and the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) did not have a direct hand in choosing Serrano's work, does not absolve either of responsibility. The sale of both the work and the SECCA with taxpayer dollars promoted this work as part of the "Awards in Visual Arts exhibition, is reasons enough to be outraged.

We urge the Endowment to comprehensively review its procedures and determine what steps will be taken to prevent such support in the future.

We await your response.

Sincerely,

Alphonse D'Amato, Bob Kerry, Warren Rudman, Rudy Boeschutz, Dennis DeConcini, Pete Wilson, Bob Dole, Chuck Grassley, James A. McClure, John Heinz, Wendell Ford, Hubert Humphrey, Howard Shelly, John W. Warner, Larry Pressler, Conrad Burns, Tom Harkin, Trent
May 18, 1989

Lott, Jesse Helms, John McCain, Arien Specter, Steve Symms.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the Senator from Minnesota is an absolute master of his subject. I have always admired his perspective, and I have been, as are others, taken aback by his consistent willingness to condescend to the people of the United States. I am sure that he is not an artist, but he is a Kermit.

Mr. President, the National Endowment for the Arts was established in 1965. That is a long time ago, but with the advent of the computer age, it is not a forgotten date. What this Senate colleague did, he filled a bottle with his own urine and then stuck a crucifix down there Jesus Christ on a cross. He set it up on a table and took a picture of it.

For that, the National Endowment for the Arts gave him $15,000, to honor his art. I say again, Mr. President, he is not an artist. He is a jerk. And he is taunting the American people, just as others are, in terms of Christianity. The Senator from Minnesota chose to say so.

I am not going to call the name that he applied to this work of art.

In naming it, he was taunting the American people was attempting to create indignation. That is all right for him to be a jerk but let him be a jerk on his own time and with his own resources. Do no disoblige our Lord. I present it and I think the vast majority of the American people do. And I also resent the National Endowment for the Arts spending the taxpayers' money to honor this guy.

This program, supported by the National Endowment, is administered by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art. They call it SECCA. I am sorry to say it is in my home State.

Mr. Senator, for your selection, this photograph and other works were exhibited in several cities around the country with the approval and the support of the National Endowment.

Horsefeathers. If we have sunk so low in this country as to tolerate and condescend this sort of thing, then we become a part of it.

The question is obvious. On what grounds, basis does anybody who would engage in such blasphemy and insensitivity toward the religious community deserve to be honored? The answer to that he is does not. He deserved to be rebuked and ignored because he is not an artist. Anybody who would do such a despicable thing—and get $15,000 in tax money for it—well, it tells you something about the state of this Government and the way it spends the money taken from the taxpayers.

So no wonder all of the people calling my office are indignant. The Constitution may prevent the Government from doing some things, but it seems to me, laughably, I will describe it as "artistic expression." It certainly does not require the American taxpayers or the Federal Government to fund, promote, accept, approve, or condone it. None of the above.

Mr. President, the National Endowment's procedures for selecting artists and works of art deserving of taxpayer support are badly, badly flawed if this is an example of the kind of programs the fund with taxpayers' money.

I have sent word to the Endowment that I want them to review their funding criteria to ensure that such things happen again. The preliminary report we got from one person with whom we talked was sort of "Down, boy, we know what we are doing."

Well, they do not know what they are doing. They are insulting the very fundamental basis of this country. I say again I resent it.

Mr. COATS addressed the chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana is recognized.

Mr. COATS. I think the Chair. (The remarks of Mr. Coats pertaining to the introduction of S. 1057 are located under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDENT. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

THE SHAMIR PLAN FOR ELECTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Mr. METZENBAUM. Mr. President, the State of Israel has been the focus of abundant study, commentary and criticism over the past 1 1/2 years. Israelis have been told in every manner imaginable that they bear responsibility for the violence in the occupied territories. Israeli security forces have been compared to everyone from the Nazis to the Khmer Rouge in their attempts to restore order in the West Bank and Gaza territories.

What the world continues to ignore is the fact that Israel is at war. The State of Israel is faced with almost impossible alternatives regarding its relations with the Palestinians. Too many of Israel's neighbors, with the exception of Egypt, continue in their determination that there should be no State of Israel. I will not take up my colleagues' time with reviewing the strategic position Israel has faced over the past year. One only has to look at a map to understand this situation. Most Senators are already well aware of the critical geographic problems that limit Israel's diplomatic and security options.

Mr. President, even with the majority of its population and industry crammed into a narrow corridor 9 miles wide, Israeli forces have offered a major concession to West Bank and Gaza residents. Israel has just taken a big risk in the search for peace.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has produced a viable, realistic plan which includes Palestinian self-rule and a vehicle for negotiations on a permanent solution. The Shamir plan represents an accomplishment of which it should be taken seriously by all parties to the conflict.

Mr. President, it is significant that the Israeli cabinet has given approval to the Shamir plan. Israeli democracy has, at times, been almost too pluralistic, creating a divided government...

But the Shamir plan is not the product of division. It is a plan that the entire Government, has endorsed because the voters of Israel want peace.

For so many months, the fact that Israelis are ready and willing to make peace has been callously overlooked. No one has suffered more from the ravages of violence than ordinary Israelis. Many who have been calling on us to lay the blame on both sides of the conflict fail to see two essential truths about the conflict. The first, as I have mentioned, is that Israelis have endured a vastly greater level of war, strife and suffering than anyone else. Israelis are truly the party most in need of peace.

The second frequently overlooked truth is that no sovereign state can resolve its security problems through a "unilateral" strategic position to satisfy the fickle whims of world opinion. The PLO's so-called peace proposals are inherently insincere and cynical because they would ultimately be fatal to Israel.

One need only look at the PLO seal to see that it views all of Israel as part of its self-declared State of Palestine. This is not the emblem of an organization committed to peace.

The Shamir plan, on the other hand, gives something of substance to both sides in a realistic framework.

The Shamir plan will help bring a measure of stability to a turbulent area. Arafat's various ideas and plans have simply served to stir up the plot.

Mr. President, Prime Minister Shamir has laid out a 5-year road map toward a permanent solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This is an attempt to identify responsible negotiating partners within the Palestinian community, and to give them the credibility to speak for their people.

The plan is intended to be a flexible vehicle for dialog—not a diplomatic strait-jacket.

Upon implementation of the Shamir plan, free democratic elections will be held in the territories by secret ballot. And, symbolically, theoretically, that if this plan is put into effect, it will represent one of the first truly free plebiscites in the Middle East.

Has anyone ever heard Mr. Arafat or any other Arab leader, for that