

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY™

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COPING WITH CUTS: Neighborhood Arts Carry On

One year ago we surveyed neighborhood arts groups to assess the early damage of the Reagan administration's "Economic Recovery Program" (see "Cross Country Cuts," NAPNOC notes #11). This year we contacted some two dozen groups to see how people were faring.

One of our headlines last year predicted "the first cut is the deepest"; so far our prediction has been correct. Though there have been further cuts in many public programs that provided assistance to community-based cultural work, none has had the sweeping impact of the axeing of public service employment programs through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

The National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities (NEA and NEH) suffered relatively small budget cuts -- around 10% overall -- and House and Senate authorizing committees have already recommended maintaining these funding levels for Fiscal Year 1983 despite the Reagan administration's recommendation that they be cut more deeply. But both agencies have shifted even more toward support of established institutions, making it that much harder for smaller, newer and unconventional groups to get grants.

Of course, many neighborhood arts organizations have not been directly affected by these federal funding cuts: as Ruby Lerner, director of Alternate ROOTS (Regional Organization of Theatres - South) has pointed out, many small groups have relied on earned income, private donations, and the voluntary work of artists to continue their programs through the years; the federal cuts have passed them by, as did federal grants.

Nowhere To Hide

But many people we surveyed stressed that no one has escaped the larger impact of the economic shifts stemming from Reaganomics. The country's economic decline has continued; many economists talk about a serious depression, with unemployment and interest rates climbing steadily and production continuing to decline.

Groups that rely on bookings have found fewer potential sponsors and box office has slowed as people have less money to spend on tickets. Less disposable income also means less likelihood of individual dona-

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PRACTICING Cultural Democracy

Dates have just been set for NAPNOC's 1982 Annual Meeting and Conference. This year's Meeting will be held October 15-17 on the campus of the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). The theme of the Conference will be "Practicing Cultural Democracy: Artists at Work in Communities." It will focus on survival questions, since these are foremost in people's minds these days, but not merely on survival: participants will be talking and thinking together about their community work, its strengths and weaknesses, and about the tasks that face the neighborhood arts movement in the coming year. Some of the sessions will deal with concrete strategies, others with analysis and discussion.

The agenda won't be prepared 'til much closer to October, but in order to get as many people there as possible we need to start planning now. We'll be working with Doug (continued on page two---)

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Paterson of the Dakota Theatre Caravan and UNO to identify possible performance, exhibit, workshop and lecture venues in and around Omaha, so we can try to help NAPNOC members get gigs to help cover travel costs. With a little advance planning, we can turn Omaha into a festival of neighborhood arts while we're in town.

Members should send us resumes, descriptions of the kinds of talks, workshops or other presentations you can offer, and booking and promotional information for performances or exhibits you'd like to tour. We'll compile this material and send it on to Doug; potential sponsors will either contact you directly or through NAPNOC, as they choose.

We need to get started on this right away, so send material to us as soon as possible -- but no later than the end of April. And send us your ideas about topics or presentations that ought to be part of the 1982 Conference itself. Write to NAPNOC, P.O. Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239 or call 301/323-5006.

PUTTING OUR HEADS TOGETHER: A National Brainstorm

Late last month we participated in a meeting -- The February 26th Movement -- sponsored by Political Art Documentation and Distribution (PADD) in New York City (see Cultural Democracy #17 for information on PADD).

The February 26th Movement was two days of panels, exhibits and performances that focused on the work of socially-conscious visual artists: there was a panel of artists working in New York, another of people from around the U.S. (on which NAPNOC was represented), and a third which dealt with distribution systems for artwork.

There clearly wasn't time for the complex, important issues raised by the meeting's many participants to receive the serious attention they demand. That's why one of the agreements to emerge from the PADD meeting presents such an exciting opportunity. On February 28th, after the conference had ended, several of us met to discuss follow-up.

