

1. Arts and Humanities: Culture Agency Is Emerging from Infancy

I must study politics and war that my sons have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture. . . . —PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS

With the passage of the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, the United States government undertook for the first time to become a continuing patron of the nation's cultural activities. In the years since the act was passed, a total of some \$50.5 million have been expended under the Act. The effects of these expenditures are difficult to evaluate as a whole: in many instances the individual sums are small and the impact of many of the activities cannot be measured in physical terms. But the organization that implements the Act, the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities (NFAH), appears destined for an increasingly large role in the economics of American culture; therefore, at this half-decade mark, it may be useful to examine the structure of the NFAH and its pursuits.

The legislation created two separate but adjacent organizations, or endowments, one for the arts and one for the humanities. It provided for a staff for each and a 26-member council, composed of well-known figures from a variety of disciplines, to preside over each. The chairman of each council, who is also chairman of the endowment, was to receive the same salary, \$28,500, as the director of the National Science Foundation (the salary has since been raised to \$40,000 for council chairmen and \$42,500 for the NSF director). To coordinate the endowments and provide liaison with other government departments a Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities, made up of selected government administrators, was appointed. The endowments were each allotted \$5 million for the first year of operation, with as much as \$5 million more apiece promised to match private gifts.

The arts endowment was directed to supply fellowships and matching grants to individuals and groups engaged in study or performance in all

fields of the performing and creative arts, including film-making, architecture, and fashion design. The mandate to the humanists was to assist the study, teaching, and public dissemination of knowledge in history, philosophy, law, languages, literature, religion, and archeology.

The law governing NFAH is designed to keep federal participation minimal, both spiritually and financially. It contains the usual language forbidding interference with the policies of grantees. Most grants to institutions or groups made through the arts endowment require that at least 50 percent of the necessary money be put up by the recipient; no such stricture pertains in the humanities endowment. But both operate under the assumption that federal

funds are to act as "seed" money, not as primary support of any project.

Like NSF, NFAH underwent many changes and reversals between conception and birth; but, unlike NSF, whose budget has blossomed from a few million to almost a half billion dollars, funding levels have remained small by federal standards.

This year has seen the Foundation's first big jump in appropriations—the fiscal year 1971 allocation is \$31,310,000, an amount exceeding that allotted for fiscal 1970 by more than 50 percent. Of this, \$11,060,000 is earmarked for humanities programs, and \$12,590,000 will go to the arts, of which \$4,125,000 is designated for the use of state arts councils. \$2.5 million in matching funds is available for each endowment. The rest is for administration.

No one now seems to question the Foundation's right to exist, but many regard its acceptance by Congress as little short of miraculous. Attempts to create a federal arts agency go far back in the nation's history, but success can finally be attributed to the 89th Congress, which, rich with the liberal harvest of the 1964 Democratic landslide, supplied a friendly environment to arts legislation. In addition, President Johnson, whose cultural philistinism was generally exaggerated, gratified enthusiasts by his strong endorsement of an administration bill that combined the arts and humanities in a single agency. The mood of the nation—activist and optimistic—was ripe for the idea. "Arts have a way of moving ahead when people feel this way," observes a National Gallery official, "and this was a time when in the unconscious sense this was a great society."

The bill was not without its critics, some of who feared the enstatement of a "culture czar," the propagation of "committee taste," and the danger that the arts would be dragged into a slough of mediocrity. However, the Foundation has not only failed to justify these expectations but has, despite its modest appropriations, apparently surpassed the hopes of its fondest adherents.

The arts endowment, which got a year's head start in planning, has perhaps scored the most significant advances. In 1966, its first full year of operation, it faced what the arts council likened to a cultural desert in America. While great metropolitan centers such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco were teeming with creative activity, the rest of the country was relatively barren of professional artists.

Greenberg Resigns from Science To Produce New Publication

Daniel S. Greenberg, a member of the News and Comment staff since 1961 and head of it for most of that time, has resigned, effective 18 December, to publish an independent, specialized newsletter, *Science and Government Report*. To be issued twice monthly, starting in February, the new publication will concentrate on science-government relations in Washington, and is intended for scientists, research and academic administrators, and industrial research executives. Subscriptions, at \$25 per year, \$35 for foreign addresses, are now being accepted. (Science and Government Report, Inc., Post Office Box 21123, Washington, D.C. 20009.)

