

# CULTURAL DEMOCRACY™

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## BETWEEN TWO STOOLS: FINDING PRIVATE FUNDING

In the course of fundraising for NAPNOC we met with a woman whose job is to advise the members of a wealthy family on their personal charitable contributions. We had reason to hope she would understand NAPNOC's difficulties in raising money -- the arts foundations thought our work sounded a little too much like community organizing, and the community organizing-oriented foundations thought it sounded a bit too much like art -- and she did understand. "Why," the venerable lady said, "you fall between two stools, don't you?"

This expression apparently derives from the 19th-century practice of seating clerks on tall stools; a matter that didn't exactly come under any clerk's purview could be said to "fall between two stools."

It seems apt that the "between two stools" formulation sounds sort of unpleasant, because it sums up an unpleasant situation: neighborhood arts groups have a hard time raising funds from foundations, corporations, and private donors partly because neighborhood arts work doesn't fit the categories these funders tend to use in thinking about their priorities.

Most neighborhood arts people who've followed the standard route of researching potential funders, preparing written proposals full of the right kinds of documentation and reportage -- and then collecting rejection letters -- know that raising private money for neighborhood arts work requires special measures. We've learned a bit about the subject through our own and NAPNOC members' experiences, and herewith pass it on.

### Identifying Prospects

Theoretically, there's a huge pool of potential private donors. Anyone who puts money into the collection plate at church or gives old clothes to Goodwill is a private donor. And there are thousands of foundations in the U.S. and many thousands of businesses, all of which are able to make tax-deductible charitable contributions.

But most of these prospects are not likely to be accessible to "between two stools" organizations. You may be able to raise contributions from individuals in your own community, but probably don't have the capital or clout to go the national direct-mail-TV-  
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## PRIVATE LESSONS IN PUBLIC ARTS

The State-Local-Regional Symposium -- one of 14 seminars convened by National Endowment for the Arts Chair Frank Hodsoll -- was held at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, on April 6 and 7. We attended (as non-participating observers) and took notes on every word we heard.

So what happened? Well, the big news is that nothing happened -- \$20,000 worth of nothing, according to Chairman Hodsoll's estimate of the cost.

All the pre-seminar rhetoric focused on the idea of inviting a mix of "insiders" and "outsiders." Hodsoll opened the session by noting that many "diverse points of view" were represented. But to the contrary, the seminar was a typical gathering of the old-boy network (albeit the second generation) and friends; the few participants who might qualify as "outsiders" pretty much kept quiet and let the old boys do the talking.  
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## PRIVATE LESSONS IN PUBLIC ARTS (continued from page one---)

Twenty invited guests participated in all. Five of them sit on the NEA's State Programs Advisory Panel. Two others are members of the National Council on the Arts (NCA). Most of the rest are heads of public arts agencies or representatives of establishment arts institutions. Two of the participants might qualify as "outsiders" in that they haven't been involved in NEA politicking before or haven't served on Endowment grants review panels: one was Sandra Smoley, a member of the Sacramento (CA) Board of Supervisors; the other was Bill Bondurant, Executive Director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and president of the Arts Council of Winston-Salem (NC). In other words, even the "outsiders" were persons of position -- no one was there to speak for those truly outside the system.

For a two-day "no holds barred" seminar (at the post-seminar press conference Chairman Hodsoll described the atmosphere he had striving for as "collegial"), there was amazingly little free discussion. Partly the problem was politics. The seminar was packed with people who had to remain in each other's good graces (for instance, 3 participants from Massachusetts' public arts establishment), so there was a lot of "my great good friend is right"-ing where there would have been contention in a less politic crowd.

But partly the problem was structural: Chairman Hodsoll began the seminar by posing a number of questions about "quality" and "access," and he stuck with these questions throughout the two days, regardless of the turn the discussion took. In other words, Hodsoll knew what he wanted to talk about, and there wasn't much opportunity--had there been the inclination -- to teach him anything else.

The inclination, though, was hardly in conflict with Hodsoll's intentions. Most participants were *serious* about wanting to support the major institutions, and the few who had other points to raise were clearly outnumbered.

### The View from the Chair

Though the stated intention was a free exchange of views, Chairman Hodsoll's opinions unquestionably dominated the proceedings. Several times during the seminar he laid out a set of givens (which ought to be seen as more instructive about his own attitudes than the public arts support picture.

He offered a "possible conceptual framework for discussion," saying that "some institutions are excellent by all standards." At the NEA, Hodsoll said, over 50% of the money goes to these major institutions, and "if you took the states and localities as a whole, I would guess that over 50% of their funds go to these same institutions... In this category, there is no issue as to who funds -- we will all support them and should just avoid tripping over each other."

"Then," said Hodsoll, "there's the avant-garde," for which there's some public sup-

port, "but a lot just goes on outside." He said "we all agree public agencies should try to help here -- it's one of the NEA's principal missions, though with a small amount of money. Not that much new happens."