It was agreed that we need some way for the various regional and national coalitions to keep in touch, and some unifying project that can help us work together. We decided on a round-robin discussion of a question that is important to all our work. Here's how the round-robin will operate:

Between now and the end of June, people and organizations across the country will be encouraged to take up discussion of these topics:

a) Why is there no financial support for progressive political arts work in the United States?

b) What strategies to address this problem have been attempted so far, and how have they succeeded or failed?

c) What proposals can be offered for new strategies?

The goal of the round-robin is to come up with workable new ideas, but it also seems important to go beyond the over-simplifications that usually stand in for analysis. It's just not useful to say that people are too stupid or reactionary to look beyond the marketing marvels that shore up consumer culture; and it's not enough to say that political artwork just isn't sufficiently slick to compete. Nor can we say our potential supporters haven't got the cash: we have to face the fact that even in our poorest neighborhoods people spend money on culture -- movies, records, magazines and so on -- and most of that money goes to Hollywood and not to neighborhood arts work. But at the same time, we have to face the fact that we can't compete with Hollywood's advertising and marketing schemes, and that it might not be so hot if we could. In other words, this is a complex problem; none of us is an expert; and all of us need to contribute to its solution.

People can address these topics in any form they choose. Here are some suggestions.

For individuals:

- o write a letter, essay or working paper and send it around to friends;
- o go out with a tape recorder and interview people you think will have something to contribute -- transcribe their remarks and add your own commentary;
- o write a letter to the editor of your local paper, compile responses and write about the results;
- o pose the question to a class, workshop, or organization you belong to, and make a record of the discussion;
- o post the topic on a bulletin board and ask interested people to get in touch or append their own thoughts.

For organizations:

- o hold a forum, inviting not only arts people but community activists of all types -- use it as the occasion to encourage the use of arts work in non-arts organizing;
- o put the topic on the agenda at your meetings and make a record of the discussion;
- o use your newsletter or other publications to call for ideas, and publish the results.

A word about "political art": people at the PADD meeting preferred to call it "oppositional art," but some might say that puts too much emphasis on protest and not enough on affirmative actions. "Activist art" was another option. Naming is just as much of a problem here as it is in the neighborhood arts movement. For the purposes of this round-robin, it's agreed that "support for progressive political arts work" means work that makes a social comment, or takes a ques-

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tion of social and political concern as its subject. For many people it also means arts work that exists outside the establishment arts world, and is "political" or "oppositional" not so much in terms of subject as in the way the artwork is made, or by whom. In other words, if the shoe fits, wear it.

Whatever modes of participation you employ, make a record in writing of the analysis and ideas that emerge, and send it to NAPNOC before June 30. The July-August issue of Cultural Democracy will be devoted to a summary, with excerpts, of contributions to the round-robin. We expect there will be some new insights and ideas to discuss, and that people will be ready to try them out and start the second round-robin as fall approaches.

We'll publish more details -- and perhaps some contributions -- as the round-robin progresses. For now, we urge all Cultural Democracy readers to participate in the round-robin: it will yield important information and help to coalesce the movement -- and it promises to be fun too.

Don Adams

Arlene Goldbard

DISARMING ART

According to the polls, most of us in the U.S. oppose the nuclear build-up. But the hawks -- especially those in the White House and Pentagon -- have unlimited access to the mass media and unlimited opportunity to state their case. Advocates of nuclear disarmament are realizing that letters to the editor and leaflets aren't adequate to the job, and that a much more powerful tool -- artwork -- can be brought to bear on the tasks of raising consciousness and mobilizing support.

During the last few months we've heard from several peace organizations working for nuclear disarmament; they've been interested in making contact with arts groups with the same goal in mind. So when we did the research for "Coping with Cuts," which begins on page one of this issue, we also asked people to tell us about disarmament arts projects in their communities.

There's an amazing array of organizations and impulses at work here; someone could make a career of sorting out the political disputes, strategic disagreements and tactical complications in and among the various groups involved. But there is unanimity on the most important questions; artists have a role to play -- as citizens and as arts workers -- in bringing an end to the nuclear madness.

