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The American Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in 1848 and incorporated in 1874. Its objects are to further the work of scientists, to facilitate cooperation among them, to improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare, and to increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of the methods of science in human progress.

Support for the Humanities

Recent issues of the *Newsletter* of the American Council of Learned Societies indicate growing support for a National Humanities Foundation comparable in function to the National Science Foundation. Laudable as this objective is, and despite endorsement by some members of Congress, a humanities foundation is likely to remain pretty low on the list of congressional priorities for the next few years.

While advocates seek to develop greater support for the idea (remember, it took 5 years to get the NSF legislation approved), a partial approach may also be worthwhile. One particularly timely proposal is now before Congress in the form of a request by the National Historical Publications Commission for an appropriation of \$500,000 a year to provide partial support for a program of editing and making generally available some of the nation's major historical documents. The function of the National Historical Publications Commission, which was established by the Federal Records Act of 1950, is to foster the "accumulation, preservation, and accessibility of documentary sources for use by the whole community of scholars, professional and amateur, and by the public at large. . . . [The] documentary sources with which it deals are the foundation on which all efforts to study, interpret, or recreate the past must rest." Examples include the editing and publication of the Adams, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison papers. Complete and well-edited source materials set a high standard for historical writing, strengthen the graduate education of future historians, and also have a public benefit. The next quarter of a century will witness the bicentennial of "one of the most significant eras of political creativity in the annals of history." The current spate of books on the Civil War forecasts a great deal of popular and semipopular writing on this historic era, the quality of which will depend in large measure on the quality of the available source material. Moreover, the undoctored, unmanipulated story of those years can serve as a rich source of information and inspiration to other nations that are struggling to establish their own political foundations.

What the Commission now wants is a little more money: \$5 million to complete work on the Adams, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison papers and to endow similar work on other collections; and \$1 million a year to support smaller and less expensive projects and to encourage the wider use of microfilm reproduction of other source materials that have been carefully prepared for this kind of distribution. Of this total, Congress is being asked to provide \$500,000 a year.

Here is a project of easily understood values (recent hearings before a committee of the House of Representatives went quite favorably); the budget is extremely modest; the objective is a worthy one in its own right; and although it is far from being a National Humanities Foundation, it might serve as a step in that direction. The request seems worthy of general support, including support by scientists who agree that in the interest of scholarship generally it is desirable to redress the great imbalance in prestige and support that has developed between the sciences and the humanities.—D.W.