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David B. H. Martin

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December 18, 1973

Mr. David D. Ryus  
Vice President  
The American Museum of Natural History  
Central Park West at 79th St.  
New York, New York 10024

Dear Dave:

Here is a copy of the hearings on the Museum Services Legislation.

The Administration has expressed a "no objection" policy to S. 2137. It opposes S. 796. HEW's letter to the Committee objects on several grounds including cost, administrative complexity, and the asserted inappropriateness of getting the Federal government more heavily involved in support of museums than it already is (on the theory that adequate support for museums should be provided by State and local government and from private sources).

I talked with Livingston Biddle of Senator Pell's staff (tel. (202) 225-4642) who is seized with the legislation for the Senator. He explained that there is some disunity within the museum community about what sort of Federal support to seek. Some would welcome partial support for the cost of special educational programs, acquisitions, capital improvements, etc.; others feel basic institutional support to help meet operating deficits is what is needed. The National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities (and the Administration generally) are opposed to having the Federal government take on the latter, in part because it would probably lead to pressures for similar support from orchestras, dance companies, theatrical groups, etc.

The Smithsonian does not want to become the manager of a large scale program of Federal support for museums lest this dimension of activity come to overshadow its primary functions as a museum (exhibition, research and education).
Senator Pell, who counts Senator Javits as a strong ally in his efforts, has not given up. I expect that if the opportunity develops in the second session of the current Congress (in 1974) to achieve something beneficial for museums (at least, say, the enactment of S. 2137), Senator Pell will be in the thick of it.

I took the liberty of suggesting to Mr. Biddle that he look to you as an effective helper in lining up support from "people who count", especially in New York.

I look forward to seeing you over Christmas.

With warmest regards.

Always,

David B. H. Martin
Special Assistant to the Secretary

cc: Livingston Biddle