Two weeks have been targeted by many groups to focus attention on the arms build-up and alternatives to it, though activities are going on now and will continue through this year's elections and beyond. April 18-24 is Ground Zero Week; most of

the plans we've heard about for this period center on teach-ins and conferences on college campuses. Several organizations (including the Fair Budget Action Coalition, mentioned in Cultural Democracy #19) are also targeting the week around April 15-- income tax time -- for events and actions which call attention to the inequities of the Reagan budget. We can expect to see some events which combine both these aims, attacking the administration's emphasis on military spending and its disregard of social needs.

June 12th inaugurates the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, and many groups have chosen this date and the following weeks for actions which call worldwide attention to public support for nuclear disarmament. New York City is a focus for these events because the UN is located there, but people around the country are being encouraged to mount supporting activities in their own communities.

The kick-off event in June will be a huge rally and demonstration in New York with many corollary events planned by various groups of artists. Two groups are coordinating these events and jointly publishing an information bulletin: Arts Alert is produced by the Cultural Task Force, June 12th Rally Committee, 853 Broadway, Suite 2019, New York, NY 10003, 212/460-8980; and by Arts Alive!, 490 Riverside Dr. 19T, New York, NY 10027, 212/749-6620. Arts Alert lists sponsors (leaning heavily toward celebrities), affiliated organizations (somewhat more community-oriented), and a calendar of meetings and events in New York.

New York artists have formed several affinity groups. Artists for Nuclear Disarmament (AND) is working on posters, murals, banners, photography, exhibits and other visual arts events. The contact person is Susan Ortega, 212/222-5567. Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament (PAND) is coordinating a variety of performing arts events; contact 212/477-0822. A number of groups are collaborating on "Future Generations," a children's rally for survival to be held on Mother's Day at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park; contact Lynn Holst at 212/598-7129. Artists Against Nuclear Madness are planning a conference, exhibit and series of events and performances called "Dangerous Works," to take place at Parsons School of Design and the New School for Social Research, April 19-23; contact Ellen Kahaner, 574 West End Avenue #21, New York, NY 10024; or call Elliot Kreloff at 212/864-1502. Political Art Documentation and Distribution (PADD; see Cultural Democracy #17) is planning a number of actions; write to Box 2064, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 or come to one of PADD's regular meetings, the second Sunday of each month at 8 P.M. at 325 Spring St., New York.

Media Network, a NAPNOC member, is putting together a filmography of disarmament materials; they're also planning a workshop/forum on April 15 where media people can meet and talk about disarmament-related projects. Contact Abigail Norman at Media Network, 208 W. 13th St., New York 10011 (continued on page four---)

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or call 212/620-0878.

The Mobilization for Survival, a national peace group involved in June 12th events, wants to put together a directory of artists involved in anti-nuclear work; write to Bill Vitale at the Mobilization, 48 St. Mark's Place, New York, NY 10003 or call 212/533-0008.

Elsewhere in the East, NAPNOC member Underground Railway is working with Mobilization for Survival to prepare a performing event for the UN Special Session. Contact Debra Wise at Underground Railway Puppets and Actors, 486-A Main St., Melrose, MA 02176 or call 617/665-7812. Mitchell Kamen in trying to form an artists' peace network in New England and wants to hear from interested artists; contact him at Artists West, 144 Moody St, Waltham, MA 02154, or call 614/861-1653. He also directs New Englanders to contact Communicators for Nuclear Disarmament, which he describes as "an association of 150 artists, designers, film makers, writers, p.r. and media professionals (who) offer a full range of creative services to peace groups. As communicators they create their own messages through exhibits, benefits, direct mailings." Contact Communicators for Nuclear Disarmament at 617/923-8800.

In the Midwest, NAPNOC member Chicago Mural Group has been talking about a spring poster offensive; contact CMG at P.O. Box 25074, Chicago, IL 60625. In Minneapolis, At The Foot of The Mountain is working on a new production, "Ashes, Ashes, We All Fall Down," described as a "ritual drama about nuclear madness and the denial of death." The company is trying to raise money now to tour the piece through the Midwest, especially with the sponsorship of community-based organizations like COACT and the Nuclear Freeze campaign. Contact them at 3144 10th Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55407 or call 612/375-9487 or 825-2820.

