Curran, Edward: Confirmation Hearing (1985): Correspondence 03

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Senator Claiborne Pell
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C. 21510.

Dear Senator Pell,

I understand the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources is soon to interview Mr. Edward Curran, who has been nominated to chair the National Endowment for the Humanities. Particularly because Mr. Curran, as head of the National Institute of Education, recommended the abolition of that agency, it seems important that the Committee conduct a serious investigation of his abilities and intentions.

I am closely aware of, and very much in favor of, the range of NEH programs. An NEH fellowship enabled me to complete my book, *Rimbaud: Visions and Habitations* (University of California Press, 1983), which reviewers have described as a significant contribution to the study of modern poetry. Subsequently I served on a panel to evaluate proposals for summer stipends, and was impressed with the expertise demonstrated by the members of the panel, who for a modest stipend devoted days of preparation and a full day of work in Washington in selecting the most deserving applicants. I am familiar with distinguished colleagues who have participated in NEH secondary school teacher seminars both during the academic year and during the summer at Brown University. In the summer of 1984 I gave an NEH seminar for college teachers, and will do another on "Fictions of the City" in 1986, this one for high school teachers.

The 1984 summer seminar proved to me the enormous usefulness of NEH programs. Though employed in small, out-of-the-way schools, with inadequate libraries and overly heavy teaching schedules, the twelve participants surprised me by their abilities and their intense commitment to teaching and to scholarship at the highest level. Together we accomplished a great deal in their eight week stay in Providence, and I know that they took away new ideas and approaches for their own teaching. I believe that the high school program has even greater potential for stimulating secondary school teachers throughout the country, surely one of our highest national priorities.

NEH is an important agency, if anything underbudgeted. It must be
kept at least at its current level. It is essential that your Committee assure itself that Mr. Curran, or any other nominee, is committed to this proposition.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Ahearn
Chairman

EA:ivd

CC: Provost Maurice Glicksman
Senator Edward Kennedy
Senator John Kerry
Senator Robert Stafford
Senator Lowell Weicker