Museums, symphony orchestras, and theater companies, which traditionally operate on the verge of bankruptcy, were teetering on the brink of extinction. Ironically, the country's culture boom is counterproductive for arts institutions, for whom a heavy customer load increases the already existing financial drain. As a result of skyrocketing attendance, for example, many museum officials have been confronted with the choice of either limiting visiting hours or setting high admission fees. Dance, the newest and smallest of America's performing arts, is also in financial trouble. Average yearly salaries for dancers in major companies range downward from \$9000 to less than \$4000. New York is the acknowledged "dance capital of the world," but companies dare not stray outside the half-dozen large cities where they can be assured of an established audience.

According to a landmark study called *The Economic Dilemma of the Performing Arts*, by William Baumol and William Bowers, which was published in 1966, the situation can only deteriorate because the performing arts are not suited to the rules of America's mass production economy. Annual net deficits of all performing groups were estimated at \$26 million, with a projected rise of up to \$60 million by 1975.

Except for tax exemptions to nonprofit groups, the government, prior to the establishment of the endowment, did next to nothing to alleviate the situation. Hardly anyone wants the federal government to become the No. 1 patron of the arts, as is the case in Europe—least of all the artists themselves, who cherish a visceral antipathy toward bureaucracy. Nonetheless, statistics tell of a striking disparity: the Austrian government annually spends about \$3.78 per capita on the arts, and Great Britain puts out \$1.23, in contrast to 10 cents a head in the United States.

While Europeans regard art as a necessity, Americans see it as a luxury. Sculptress Jimilu Mason, a member of the arts council, is appalled at the contrast. After a recent trip to Europe she said, "Returning to America makes you wonder what in the world has happened to art. In Europe, there's art in public buildings, in post offices—art is everywhere." Miss Mason contends that the American notion of the exclusivity of art has prevented us from incorporating it into everyday life. Endowment staff members, too, remark that Europe looks to this country for the most ex-

citing new developments in the arts, but Americans themselves are hardly aware of the riches they harbor. "The vitality, diversity, and creativity in American dance has been one of the world's best kept secrets," says June Arey, director of dance programs. "For years some companies have been kept alive by foreign tours sponsored by the State Department."

The arts endowment has set itself a twofold task: to stimulate and support creativity and to democratize the arts through wide public exposure and the creation of new channels of dissemination. To the latter end, approximately one-third of the money directly allocated to the endowment is distributed among state arts councils. About half the states had arts councils at the time that the legislation passed. With stimulation from the endowment, the councils have expanded and others have been created. Now one exists in every state and territory, including the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

As autonomous bodies, the state

councils operate as mini-endowments, designing programs tailored to the needs and fancies of their areas and collecting funds, either appropriated by state legislatures or contributed by private donors, to match the federal funds. (Federal money plays a very small role for some councils: in New York the legislature allocated an unprecedented \$20 million for the coming year to bail out her foundering performing arts groups.)

One significance of the state program is that it stimulates small-scale amateur projects of the sort private foundations rarely touch. In Michigan, for instance, the railroad association donated cars for an "Artrain" which was stuffed with art exhibitions, craft shows, and traveling lecturers and sent around the state. In West Virginia, a little money and talent transformed the State Music Association from a listless assortment of nonmusicians, who met to discuss high school band outfits, into a vital group that broke the pageant-like tradition of outdoor theater in Appalachia by staging an original production of *The Hatfields and McCoys*.

Where the Arts Money Goes

In addition to grants to individual artists and performing groups, the National Endowment for the Arts has made contributions to projects like these:

- \$100,000 to a Theater Development Fund which purchases tickets of new plays with artistic merit but shaky financial footings, and resells them at reduced prices.

- A grant of \$91,291 enabling ten young musicians to spend a year in Hungary studying the Kodaly concept of music education.

- \$12,500 to aid a National Educational Television production of two films on fashion design.

- \$30,000 each for environmental design projects: an urban, open space design study concentrating on the design potentials of a city street; an investigation of less destructive methods of strip mining.