The next category in Hodsoll's conceptual framework was "folk, ethnic and minority arts" (putting it this way was the clearest expression of the Endowment's distinction between the dominant culture and others we'd heard yet). Chairman Hodsoll said this category had funding at all public levels to varying degrees, and that there was "no real question here either, just avoid tripping over each other."

Having thus disposed of many of the most troubling questions about public policy, the Chairman said "what is left is all the rest -- whether it's 'access' or 'excellence,' I don't know. If we were to double every public agency budget, there still wouldn't be enough funds...so the question is: how can we help the best, and at what levels (*national, state, regional or local agencies*) within this whole array?"

### Paeans to Quality

Participants made repeated assurances about their commitment to "quality." These are from introductory remarks on state arts agencies prepared and delivered by Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council and Chairman of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies: "State agencies are concerned about the importance of quality...Quality, excellence -- the states and the regions support major institutions, communities, touring, regional organizations, experimentation....I've heard too many times that we don't support our major institutions, that we're not concerned with quality art....I hope this afternoon we can talk about how to solve the problem of quality in this country."

Needless to say, they never did get around to solving "the problem of quality," though we waited with bated breath all afternoon. It's hard to know what motivated Lawson and the other "quality" freaks to speak out so strongly: were they trying to demonstrate allegiance to the new administration's line? Did they actually have in mind some scheme for achieving a higher "quality"-to-dollar ratio, but neglect to mention it? Later in the day Lawson tried to draw a distinction between "socially-induced" arts organizations (as in "a town on the river with virtually nothing -- the quality was not there") and the other kind (presumably divinely-induced).

A few participants tried to burst the quality bubble, notably Mille Bautista, executive director of the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts, and Bob Canon, executive director of the Arts Council of San Antonio (TX) and Chairman of the National Assembly of Community Arts Agencies.

Bautista expressed her concern that the group was using "code words like 'quality' to get money to major institutions. What," she asked, "about neighborhood and community groups?" But as soon as she finished (continued on page three---)

speaking the subject was changed.

Canon shocked the group by saying he was "not particularly interested in quality....At the local level, when we go for funding we talk about access....Quality is the responsibility of artists; the public agency's duty is to respond, to provide service and access...." The reaction to Canon's remark was so striking that when he spoke again, after the lunch break, he prefaced his remarks with this disclaimer: "I have spoken against motherhood earlier...."

#### Foregone Conclusions

Attorney Hamish Sandison of the British-American Arts Association spoke early in the seminar on European cultural policy, highlighting some issues more substantial than the "quality" bugaboo -- the tax system, support for individual artists through market mechanisms, the sometimes arbitrary distinction between commercial and non-commercial activity, and the issue of "the right to culture." But like Bautista's remarks, Sandison's were followed by a quick change of subject. When he later attempted to bring up the need for explicit cultural policy, David Starr (a newspaper publisher and member of the Massachusetts Council for the Arts) pooh-poohed him by saying: "You cannot do that; there's a real world out there; you can't make a law that says 'this is quality.'"

Sara O'Connor, managing director of the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, said "We have had a policy right along revealed by the entire system, a policy of responding to requests from the field for their desires." And Frank Hodsoll closed the discussion by saying "The statute is clear -- support excellence, provide access...."

As usual, participants were quite ignorant of circumstances outside their own immediate circles: the Sacramento County Supervisor was unable to answer questions about California's State-Local Partnership program, or other counties' use of the transient occupancy tax. Nigel Redden of Minneapolis' Walker Art Center talked about local corporate giving, but was unable to answer NCA member Jessie Woods' questions about whether and how they gave to neighborhood arts groups. Sara O'Connor asserted that touring was a heavy financial drain on performing arts groups; and there was no one to point out how the contrary can be true for small companies.

Hearsay was treated as fact, leading us to wonder how much influence the opinions of these twenty seminar participants was to have. By all indications, not much.

#### Glossing the Issues

It had been expected that "the communities question" would be a key one at this seminar -- should the NEA provide funds for local arts agencies, and if so, how? The Endowment has put large sums of money into studies of this question -- one authority says there've been 14 -- and never implemented the recommendations. But most everybody stayed away from the subject, except

for lavish praise for the NEA's "City Arts" program as a model. (Administered through Expansion Arts, City Arts has made 3-year grants to local arts agencies for use in sub-grants to community and neighborhood arts groups.) Bob Canon wanted to see the program model continued and expanded, but not linked to support for Expansion Arts-type projects; in other words, he wanted to see direct federal grants to local arts agencies. Hodsoll seemed enthusiastic about the idea (as the interview which follows confirms) but speculated that "we're not going to see a national plan" for local arts agency support, but a variety of mechanisms.

The seminar featured a tiff over the term "national treasures" -- should it be used or not? An abortive attempt was made to discuss arts education: Hodsoll said the Design and Music seminars, held earlier, had targeted general arts education as a top priority; but he failed to get agreement from these veterans of battles with bureaucratized school boards. There was some disagreement over whether CETA and artists-in-schools programs were "make-work"; a dispute about whether performing arts presentors were "unprepared" to host touring groups, and whether performing groups really wanted to tour; a discussion about "the problem of how to help a company die gracefully," etc., etc.,....

