

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY™

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SPEAKING OF MONEY 1st National Brainstorm

Late in June, the first national activist arts brainstorm came to a close. Cultural Democracy readers know its history: At the end of February, arts activists from around the U.S. got together under the auspices of PADD (Political Art Documentation and Distribution) in New York to talk about the need for national networking and cooperation within our movement. We decided to take on a project that people across the country could take part in -- something that could strengthen our sense of shared struggle and shared resources, and something that would be of value to us all.

It was decided to conduct a round-robin discussion on support for progressive political arts work in the U.S. We wanted to look at the support situation for artists and groups whose work is socially critical, linked to organizing efforts, or aimed at calling into question the status quo. Groups and individuals would hold meetings, write essays or use other methods of inquiry to participate in the brainstorm, and at the June 30 deadline Cultural Democracy would collate the results and publish the following excerpts and analysis.

Cultural Democracy welcomes your response to this article. If these contributions give you new ideas, or please you, or anger you -- if you have reactions to share -- please drop us a line. As your new ideas come to us, we'll publish them.

One note: contributors to the brainstorm talked, depending on their own proclivities, about "oppositional" art, or "activist" art, "leftist" art, "progressive" art, and so on. New York video artist John Greyson began his contribution to the round-robin with "*a plea to cease and desist with the misuse of the term 'political arts.'* *The Right has a much greater right to it -- for every SPARC billboard, there are thousands of MOBIL messages; for every copy of HERESIES, there are a million copies of LADIES HOME JOURNAL.*"

This disagreement over terminology ought to be seen as an indication of the diversity of the movement: there is no

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VITAL SIGNS People's Theater Festival Activist Artists Advance

When the warm weather rolls around our Baltimore neighbors know that we will be gone for weeks at a time, on the road, doing some weird and mysterious work with artists. For us, the summer is a time of checking in on people, assessing the state of the movement. This summer has been no exception; the two major gatherings we've attended so far have something interesting to say about the movement for cultural democracy and how it's faring in these trying times.

In June, we journeyed to California for two events: The Activist Artists Advance, sponsored by the Social and Public Arts Resource Center (SPARC), based in Venice, CA; and the 5th annual People's Theater Festival in San Francisco.

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Note to Our Readers

NAPNOC's staff will be on retreat for the month of August. If you have business that needs immediate attention, call our office and leave a message on the telephone answering machine; we'll call you back within a few days. Otherwise, use the mail and expect a response early in September.

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single political or aesthetic "line" just as there is no single organizational form or community setting or program model that makes sense to everyone. Ironically, the only respect in which progressive artists are given uniform treatment is by the establishment arts and funding worlds, to whom all of us apparently look alike.

1. WHY IS THERE NO FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL ARTS WORK IN THE UNITED STATES?

At a group brainstorming session during the People's Theater Festival in San Francisco, a number of participants raised objections to the terms of this question. There is in fact considerable support, they said, though it doesn't always come in the form of cash. Berkeley writer Shepherd Bliss pointed out that volunteer time, donated materials and space had sustained many activist arts organizations; the assertion that there is no support offended him because it ignored these crucial contributions.

Most participants apparently took this question as hyperbole, however, and it seems to have touched a chord: By far the largest portion of the contributions to the brainstorm focused on the question of why support was lacking. As you will see, suggestions about how to solve this problem got far less attention.

With this, as with all the other round-robin questions, participants seemed to stick to their own experience: if they'd looked to government for support, they analyzed government's reluctance to provide it; if they'd looked to the arts market, they analyzed its shortcomings; if foundations were their target, they speculated about foundation biases; and so on.

Whose Public Sector?

People generally felt that the government now has other priorities and it is unreasonable to expect support from that quarter. From Tim Rollins of Group Material in New York: "We should all get one thing straight right away. It is ludicrous to expect the monied or the government to consciously finance anyone who loudly criticizes and challenges the society they dominate."

Lucy Lippard and Greg Sholette from New York PADD speculate that government will become less and less of a prospect for support: "With the recent loosening up of controls on domestic surveillance, FBI director Webster's statements that groups producing 'propaganda, disinformation and "legal assistance" may be even more dangerous than those who throw the bombs,' the threat to arts funding will escalate to direct financial censorship and a form of blackmail. A side effect will be intimidation and self-censorship within arts groups. These will range from liberal-cautious ('They won't take anything from a Left perspective so there's no use applying') to radical-paranoid ('Applying will just give them more information to use against us')."

"Even in the best of times, populist and progressive cultural forms are often unexpected, unfamiliar, and therefore unacceptable to the dominant culture. You'd think that after two decades or more of the most outrageous avant-gardism, anything would go in art. Yet there are still forms which, when used for progressive ends, are called into question, while the identical forms, if used ambiguously or 'lyrically', are not questioned.

"In addition, due to lack of individual economic support (galleries, collectors) for radical artists, their applications to grantgiving bodies are often less 'professionally' presented, less backed up by a body of previous work, less formal and bureaucratically kosher. Within the NEA/NEH panels, it is easier to gain support for 'non-political' art because such panels are based on compromise. Middleground, inoffensive submissions are likely to please everybody; only an impassioned progressive panelist is likely to argue strongly enough for his/her own values and persuade the rest of the panel to squeeze in a populist or activist subsidy. Not many such people are asked to join panels in the first place, or have the clout to be effective once they get there."

Jean Catellani, reporting on the brainstorm held by Xchange, Seattle Art and Politics, said, "Instead of supporting progressive political art, the present administration 'contributes' to art by dressing Queen Nancy in the latest designer gowns."

The Community Murals Magazine editorial group put its view of current government priorities concisely, according to a summary by Tim Drescher: "More money on military, less on other things."