On the West Coast, member Mary-Linn Hughes of L.A.P.A.D. and the Social and Public Arts Resource Center in Los Angeles tells us that a group called Artists for Survival is sponsoring a series of events this summer under the heading "Target L.A." Contact coordinator Sheri Gaulke at 213/225-4868 or Mary-Linn at SPARC, 685 Venice Blvd, Venice, CA 90291 or call 213/822-9560. The Los Angeles chapter of Artists Equity is involved in actions around Ground Zero Week; contact Bill Lasarow at 213/748-3411 or 664-4736. Sisters of Survival is a group of feminist performance artists planning to tour Western Europe in the fall of 1982; they are soliciting slides of anti-nuclear artworks -- or original 8½" x 11" work -- to take along and exhibit in the U.S. on their return. There's an entry fee. For information contact Sisters of Survival at The Woman's Building, 1727 N. Spring St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.

Seattle X-Change is planning a series of actions during Ground Zero Week and

afterward. Contact Doug Kahn, P.O. Box 656, Seattle, WA 98111 or call 206/323-3759.

This is by no means an exhaustive list -- it's only the tip of what appears to be a very large iceberg. We'd like to keep Cultural Democracy readers in touch with anti-nuclear artworks and events. If you're planning something or want to give us an update on events in your region, please get in touch. Write to NAPNOC at P.O. Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239 or call 301/323-5006.

Don Adams
Arlene Goldbard

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tions, and businesses are going under faster than at any time since the Great Depression. The disincentives to charitable giving built into Reagan's 3-year tax cut exacerbate these problems.

The major cultural institutions, which lost relatively little through federal cuts and draw on a high-income audience, are feeling declines at the box office. June Gutfleisch of the California Confederation of the Arts observed that "Audiences are off, and people are doing audience development programs, and doing surveys, and trying to figure out why their audiences have dropped. I think it's simply because there isn't a lot of money around...There's a terrific slump in housing. Retail sales are off. You see it all over: department stores are empty; restaurants where you couldn't get in have plenty of tables; people are worrying about having \$6 for a movie."

Out of Work

There have been relatively few organizational casualties -- at least so far as we could tell -- in the past year. Some organizations are virtually defunct, however: Rural Arts Services director Ken Larsen reported that 5 or 6 organizations in the vast rural region he serves in northern California had gotten their first staff support from CETA and have not been able to regroup since the cuts occurred.

Other organizations have seen dramatic reductions in staff in the past year: Baltimore's Theatre Project, which had a staff of 52 at this time last year, dropped last spring to around 20 due to CETA cuts. Now a half-dozen staff remain, and more layoffs may occur as existing program contracts expire.

Deep staff cuts like these have been the hardest for neighborhood arts groups to deal with. As Misha Berson, who directs the Theatre Communications Center of the Bay Area, sees it: "The companies that had CETA funds have just had to cut back their staffs -- they haven't found any replacement money."

Many groups reported that they have had to cut salaries -- and work longer hours -- to survive with reduced staffs. Others, like SPARC (Social and Public Arts Resource Center) in Venice, CA, have finally been able to re-hire some staff on a part-time basis: From a staff of 18, all but 2 were

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lost to CETA cuts; but now half-a-dozen people are working part-time and more are involved as volunteers.

Some CETA-related funding shifts still threaten: the Greater Knox Council for the Arts (Knoxville, TN) was informed this month of early withdrawal of their Young Adult Conservation Corps work teams, assigned to carry out mural projects, a theater renovation, and a signage project for the Council. The program was to end in June, and the early cut-off leaves the Council with a large amount of now-unneeded materials and supplies. The Chicago Mural Project will need CETA youth money to carry out its summer projects, and is concerned that diminishing funds will make this even more difficult for their community organization cosponsors to obtain this summer.