In sum, don't throw away your score-cards from the Biddle NEA: the same players' voices are heard; they're still paying obeisance to the great god Quality; chit-chat still passes for dialogue; and gentlemen's agreements still stand in for policy.

The significant difference we foresee is in Endowment personnel: with an increasingly right-wing complexion for staff, panels and National Council on the horizon, neighborhood arts and other potentially controversial projects can expect to have an even harder time securing federal support -- and of course, no more voice in policy deliberations than we've had over the years.

Arlene Goldbard and Don Adams

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## **FRANKLY SPEAKING**

On March 26th we interviewed Frank Hodsoll, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Mr. Hodsoll is a very cautious man, and didn't reveal much in our interview. But it was an occasion for some give-and-take; we believe Chairman Hodsoll heard some information from us -- about the way his actions have been seen in the neighborhood arts community, among other things -- that he hasn't heard from his establishment arts-oriented contacts or staff.

It's a commonplace in Washington that the Reagan administration differs from its predecessors in its zeal to bring partisan politics into government bureaucracies at all levels. People say the administration never misses a chance to fill vacancies with right-wingers, and to bring the question of political affiliation into decisions that apparently have nothing to do with politics (continued on page four---)

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of that sort. Some say that Hodsohl -- like other top-level appointees -- is not ultimately in control of Endowment policy, but is hamstrung by constraints placed on him by the executive branch. This amounts to saying that Reagan is treating the Endowment more like the "mainstream" agencies of government -- maintaining control, putting in as many of his people as possible, making it unsympathetic for those who disagree.

In our meeting, Hodsohl denied that such considerations have affected his actions, and of course it's impossible for us to know how Hodsohl's unconstrained actions might differ from the administration's preferences. So there you have the rumor and the denial. Hodsohl has made few appointments thus far, so it remains to be seen what political complexion the NEA's staff will have; but if speculations are correct, it will be considerably to the right of that of the staff members replaced. For neighborhood arts people, access to the NEA has often been through the good graces of a staff person who's seen his or her role as a kind of agent on the inside; will there be fewer of these "moles"? Our interview with Frank Hodsohl didn't offer an answer.

### A Mistaken Impression?

We asked Chairman Hodsohl about the grants he withheld from signing. (You'll recall that he requested clarification or justification for the grants review panels' decision to fund certain proposals; see "Hodsohl Works Overtime," Cultural Democracy #18.) He took issue with our characterization of these grants as unconventional or experimental projects:

*"I don't think you could characterize them that way...they were for the most part smaller institutions...some of them were conventional and some of them weren't. In the end, when I went back to panels, virtually all of those were signed, but a number of recommendations were produced for future guideline changes....In the Expansion Arts program I was concerned largely with the question of what the scope of the program was. We had a number of general education kinds of projects there...and we've been having an on-going discussion with the panels...as to what the guidelines ought to be...."*

*"Some (of the grants held back) were experimental and some were very routine kinds of organizations that didn't seem to fit the guidelines....People were nervous about what I was doing, I know that."*

We mentioned that NEA staff people had spoken to grantees, advising them to tone down social issues, political and experimental elements in their proposals for fear of flagging the Chairman's attention. Chairman Hodsohl said this was not his intention.

*"In one theater case I asked whether the theater was a theater or whether it was a vehicle for political expression and we had a discussion about it in the theater panel*

*and I was convinced it was a theater. You know, in theater and in film (and to some extent perhaps in some of the other art forms...), it's very difficult. You're always on a fine line. And the one thing we don't want to have happen here is to have any kind of censorship or thought control. People ought to be able to have theater about any subject with any point of view as long as it starts with theater, and it's not a propaganda arm of some political organization....I think people ought to write in their applications what they really want to do, and in fact we're going to encourage ...both big organizations and little ones ... (to) do more of that because there's been a tendency, as is natural in any government program, to write what they think the audience wants to hear."*

### The Best Meet the Biggest

Mr. Hodsohl expressed his opinions on the special problems of smaller organizations in raising funds: *"I think we're going to have to try at least on a pilot basis in two or three places getting the best of the smaller institutions in a city together with the establishment that provides money to the arts...and maybe link it with what is now concluding but I think we'll want to re-start, our Advancement Program, which is a Challenge Grant program for smaller institutions... (We'll) see if we can't make linkages between the smaller institutions -- the best of them -- and the people who normally give money to the arts -- and by that I mean the principals, not just the grants officer at the bottom of the echelon in a foundation, but the top people, and the principals among the private patrons....I understand that Chicago, for example...--I think it was the Community Trust -- tried to do this and they got people to actually go to some of the smaller organizations...and there was a great deal of enthusiasm, the way it was described to me by someone who helped organize it. The problem is they didn't follow up on it."*

We asked if he thought lack of familiarity was the main stumbling block. *"I think that's part of it. I think the establishment tends to go to the establishment organizations and that's natural...and therefore don't know some of the good things that are going on elsewhere...Obviously, there are going to be different tastes, and each extreme, from...the golden horseshoe to...a particularly, let's say, far-out neighborhood organization -- you're probably not going to bridge that. But there are people perhaps within the inner quarter of both of those that you could start moving out....I mean I'm sort of an establishment character but I do get off-Broadway occasionally, I go to other things and I find it very interesting and I'm even turned on by a lot of it. That sounds very condescending on my part but I don't mean it to be. I think it is in part just lack of familiarity."*