- Grants totaling \$1 million to aid in the establishment of Westbeth, a nonprofit artists' housing project created out of the old Bell Telephone Laboratories on New York's Lower West Side.

- \$203,767 for the University of Wisconsin to conduct experiments on how to increase rural community receptivity to and participation in cultural programs.

- Poetry in the schools: the endowment pledged \$148,000 to state arts councils and universities across the nation for a program in which poets visit public schools to read and discuss their work.

- \$3,500 for research into a lost technique of violin finishing ("the shellac that made a Strad a Strad").

- Yearly anthologies of poetry and prose culled from hundreds of small American literary magazines and edited by writer George Plimpton. Most of the endowment's total contribution of \$179,950 went into cash prizes for authors and editors. (Support of the project was terminated when the council decided priority should be given to creation of new works rather than recognition of work done.)—C.H.



(Left) Dancers practice performance in "Assemblage," an artistic exploration of the potentialities of urban living filmed by Richard Moore in San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square. The film, which combines the talents of musician John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham, was distributed to educational television stations through the Public Broadcasting System. (Right) Violinist Isaac Stern (left), a member of the arts council, joins musicians who perform and talk with elementary school children in a program sponsored by Young Audiences, Inc., a national audience development organization.

The state program bears much responsibility for the endowment's popularity. There is evidence that enthusiastic mail from home has spurred a number of congressmen to jump on the art bandwagon. The program's vitality also argues against the occasional criticism that the endowment is limiting its beneficence to entrenched big-city cultural establishments.

The national program money has gone to a variety of individuals and groups in nine categories: dance, literature, music, education, public media, theater, visual arts, architecture, and interdisciplinary programs. Nonmatching grants to individual creative artists account for about 4 percent of outgoing funds. Other grants are designed, as a staff member put it, to "kill all kinds of birds with one stone."

An example of this multiplier effect is found in a grant which enabled the Vermont Marble Company to arrange an outdoor sculpture symposium. Ten outstanding sculptors were invited to spend the summer chipping away at blocks of marble, and the results were left to start a sculpture park. For a

modest outlay of \$10,000, the endowment linked up with private industry, which promises to be a vast source of future support for the arts, engaged a wide audience (some 100,000 people came by to watch the artists at work), set an unusual and imaginative precedent, and left a legacy which will draw further contributions.

Another unorthodox venture is the Affiliate Artists program, made possible by a donation from the Sears Roebuck Foundation. A performing artist, usually a musician, becomes an affiliate of a college or community organization, and—freed from the usual academic obligations of the artist-in-residence—he gives concerts and acts as an adviser to the community.

The endowment's largest commitment to date has been \$2.6 million, over a 3-year period, matched by donations from the Ford Foundation and the Motion Picture Association of America, for the creation and support of the American Film Institute. The AFI is a nonprofit organization set up to further education, research, and publication on film-making and to build an

archive of old American movies which have been transferred from crumbling nitrate to durable acetate stock. The AFI also runs a theater in Washington, D.C., whose overwhelming popularity testifies to a heretofore untapped audience of old-film addicts.

The endowment faces a danger common among all foundations: that of sinking money into projects that die the minute their grants are used up. The idea that a program, once launched, will be carried by momentum "is plainly a complete illusion," says Michael Straight, deputy to chairman Nancy Hanks. Grant applicants are therefore required to submit long-range plans and to furnish information on potential private sources of cash. Miss Hanks, who came to the endowment after 10 years as chairman of the American Association of Arts Councils, is also credited with uncanny knowledge of the habits of private foundations and the business world, which enables the endowment to make realistic assessments of a program's survival capability.

Nonetheless, miscalculations have been made. A few years ago the en-

dowment put \$350,000 into the creation of a touring arm of the Metropolitan Opera Company. After 2 years of struggle the company sank. Sarah Caldwell's American Opera Company was then given a touring grant, but this venture has been plagued with financial difficulty.

Also in deep trouble is a resident theater company which was set up in New Orleans—one of several pilot theater projects across the country. The endowment played the major role in establishing the theater in a community where little organized interest existed, and efforts are still being made to create a reliable base of community support.