(The four bills now before Congress to replace CETA all ignore public service employment entirely; most provide no salaries or stipends to trainees and all emphasize placing trainees in private sector business situations. It's hard to see how cultural groups will make use of these programs.)

De-Programming

Shifts in funding and staff support have naturally been reflected in programming shifts. Deep staff reductions at the Theatre Project have virtually eliminated the Baltimore group's community service programs: The Rat Squad (a theater piece about rat eradication and neighborhood pride) was ended in mid-March, earlier than scheduled because of Community Development Block Grant reductions; all but two members of the Baltimore Voices oral history company have been laid off and in August the project's NEH funding expires. Director Philip Arnoult says the Theatre Project plans to continue to work on developing theater pieces when contracts can be obtained, but the community program Philip described in NAPNOC notes #3 is largely gone.

Many groups that were once able to maintain full-time staffs now bring in artistic companies part-time, maintaining only skeletal administrative operations. The Play Group, a theater company based in Knoxville, operated on a low level for the past year: a one-man storytelling show was toured through the winter, after the 4-member company dispersed. The Play Group's recent designation as the official children's theater of the Knoxville World's Fair will bring 111 days of work from May through September under the direction of Donna Kelsey.

Feedback Productions in San Francisco has gone through similar changes, though the two projects Feedback operates have fared quite differently. Make-a-Circus, (which brings a company of 15 into communities to create a circus with neighborhood children) now operates with a 3-person administrative staff and engages its artists and technicians on a part-time basis. According to Feedback director Liz Price,

"*Make-a-Circus is doing fine considering the economy.*" Though the cutbacks in California parks and recreation departments eliminated many former sponsors, new corporate underwriters have been found. Make-a-Circus earns about half its budget and is experimenting with winter indoor shows which will permit charging admission.

Feedback's other project, Tale-Spinners, is in serious trouble. A multigenerational acting company of 7 that plays mainly to senior audiences, Tale-Spinners now has no paid administration (as it did with CETA funds), though Price hopes to have someone on board soon to develop new financial support. Though the program has operated since 1974, Bay Area foundations have not responded to Tale-Spinners' requests for support. Liz attributes this to the fact that "*there's more of a demand for children's groups than seniors'. It wasn't like that in the past. It was 'in' to fund seniors for a while; now it isn't popular at all.*" Tale-Spinners was just awarded a small touring grant from the California Arts Council which will take it to new territory in southern California. But without additional support, the company is worried about holding out.

Many other performing groups have been sustained despite cuts through touring, but all are wary of the declining market for touring events. Even such solid markets as colleges appear "soft" to some. Bob Feldman of the United Mime Workers noted that their touring was "down a bit" this year and pointed out that touring scattered throughout the year results in a lot of "wear and tear." He wishes there were support available for residency work that would enable the Illinois mime company to plan their touring more carefully and allow company members to develop other projects. UMW is trying to build tours for its children's piece, "The President's New Clothes," feeling that the children's market will prove more resilient.

Many presentors have begun to feel the effects of Reaganomics and have discontinued cultural programming in favor of other institutional priorities. Staff of the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities report big cut-backs in parks and recreation programs due to Proposition 2½, that state's tax limitation initiative. Four years after the passage of Proposition 13 (see NAPNOC's report on its impact on community arts programs), California's state treasury is nearly exhausted and deficits are projected; Californians expect arts budget cuts.

Much of the progress made in recent years by community-oriented cultural groups utilizing humanities funds is being undone. The Association of Southwest Humanities Councils, funded by NEH to provide technical assistance to Hispanic groups, is no longer in existence. NEH funding is expected to be less available to community-based oral history projects. Nevertheless, the Community Media Project was just awarded a \$100,000 grant for its program of media organizing forums in public libraries in 3 boroughs of New York City.

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New On The Block

Most of the groups we surveyed felt that the economic situation has had a decided chilling effect on the growth of innovative cultural programs and especially on the development of new cultural groups.