We noted that the Business Committee for the Arts always emphasizes that public relations are the main impetus for corporate giving, and that most neighborhood arts groups couldn't promise business much p.r. value for its dollar. *"That's true. But a*

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lot of these businesses have employees in the areas where these smaller organizations are and they may find that useful to demonstrate an interest in the neighborhoods. You're never going to get the kind of p.r. certainly for a corporation with a smaller organization that they might from doing one of the establishment organizations."

Outside of the Mainstream

We told Chairman Hodsoll that a number of our members in rural communities had expressed concern about the Endowment's commitment to them. He wasn't sure what could be done beyond existing Expansion Arts and Folk Arts grants programs, saying "we're stretched awfully far as it is." But Mr. Hodsoll talked about his desire to see policy panels and more representative:

"I want to make sure that they're on the state panels, in particular. When you get down to the very small communities it's very hard from Washington to...keep track. We have enough trouble just keeping track of the big fellows -- or the larger fellows, let's put it that way. But you know in our civil rights effort...we are in the process of putting together a series of workshops to get states to identify...to the maximum extent possible minority artists or arts institutions...It occurs to me...we could certainly explore whether or not we would also be talking about...re-moter populations. It's a possibility."

We asked about the Endowment's "civil rights effort," noting that Mr. Hodsoll had not so far filled any staff vacancies with minority persons. "We've put a timetable on everything....We're identifying minority newspapers, media, so we can get the word out as to what we do here....I've set up...dates by which all these things are supposed to be done...I haven't made that many appointments, which I'm also being criticized for. But there will be some minorities represented at the upper levels of the Endowment before we're through. I'm very mindful of that, though obviously the first criterion is the merits of the individual;there's no question about that."

We asked the Chairman about "the communities question" -- Endowment funding for local arts agencies (which was also to come up at the State-Local-Regional seminar covered in this issue). "Well, I don't have a plan, but I'm beginning to formulate a process whereby we can come to a plan....I find that the City Arts aspect of the Expansion Arts program is a very intriguing concept. Furthermore, it's actually worked rather well with one or two exceptions in its pilot years...What we have done is to negotiate a deal with each of these towns ..., with sets of criteria, and then we've given them money -- very little really -- and said that they have to match it and then that money...is available to be granted to smaller institutions....And so, what I want to do over the next several months is to explore a number of areas --not just Expansion Arts -- smaller orchestras, whatever it may be, to see whether that particular process (or some similar process...)

might be helpful in terms of getting more of the decision-making down at the local level. But that's going to be controversial, I suspect."

Finally, we asked Chairman Hodsoll about the problem of high unemployment among artists. "I believe the average of sum unemployment amongst the various employment occupations for 1980 is about 13%;... but the average for performing artists was in the 70% range. That was unionized performing artists...and the unionized people are going to be presumably...better off than the others....There are more artists in most of these fields than there are jobs for artists, and yet artists, many of them, really want to do what they're doing....As long as there's that tremendous imbalance of supply and demand I don't know any way out of it, to be honest with you."

Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard

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advertising route. Many small foundations are basically family philanthropies; they don't have staff and mainly make donations to the founder's alma mater or a hospital wing which carries the family name, or a half-dozen big charities where family members sit on fundraising boards. Unless you have direct connections -- know someone in the family or on the board or someone who knows them and will intercede for you -- these foundations are not likely to be open to you.

Corporations that give primarily for public relations or prestige value are looking for a big bang for their buck. They want a lot of people to see that credit line that says "this program made possible by a grant from the blank corporation," and they don't want the corporate name to appear in connection with arts work that is liable to offend potential customers.

Individual patrons are the most problematic for neighborhood arts fundraisers, first because few neighborhood arts groups have contact with wealthy potential donors; unless you travel in their circles, it's hard even to learn their names. But beyond unfamiliarity there's the inescapable fact that (as NEA Chair Frank Hodsoll says elsewhere in this issue) "the establishment tends to go to the establishment organizations."

This leaves foundations that do give grants beyond a few family favorites; corporations that are potentially interested in small-scale and community-based projects; and the few wealthy individual donors whose proclivities aren't staunchly "establishment."

(It also leaves a great mass of potential individual donors -- your friends and neighbors -- who might make small donations that, taken together, can sustain your work. It's this group of supporters which we believe neighborhood arts people would do well to explore. But that's a long-term, gradual effort that demands an article of its own. We are concerned here with potential sources of grants, by which we mean donations of any-  
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thing from a few hundred to many thousands of dollars.)

In our experience, the foundation, corporate and individual donors most likely for "between two stools" groups fall into three categories.

*Those who have reputations as arts donors:* They make contributions to the symphony orchestra year after year, endow local museums, make project grants to local arts groups.