Nevertheless, popularity is not enough to ensure a program's success, since the worth of an artistic institution cannot be judged by standards of cost-effectiveness. While salaries and expenses rise, there can be no balancing rise in efficiency when the product is labor. As one report notes, "it takes as many man-hours to perform a Schubert string quartet today as it did 150 years ago."

With their new 1971 appropriations, Miss Hanks and her council have decided to address this problem with the endowment's first grants to symphony orchestras. Although Straight hails the move as "going to the core of the arts," to the "carriers of our cultural heritage," others question its merits. "Every orchestra in this country operates on a deficit—they're bottomless pits," says a congressional staff lawyer. Endowment policy forbids the funding of deficits, "but that's where the money's bound to go." A music critic points out that only 5 percent of the population goes to one or more performances a year by any of the performing arts. A staff member calls symphony orchestras "gargantuan" monsters, a creation of another era, whose march to extinction will not be slowed by a few million dollars. Critics also mention the \$82 million invested by the Ford Foundation into 61 major orchestras over the past 5 years. Services have been expanded and salaries have been raised as a result, they say, but the orchestras' escalated economy has created further needs which leaves them back where they started.

Nevertheless, the endowment believes aid to symphonies will spur their managements to uncover new sources of financial support and, more importantly, will encourage them to break past their hoary role as museums for the classics—to play more contemporary music, to break into small en-

semble groups, and to venture out of concert halls and into parks and suburbs.

As the endowment grows, so will controversy within and around it, and the staff is aware that the real battles are yet to come. At present, though, harmony predominates. Nancy Hanks, who was appointed by the President last year to take over from Democrat Roger Stevens, enjoys unusual respect and admiration from her colleagues. Combined with her soft-spoken charm is an

awesome political prowess which the Oxford-educated Miss Hanks used to good effect in the course of buttonholing some 200 congressmen to urge this year's hike in appropriations. Nixon offered concrete evidence of his faith in the Hanks leadership when he asked Congress last December to double the Foundation's allocations. The confidence seems to be mutual—"the arts picture under Nixon is the brightest it's ever been," says she.

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Department of Interior: Hickel Leaves a Diminished Agency

When Walter J. Hickel was abruptly fired by President Nixon last week as Secretary of the Interior, he left an agency much different from the one he had come to head in early 1969. His successor-designate, Rogers C. Morton, a Maryland congressman who is currently chairman of the Republican National Committee, will take over a Department of the Interior that has suffered a deep erosion of its functions and authority.

The erosion has come as the result of the establishment this year of three new federal agencies. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took over Interior's water pollution control program, which commanded a larger budget than any other activity of the department. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) absorbed Interior's marine mining and commercial and saltwater sports fisheries programs, which was a setback to the department's aspirations to become a comprehensive department of natural resources. And the new Council on Environmental Quality, established by statute at the turn of the year (EPA and NOAA were established by Presidential reorganization plans), clearly diminished what had been Interior's newly emerging role as the government's "environmental conscience" and center of policy innovation in environmental matters.

Interior remains responsible for managing most of the federal public lands (embracing about one-third of the land area of the United States) and the outer continental shelf. Its other activities include western reclamation projects, promotion of better

mining technology and enforcement of coal mine safety, and management of parks, wildlife refuges, and outdoor recreation programs. For the most part, these are responsibilities traditionally associated with Interior, an agency still oriented largely to the interests of the western states.

There is now the possibility at least that Interior can find a major new role for itself by asserting leadership on the problem of developing a national land-use policy. But the official chosen to represent the Nixon Administration last spring at the Senate Interior Committee's hearings on pending land-use legislation was not Hickel, the Secretary of the Interior, but Russell Train, chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality.

Great political skill as well as courage will be required of Rogers Morton if he is to build any ambitious new edifices upon Interior's presently eroded base. In Hickel's case, there has been more courage than finesse. Since President Nixon has not really explained why Hickel was fired, one must look for the explanation in the circumstances of the dismissal. For some time now it has been evident that Hickel is not the kind of political person well adapted for survival in the Washington environment. Whatever the merits of his letter to the President last May on the Administration's alienation of youth, Hickel behaved recklessly in exulting publicly in the attention and acclaim that the letter brought him.

Moreover, he virtually asked for dismissal by later indicating that the White House would not dare fire him. For instance, in an interview reported