June Gutfleisch predicted: "What's probably the single thing that's going to emerge is that everyone's going to play it safe -- and that will be particularly true with theater. What won't happen, and what won't even get planned, is what will be the most serious loss. Everyone suddenly wants to be an entrepreneur. If you're an entrepreneur, that means you look for a market and that you're not necessarily doing experimental work -- in fact, you're not."

Cynthia Pitts of the Milwaukee Inner-City Arts Council and the Midwest Black Theatre Alliance talked about the difficulty of risk-taking now: "These are very, very dark time for all of us, but especially for groups that are just coming into existence. That whole commitment to experimental art and to emerging art -- the kind of risk-taking that the old guard at Expansion Arts did in the old days -- does not exist at this point."

Phyllis Jane Rose of At The Foot of The Mountain in Minneapolis added her voice: "We're at that borderline budget place right now -- where even among smaller arts groups now they're terming us the 'major minors.' And I have such mixed feelings about that because the people who are where we were for six years have nothing. So the opportunity for beginning groups is really bad."

The Private Sector Finks Out

The Reagan administration's policies have had a strong influence on private funders. Speaking of these developments in the Twin Cities, Phyllis observed: "Last October, November, December, when the big speeches were coming out of Washington it affected all foundations and corporations in the city. That whole thing about making sure the major institutions survive was being acted out spontaneously. And the issue about what's art and what's not art -- Reagan's definition of 'the fine arts' had a large effect in this community. In terms of the climate, things seem so much worse because so much local money is being funneled into the major operations."

No one was optimistic about new funds from corporations. One member, speaking of the response small groups get from corporate funders, said: "Everyone's going after corporate funding and no one's really getting it. It's still the same old story, where you work your butt off and woo and court and you get a check for \$500 from a huge corporation. I don't see that changing, except for very big things that have a lot of advertising potential."

June Gutfleisch reported on the situation in California: "I'm hearing frightening news from the (corporate and foundation)

sector, despite all the rhetoric coming out of the federal government. I think Arco is thinking of cutting back, and they have been a major funding source here and an enlightened one, as they have funded everything from the largest to relatively small, grassroots organizations. They're talking about having to cut way back. People are talking about major cuts in the corporate funding that has been available....The San Francisco Foundation reports it's getting 200 requests for every 20 they were getting before. Arco is getting phone requests every 5 minutes instead of every 20. Everybody's bandying those kinds of numbers around."

The March/April issue of the Cultural Post quoted Robert Gustavson, executive director of Seattle's Corporate Council for the Arts, sounding pretty god-like: "What we're saying is that we want to invest the corporate arts dollar most effectively. A comprehensive fund drive is a feasible idea when there are not many arts organizations. When CCA started (in 1968) there were six large organizations and 12 or 13 small ones in the city. Now there are hundreds. The business community has some serious questions about whether so many arts groups leads to a duplication of services."

Cynthia Pitts offers a more humane explanation of the problems neighborhood arts groups face in securing private support: "The local donors are now dealing with the whole dilemma of how to catch the Reagan torch in dealing with all human services. We're going to find ourselves in a real bitter kind of struggle where local foundations are going to decide between whether to give to culture or to augment what's going to happen to people on Medicaid, and what's going to happen to food stamps, and all of those really bitter, bitter cuts that are coming down the pike."

Joe Rodriguez, currently on leave from the NEA's Office of Civil Rights, reported that some Hispanic groups have begun to make progress in getting corporate support, noting first-time support from business for Ariztlan in Tempe, AZ; from affluent Cuban-Americans for some groups in Miami; and for a few of the Association of Hispanic Arts' member groups in New York. He noted, though, that not everyone was able to benefit from these new sources of support: "the top echelon of organizations gets most of this money; there's no way to market the local work of groups in their neighborhoods."

Getting into Real Estate

Besides looking to the private sector for donated income, more cultural groups have their eyes on the business model of earning income. Cynthia Pitts says: "Some groups are really trying to get into the economic development thing, and here again, the extent to which they have already become viable as institutions is crucial -- that is to say they can get their own buildings, they can use their buildings to generate income, they have capacity for financing and dealing with the banks, these are areas that only a minority of neighborhood groups can get into."