*Those who are known for their support of social services and community action projects:* They give money to environmental groups, education projects, community housing projects, childcare councils and so on.

*Those that make contributions to create goodwill in a community or to fulfill commitments to "corporate responsibility":* They are businesses -- for instance a clothing manufacturer that supports social service projects in the communities from which its sewing machine operators are drawn, or an insurance firm that supports anti-arson projects.

You need to begin by finding out all you can about these potential donors. The "grapevine" is your first, best source. Ask allied groups where they've found sympathetic donors. This is just about the only way to find out about individual donors. Corporate and foundation annual reports can be helpful. If there's a Foundation Center library in your community, you can use it to identify prospects and research their past grants. Call the Foundation Center's hotline for information: 800/424-9836. But bear in mind that these materials can only offer you an overall pattern of grants-making with respect to each potential supporter. You aren't going to find a long list of foundations and corporations that have made grants to organizations like your own. You'll have to rely on hunches and your imagination to target prospects.

Remember that for all "between two stools" organizations, *education* is the key to fundraising. Most private funders will be unfamiliar with the kind of work your organization does -- unless they've seen some of you on the 5 o'clock news in an anti-nuclear demonstration. Before you can raise money from these prospects, you must help them to understand the aims of your work, and sympathize as well. They aren't going to give you money because of the prestige, or p.r., or your connections. For neighborhood arts groups, then, the process of private fundraising is first and foremost a process of education -- on behalf of the group that's applying, and also on behalf of the movement as a whole.

### Getting to Know You

Since your work will be unfamiliar to these funders, you need the opportunity to discuss it face-to-face. There is no substitute for personal contact with potential donors; you can prepare beautiful grant proposals and still have no guarantee that they will be read; or if read, understood;

or if understood, accepted. When we first began raising money for NAPNOC we worked hard, with the generous help of several experts, to prepare what we thought was a model proposal. The director of one foundation we applied to actually got in touch to say our prospectus was fantastic; could he use it to show some other applicants how it should be done? But this same foundation rejected our grant request because neighborhood arts wasn't on its list of priorities.

The optimum situation is one in which you can get an introduction from a peer of the donor, the director, or another key staff person (whom we'll call Ms. X). After you've done a bit of research, you can write her a letter briefly describing your work and saying "So-and-so suggested I get in touch. He thought you might be interested in hearing about our work, and also might give us some advice on fundraising." Send a copy of this letter to So-and-so, who has already promised to call Ms. X on your behalf. By the time you call Ms. X yourself to set up an appointment, she will have heard from your mutual friend; and since you haven't made a proposal, she won't be feeling quite so pressured.

When you can meet with her, talk candidly about your work and the problems you've encountered in raising funds; tell her about some aspects of neighborhood arts work that will be interesting and new to her; and conclude the interview by asking how she might receive an application from your group. She might say not to bother-- in which case you've put yourself through far fewer changes than you would have sending our proposals blind and awaiting rejections. And who knows? She might say yes, in which case you'll have a friend who can put a face to your name as your papers move through the office.

Sometimes this optimum situation isn't possible: you can't convince Ms. X to see you. If you try to make a contact and get rebuffed -- especially if you have an introduction -- you should think about forgetting that source and go on to another. In our experience, a funder that isn't willing even to hear you out is not going to give your request the kind of careful attention a "between two stools" application requires. It may be that Ms. X's agency has a clear idea of priorities and just isn't interested in reconsidering them. Or it may be that Ms. X has come down with a case of the bureaucrats' disease and sees all applications as land-mines in an obstacle course; her day is made when she can get rid of as many as possible. But whether the reason is policy or peevishness, unless you have a direct route around Ms. X to the people at the top, it will probably be more promising to pursue other prospects.

Now, we don't mean to say that contacts are everything. Some funders have policies against meeting with potential applicants before an actual request has been made. Others, as we mentioned earlier, have no staff at all. Use your own judgement in evaluating the situation. But if you do have a chance to meet with Ms. X and she rebuffs you -- and there don't appear to be any rules or

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structural obstacles in your way -- you should think twice about whether going on is worth your time.

### Honesty is the Best Policy

Rich institutions might be able to get away with misrepresenting their intentions or financial situations; there's something about knowing their money is endowing a chair at the symphony that makes funders forget the hard questions. But the credibility of "between two stools" organizations is our most valuable asset. If you promise a funder that the \$10,000 you'll get will support a new program -- and you can't keep the promise -- you can forget about second year funding. If you say that everything in your repertoire is fit for kiddie matinees -- and then the local paper stages a scandal over nudity in one of your productions -- Ms. X is going to tell her friends that you're pretty unreliable, and your reputation will precede you around town.

Most neighborhood arts organizations will have to convince potential funders of their real commitment to work that can only promise long hours, low pay and fame that doesn't go beyond the neighborhood. The only explanation for this kind of commitment -- short of insanity -- has to be that you believe in your work, and also believe that your work will help to bring into being the kind of community and society in which you want to live. If you come on with super-sophisticated fundraising techniques and no credible, understandable way to explain your commitment, Ms. X is going to say to herself "*hm-m-m, I give this kid five months to make assistant development director at the symphony.*" The only hope you have of being convincing is to be authentic, and believe us, it makes fundraising so much less painful.

### Building a Case

To convince either the traditional arts funders or the community-oriented ones, you're going to have to confront their prejudices.

One of our members received a foundation rejection letter that said "*We just don't know whether your work is theater or not.*" The knee-jerk reaction to this sort of response is panic: "How can I convince them that our work is really theater?"

But the shoe is actually on the other foot. We advised the recipient of this letter to write back expressing puzzlement: "Throughout our ten seasons in this community it's never occurred to us that our work wasn't theater; what is it that makes you wonder?"

This theater group has every possible conventional qualification and credential: a professional company, advanced degrees, a long track record of reviews and other recognition. But their work differs in several ways from establishment theater: company management is democratic and cooperative; audience members pay admission fees according to a sliding scale based on income; and most important, the company takes social concerns as its material, and

involves audience members in the process of inquiry that is part of each performance. In short, you can quack like a duck, float like a duck and have feathers like a duck -- but if you swim to a different drummer, well, perhaps you aren't a duck after all.

The classic obstacle that neighborhood arts groups have to overcome with traditional arts foundations is this one: their prejudice against art they see as too useful or relevant. The task of education in this case is to expand Ms. X's idea of art -- to help her understand that she is indeed suffering from this prejudice, so that she can get past it.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you don't ask Ms. X why she thinks it isn't theater you'll never know what you're up against -- and neither will she. It's easy to get intimidated by funders. After all, you get dressed up and go to their fancy offices and there's a tacit understanding that they can say anything they please and you can only swallow and be polite. But if you think of your task as two-tiered -- first, to educate this person about neighborhood arts work; and second, to raise support for your own project -- you can remain polite without swallowing everything that comes your way. Don't assume; ask.

### Ignore Alien Orders

Some arts funders have been bitten by the management bug; they've come to believe their own rhetoric about technical assistance being better than money, and see nothing ludicrous about requiring an organization with a budget well under \$100,000 to have management plans and five-year program and fundraising plans and audience development surveys and you-name-it -- even in the present financial climate.

These people will make it clear just what sort of planning documents and management reports they want to see, and you'll have to decide whether it's worth coming up with them. If you don't run you dance company or mural project as if it were an insurance firm, you'll have to decide whether to try to explain to Ms. X why not; to hustle and come up with the systems she wants to see in place; or to forego applying. Part of this decision will be assessing whether, if you are able to produce the kind of management systems Ms. X prefers, she won't sit you down and say "*Now, I have only one question: is it theater?*"

A small arts organization needs a clear, understandable way to account for money and keep track of expenditures; it needs a shared vision that guides its members' work; it needs a division of responsibility that works and makes sense to its members; and it needs a way to make decisions and stick with them that everyone finds acceptable. Neighborhood arts groups have lots of work to do, and usually too few people to do it: there's planning programs and implementing them, communicating with people, participating in the larger movement for cultural democracy and in the life of our own communities. Accomplishing this work requires dozens of different skills and real dedication. Too much time on management systems inevitably means misplaced energy. The funders with

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management bugs lodged in their ears need education not only about neighborhood arts work, but about the relative importance of management too.

### Advocate Cultural Democracy

The obstacle you'll face with community action-oriented funders is likely to be just the opposite: they are getting requests from groups that offer free legal services to poor people or that set up rural health clinics and they doubt that this artsy stuff is as important -- especially now, with drastic cuts in public spending for social services. If Ms. X succeeds in getting you to agree that she's faced with a terrible choice between "*food for babies*" and "*your little art project*," you'd be calous to press your claim.

This is one place where research is important: Ms. X is probably also putting money into projects that monitor children's TV programming and educate older people about nutrition (and, more often that might be suspected, endow a chair at the symphony in memory of the original donor). Here, your educational task is to acquaint Ms. X with the movement for cultural democracy, and the way your organization puts its principles into practice.

The concept of cultural democracy will be unfamiliar to most funders, even the progressive ones. Our experience has been that people like Ms. X put community cultural work in the "*nice*" category, as in "*it's nice to have art classes and stuff, but is it important now?*"

One Ms. X in our experience rolled up her sleeves and asked us "*What if there were no cultural activities; what would happen then?*" She was using the same kind of yardstick she applied to, say, childcare projects: she would ask these applicants to tell her what detrimental effects would result if their services were withdrawn, and would take their response to be an indicator of "need."

But the prospects aren't at all parallel. There is cultural life in every community, regardless of whether neighborhood arts organizations exist. People do more with their time than go to work and sleep, and most of what they do comes under the heading of cultural activity. So the indicator of "need" that Ms. X was looking for doesn't exist. Our task was to convince her that other, equally valid standards apply.

We talked to Ms. X about cultural projects as experiments in community autonomy-- a way for people to develop respect for their own heritages and values, to give expression to them, and to join with others in action. We talked about the way that establishment cultural forms work against cultural democracy: anyone with the price of a ticket can go to the establishment theater or the opera, but only a few people can decide what images and values they promulgate. Neighborhood arts work is based on learning to tell your own story, on equal footing with the stories of others. The establish-

ment arts are based on the idea that some stories are worth telling -- but most not -- and that most people's role is to buy a ticket and listen quietly.