While the Theatre Project's program has (continued on page seven---)

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has been hurt by public funding cuts, Philip Arnoult remains hopeful of the capital development scheme he described at NAPNOC's last Annual Meeting (see issues #3 and #13). The project was delayed for 6 months when the discovery of an underground stream necessitated redesign of the theater's renovation plans. Philip hopes that ground will be broken this summer and that the theater's performance season will resume in 1983-84 after a one-year hiatus. Due to high interest rates, the Theatre Project is trying to minimize the amount it must finance by securing more direct subsidy: The Project is attempting to have a \$600,000 development bond passed by the Maryland State Legislature to assist in the nonprofit's share of the renovated facility. Foundation sources are also being explored to help make the package more attractive to private investors who will participate in the syndicate arrangement.

Most groups are working on the development of facilities with an eye to their potential for earning income to fuel nonprofits. Joe Rodriguez reported that SACHA (San Antonio Consortium for Hispanic Arts, described in NAPNOC notes #9), the Chicano Humanities and Arts Center in Denver (CHAC), Teatro de Albuquerque, and Los Angeles' Self-Help Arts Center are among those now involved with developing community cultural facilities.

The Issues of Economic Development

Appalshop is nearing completion of its new home in a renovated building on the edge of downtown Whitesburg, a community of 1,200 in eastern Kentucky. Having spent its first dozen years in various rented spaces, Appalshop's new home will inaugurate a role for the media and theater collective as a community cultural presenter and programmer. As President Katharine Pearson points out, "the building is demanding a lot of the organization -- figuring out how to take it over and use it -- and we're just figuring out how to raise enough cash to cover it." Appalshop is working with consultants to explore long-term financial strategies, including the possibility of an endowment. The opening of the building, renovated with the help of Economic Development Administration funds allocated through the Appalachian Regional Commission, has been substantially delayed due to problems with contractors.

The prospect of new facilities and no programming threatens some. Ken Larsen reports that the Mendo-Lake Pomo Council has no program funds for the new interpretive center built by the Army Corps of Engineers outside Ukiah, CA. Similarly, the United Native Indian Tribes lost federal and United Presbyterian Church funds promised for programs in its cultural center.

For groups which depend upon rented space, the condition of the economy has made the facilities question an important obstacle. Misha Berson, speaking of the inflated real estate market in the San Francisco area, said: "A number of groups

are looking for space -- some have been kicked out, the Eureka Theater had a fire -- and the real estate is so awful that they're being faced with an enormous new expense."

The pressure to earn more income from facilities also affects programming. Los Angeles' Woman's Building, in an effort to raise revenues, has converted what were once public meeting and workshops spaces into private, for-rent studios, according to Mary-Linn Hughes.

Real estate is not the only basis for economic development; increased emphasis is also being placed on marketing the products of community cultural groups. Appalshop's Katharine Pearson reported that she felt optimistic about the shop's financial prospects: "We have 34 films that have been produced, so one way for us to make more money is to sell more copies of all the films. So a lot of our attention is looking to that -- distributing them, getting them out. Same thing with the records and the video. It's certainly easier in some ways to sell somebody a record for x number of dollars than it is to sell somebody an idea, although the idea is why you do the record."

Building Bridges

In Milwaukee, Cynthia Pitts reported that a strong alliance had helped save an important municipal cultural support source which was slated for elimination. "If you could have seen the coalition, the network-building going on in this community between the 'majors' and the neighborhood groups, it would have blown your mind. Now obviously, the major funding institutions are heavy into the funding allocation -- we really get peanuts -- and their lobbying system is well-oiled. But then when the County was talking about eliminating funding altogether, we formed a coalition that was representative, across-the-board, regardless of cultural community or budget size, to present an austerity program to the County. And we managed to get funding that is reflective of work that will be done by the majors and by neighborhood-based arts organizations -- about \$500,000.