We talked to Ms. X about the fact that much of the community work her foundation supports is based on offering services to people who are in need of help, and that while this work is frequently worthwhile, it doesn't do much to help build self-determination. We pointed out that cultural participation isn't a form of "service delivery," and that people don't need to be sick or homeless or otherwise needy to join in. We reminded her that social change is not only accomplished through social work.

Finally, we talked about social and cultural participation as a problem neighborhood arts groups are uniquely equipped to address. Everybody complains about the way things are, but many people feel so trapped by circumstance they can't imagine doing anything to bring about change. One of our country's problems is the lack of a real forum; we have few places for citizens to come together, to discuss their common concerns, and to act in concert. Community cultural groups provide this forum: they offer meeting-places, they raise issues that concern people and they encourage discussion. They give a voice to thoughts and feelings that otherwise remain private frustrations and private hopes.

### Swimming Upstream

It's difficult to break through received ideas about culture. Most people form opinions about art at an early age, and have little provocation to rethink these opinions. The difference between busing school kids to the symphony and giving them a chance to make music themselves won't be readily apparent to Ms. X. It will be even more difficult to get her to see the difference between supporting cheap tickets at a regional theater with a repertoire of the classics and British bedroom farce, and supporting a community-based theater that uncovers the buried history of its region.

Many of the Ms. X's we've encountered have opened an interview by saying "*Who would I have heard of in your group?*" or closed one by saying "*Which rich artists do you know who could help?*"

We haven't had much of an answer to either question, and getting Ms. X to understand why has taken a lot of explaining. It means explaining that the star system is rootless, placeless -- all stars come from Hollywood -- and the neighborhood arts movement is just the opposite. It means explaining that we have less chance of getting Marlon Brando's phone number than she does -- and then, less chance of getting him to make a donation to neighborhood arts work than to some other cause closer to his heart than a movement which calls into question the system that made him a star.

To raise money for "between two stools" organizations you need missionary zeal and an appetite for debate. Without these, your chance for success amounts to a roll of the dice. But with them, you may help to open (continued on page nine---)

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up new sources of support for the whole movement.

### Putting It on Paper

When you reach the stage of making a written proposal, you should already have gathered quite a bit of information and, it is hoped, had some personal contact and a history of communication with the potential funder. Preparing an omnibus proposal and sending it out blind to a couple of dozen funders is a waste of paper. It does make sense to prepare a basic description of your work (or perhaps two -- one for the arts funders and one for the social programs people). But don't send it out without a carefully written and substantive cover letter, and attachments that are tailored to each recipient.

We've read too many dull proposals for exciting projects. Their authors are generally striving to sound businesslike and responsible, but they manage to take all the life out of their narrative in the process. While a written proposal shouldn't sound defensive, anticipating all the tricky questions a funder might ask (we once walked into a foundation office and the first thing that was said to us -- even before hello -- was "So NAPNOC is just the two of you, eh?") it should anticipate Ms. X's need to understand the vision which guides your work and the meaning which keeps you at it despite less-than-luxurious conditions. It's a good idea to ask someone who's not an expert either in your work or in Ms. X's to read your proposals in draft; a non-expert reader will help you achieve a document in plain language, something that yields up its meaning to people who aren't masters of jargon or members of the home team.

If you receive another grant or have an especially successful program or event, report it to the funder(s) to which you have applied. Stay in touch until a decision has been made; and of course, if your request is accepted, stay in touch during the project period.

### What Makes Ms. X Run?

Grants-making is a very strange business. The people who are in it find themselves mired in ambiguity: on the one hand, their task is to channel support to worthwhile work; on the other hand, they typically receive many more worthwhile requests than there are funds to support. They may be personally drawn to a prospective grantee, but fear expressing their friendship--it might be interpreted as a leg up on funding approval and not personal warmth; or perhaps they fear the grant applicant is shamming warmth and won't return genuine friendship. The do-you-only-love-me-for-my-money? syndrome plagues grantmakers, and because it generally isn't their own money they are stuck with suffering the "punishment" (insecurity) without enjoying the "crime" (wealth).

Some people are crazy about being grants-makers because it feeds their power-hunger; they are flattered and deferred to in a way they would never be if their job didn't involve distributing money. Other people are

driven crazy by the work; they are veterans of community projects themselves, and part of them longs to be out there doing it instead of talking about it.

The grantsmaking world is extremely political, especially the foundation side of it. In places where there are a number of foundations, staff people talk regularly and refer projects to each other. There's a lot of keeping score: "you owe me one" is a frequent refrain.

This atmosphere makes it easy for Ms. X to get caught up in her society of grants-makers and mistrust everyone outside. She's also likely to be busy and have a thousand other things on her mind besides your project. So apart from the merits of your work there are many other factors -- personal, professional and political -- that affect consideration of your proposal.

When, despite all these pressures, Ms. X can actually take the time to encounter the people she meets, give careful thought to their work, ask pertinent questions and evaluate the answers -- it's quite an admirable achievement. There are quite a few people in the grants-making business who've been able to meet this challenge and keep their eyes on the goal of channeling support to worthwhile work. They are prepared to enter into a relationship of mutuality and respect, and you will lose a valuable opportunity if you aren't prepared as well.

As for the others -- the power-mongers and abusers -- we tell you about them not to practice pop psychology but to remind you that the grants business is not a science but a complex of persons and relationships. If you look back at the advice we've offered in this article you'll see it's not a compendium of tricks, but a way for you to conceptualize the job of raising money for organizations that "fall between two stools," and along the way, to do some educational work that will help the movement. We hope it helps.

Share your trials, tribulations and successes with the rest of us; anonymity guaranteed. If you have anecdotes or experiences to relate, send them to NAPNOC, P.O. Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239.

Arlene Goldbard and Don Adams

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## The RIGHT Humanities

The winds of change are blowing at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and already beginning to stir the air in far-away state capitals. NEH Chair William Bennett (see Cultural Democracy #17 for background on Bennett) went public with his "distress" over a documentary film on Nicaragua produced with the assistance of NEH funds. He stated that he will be reminding grants panels of guidelines that forbid support to "programs that seek to champion causes, or fund programs that do not strive for balanced presentation."

At issue is "From the Ashes...Nicaragua," a film directed by Helena Solberg Ladd for (continued on page ten---)

## THE RIGHT HUMANITIES

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the Madison (WI) Area Campus Ministry and shown on many Public Broadcasting Service stations this month. Ladd's film was supported in part by a \$45,623 grant from the Wisconsin Committee for the Humanities -- from federal funds allocated by NEH.

After viewing the film, Bennett stated, "There was not a scintilla of evidence or perspective. It is political propaganda, not the humanities. Why are we, or an agency that we fund, financing propaganda? The program was a hymn to the Sandinists and all of the 'wonderful' things that they have done."

Ladd called the attack "completely unjust" and warned of political and artistic censorship for those who depart from official positions on issues. Wisconsin Committee director Patricia Anderson defended her agency's position: "I don't think we should be funding propaganda. I don't think that we have funded propaganda."

NAPNOC has received reports from media artists working on humanities-funded projects in other states which indicate that this is not an isolated instance of conflict. The Kansas Committee for the Humanities withdrew its support for a media project on "Labor in Kansas History," directed by NAPNOC member Fred Whitehead of Kansas City. The Committee had awarded a first phase grant on September 21, 1981. In February, 1982, a Committee staffer noted that the subcommittee that monitors media projects was put off by the project's draft script, saying that "Their primary concern is that (it) seems to be a general social and political history, and does not deal in a sufficient and satisfactory way with labor in Kansas history..."

But 3 weeks after the grant was made, Whitehead showed an early version of the slide/tape program to the Kansas State Federation of Labor meeting and received ovations from the 400 participants. Even so, Whitehead was advised that the script in its present form was "political" and therefore unsatisfactory. In withholding future project support, the Committee cited its media guidelines; but Whitehead explained, "The real reason is direct political censorship. This is an example of the 'New Federalism' in action, since there is no recourse, no system of accountability..." (Contact Fred

at P.O. Box 5224, Kansas City, KS 66119 or call 913/588-1996.)

In speaking about the Nicaragua film, Bennett stated "The rules are that the funder can't see it before it goes on. I think that's to prevent censorship." But in the case of the Kansas project and the others we've heard of (which are still pending), the state's concerns were expressed in mid-project reviews that are part of the many agencies' standard procedures -- leaving room for just the kind of censorship Bennett claims is prevented by "the rules."

These controversies demonstrate the new administration's impact on public humanities support; we haven't heard Bennett or his state counterparts criticizing projects for being too right-wing. In a speech in Baltimore this month, Bennett stated: "The subject matter of the humanities is not public policy. It is something more important than that. It addresses questions such as the meaning of life, birth, love, death, honor, friendship..."

What was at best tepid support for publicly-oriented programs will undoubtedly cool off, at both the federal and state levels. According to the New York Times, Bennett intends to take up the question of state humanities councils' responsibilities in relation to such projects as the Nicaragua film in a Washington meeting with state humanities representatives next month.

Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard

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## LEST WE FORGET

NAPNOC's 6th Annual Meeting and Conference will be held in Omaha, Nebraska, October 15-17, 1982. Though that's still 6 months away, April 30 is an important date for NAPNOC members who'd like some help financing their trips to the conference.

Conference host Doug Paterson has offered to help us get bookings, lecture or workshop gigs and the like for NAPNOC members participating in the conference. If you'd like to try to find paying work in Omaha while you're there, send us your materials no later than April 30. Please send resumes; your group's standard promo materials; descriptions of the kinds of workshops, talks, performances or exhibits you can provide; your technical and fee requirements; and any other information you think will be helpful. P.O. Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239.

# NAPNOC

neighborhood arts programs  
national organizing committee

P.O. Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239