"Now, the major institutions aren't buying into cultural democracy as such. But where there is this real possibility of the arts being crippled across the board, and where we for the first time gain access to decision-making about public resources related to the arts, there is a greater tendency for more exploring of how the majors can provide in-kind help for emerging groups that don't have the same kinds of financial options. We have not arrived at that place in our negotiations now, but it is a logical next step for what we've been through with the County this year."

Phyllis Jane Rose reported that At The Foot of the Mountain's extensive collaboration with various peace and disarmament groups in preparing to tour their new show "Ashes, Ashes, We All Fall Down" throughout Minnesota (see "Disarming Arts, this issue): "I'm spending all my basic time and energy trying to form coalitions in the city, try-

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COPING WITH CUTS

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ing to stay in touch with all the grass-roots people. That's where "Ashes" is coming from -- all the churches in town, and we've got a huge network of disarmament and peace people for this play, and that's always the direction we've wanted to keep the theater going in....Our audience consists of the disenfranchised -- largely women, the economically disadvantaged -- so I would never want to sacrifice that to move into the money."

Bob Feldman reports that the United Mime Workers has continued to attempt to build stronger alliances with other organizations -- especially labor groups -- but finds that this work is very slow and must be viewed as a long-range effort. "For one thing, there's not much of a precedent, and with the economy as it is, some groups figure that right now, the arts -- right now -- are not a top priority for their constituency. We've gotten a couple of bookings, but nothing along the lines of significant funding or getting a lot of work."

Riding The Rollercoaster

The Greater Knox Council for the Arts is one of those local institutions Reagan expects to benefit from private philanthropy. Director Wanda Harding reported a new \$20,000 grant from the Aetna Foundation; around \$18,000 will be passed through to Council subgrantees, filling a bit of the gap left with the loss of \$60,000 in NEA City Arts funds the Council had administered for the previous three years. Wanda's hopefulness about private funding has been tempered, though, by feedback like the message the Council received from a former grantor, the Levi-Strauss Foundation, saying it's getting out of the arts to free more funds for social service programs. The Council is likely to receive modest increases in its municipal support this year, but nothing at all from the state. Overall, it will drop from nearly \$250,000 to around \$166,000 this year -- while the artists and small groups the Council serves will be dealing with their own economic pressures. Wanda said: "I think Frank Hodsoll (NEA Chair) is very naive if he thinks that corporations and businesses are going to pick up the tab for arts services on a local

level. He's very wrong, and that's real discouraging. What you have is everybody really scratching at the community for support money, and you have foundations that are saying 'No operations money -- just special projects money.' In Knoxville, we don't have any major corporate contributors to speak of; Container Corporation gives us cardboard, and that's about it. So it's like a real 'catch-22'...."

Renewing Commitments

All things considered, though, neighborhood arts groups seem to be surviving -- and faring rather well given the changes in their own financing and the disastrous state of the overall economy. Many of the people we spoke with reported that this last year has been the occasion for serious re-examination of the goals and priorities of their work, and that this re-examination had helped to strengthen their organizations and their resolve.

Wanda Harding ended our conversation expressing her optimism: "Our neighborhood arts groups are going to be better off than our institutions -- maybe -- because they're deeply rooted in the community, and there's a real sense of need and caring and friendship about the programs: the communities started them and own them and have bought into them. And that's what I think is going to save our programs, but you're going to see more and more of it go to volunteers."

Don Adams
Arlene Goldbard

RADIO ART

National Public Radio is looking for features and interviews that reflect local and regional participation in the arts, according to the National Federation of Community Broadcasters' February newsletter (see NAPNOC notes #15 to read about NFCB). They suggest: "Written ideas and tapes (not more than 15 minutes, and stereo if possible) should be sent to Deb Lamberton, Producer of NPR Arts & Performances, 2025 M St. NW, Washington, DC 20036. All tapes received will be auditioned, but...response may be slow....An acquisition rate schedule and submission guidelines will be distributed soon."

NAPNOC

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