Many of these points were echoed by participants in the brainstorm sessions at the Activist Artists Advance and People's Theater Festival in June (see coverage beginning on page 1 of this issue); it would be pretty silly to argue that the present federal administration is likely to step up its support for socially-conscious art.

But we were disturbed by some omissions in this analysis. First, it is discouraging to know that people regarded government as a fixed quantity, a lost cause. Progressive artists pay taxes too; even if we don't stand to determine the current direction of public cultural policy, we surrender our future impact by failing to provide a strong voice for a policy of cultural democracy today. If the federal government looks like a lost cause, then perhaps activist artists stand a better chance of making their voices heard by state and local governments. But can the movement afford to let government totally off the hook now?

Swimming Up the Mainstream

PADD explored the reasons the art world doesn't support much political work: "Mainstream fine art is not considered political, and culture is generally considered something that transcends politics and real/everyday life. Art overtly treating political issues therefore becomes hors concours,

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that is, taboo. In relation to 'real life', mainstream art is either above it all or below it all. In the first case, it is seen as very profound, but distant and uninteresting to the general populace; in the second case, it is seen as a frill -- decoration or entertainment. In other words, culture is acknowledged to be so important that it's unimportant, except to the ruling classes. It remains under their control, since they are supposedly the only people who have the time and the money to bother about it, who are educated to know about it, and to determine what is 'quality.' They are also the only people with the power to select and impose their taste on everyone else.

"Art, then, tends to be supported mainly by do-gooders (missionaries to the 'other' classes) and by those who want to use it for their own political ends through hegemony." When these people support political art, Lippard and Sholette assert, their aim is "...often to oppose and defuse any progressive culture, to co-opt and patronize it. Within the artworld this has taken, so far, the form of making 'political art' into a temporary style, rather than acknowledging it as an ongoing endeavor that adapts to and develops within current situations. At three points within the last 16 years this has happened: in the late '60s when the antiwar movement reached out of the general left community; in the mid '70s when the bicentennial called 'patriotic' issues into question; in the early '80s when Fear of Frying and rebellion against Reaganism also emerged from the grassroots. We are riding the crest of this last wavelet now..."

Others, especially at the Activist Artists Advance, pointed out that traditional patrons and collectors don't support progressive artwork, quite simply, because its message is repugnant to them or its form unacceptable. For some, this was trying to get blood from a turnip; some Advance brainstormers felt that the acceptance of the traditional artist's role impeded the progressive artist's work -- "Stop trying to please the arts world and get on with it" was the message.

Charles Frederick of New York's Pandemonium Group offered another angle on this question: "The artist who wants to socialize his work often feels that he has to give up being an artist, when actually his responsibility is to create work which shows the contradiction of that -- the problem of individuality within a socialized society....One of the poignant positions of the artist right now is that at some point people will recognize that the notion of artist which prevails at the moment is no more than a superstition."

But other brainstormers saw the possibility of altering the artist's stance in order to increase support. From Tim Rollins: "Just as Brecht's corporate shark keeps his pearly white teeth out of sight, so too must the left learn how to tell the truth in a more accessible, clever fashion.

"I think if progressive culture began dropping those old dripping red letters and

stencilled fists and began to develop a broader, less defensive, less negative approach to making critical social art, then we would gain a broader financial support from sectors not especially inclined toward financing 'political art'."

Promoting Private Grants

Private philanthropy was a big object of speculation in the brainstorm. At the Activist Artists Advance, participants pointed out that political artwork fell between various funders' priorities: Traditional arts funders tend to consider political art illegitimate; establishment funders in general shy away from any progressive work, whether arts-oriented or not; and the small funders who focus on progressive projects generally see cultural work as a low priority within their own purviews.

Like PADD and the People's Theater Festival group, the Advance brainstormers thought progressive artists worsened the situation through self-censorship: by not applying for funding, they encourage funders to see political artwork as marginal, a fringe activity; and when they do apply and receive support, progressive artists sometimes internalize funders' biases and tone down their reports and proposals to ensure continued support.

Most discussants felt that activist artists had been remiss in educating potential supporters -- in all sectors -- about the development of our tradition. It was asserted that potential funders can easily dismiss each socially-conscious arts project as an individual aberration or departure from the mainstream, because we have done very little to educate people about the long and varied history of political art movements. Advance participants pointed out that political art is always seen as existing in opposition to other, more legitimate traditions; our responsibility is to legitimate its own inspiring history. They also pointed out the movement's handicaps: most of our supporters don't have the kind of access to funders that establishment arts boosters have; and often they haven't got the clout -- or the desire -- to argue for progressive arts projects when they must compete with equally worthwhile social service programs.

Considering the Audience

Others raised the question of identifying audience. People's Theater Festival discussants felt too much work was addressed to a too-narrow public: "Preaching to the converted." Some felt activist artists would do better to define their audience more broadly and work accordingly. Brainstormers at the Advance felt we just didn't know enough about who our audiences are, and how best to address them; it was suggested that research is needed into who does support artwork, what cultural enterprises now interest our desired audiences, and where their interests in new work would be greatest.

It was repeatedly pointed out that few members of our society are involved with

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artwork outside the consumer culture industries. How many people go to plays, or buy original artwork of any kind -- much less progressive? Not many, according to Xchange: "At the grassroots level, the deepening depression means people are spending less money on entertainment overall. Whatever money is available usually goes to a sure-thing, a guaranteed good time -- such as a Hollywood movie recommended by friends and given positive TV/newspaper reviews. If you've only got \$7 for the weekend, why blow it on some little-known, marginal group whom you've never seen before?"

"The entertainment consumer is often more interested in the product than the process. Therefore, the high priority questions are: What film, play, etc., is happening? Will I enjoy it? Is it worth the cost of admission? The low or no priority questions are: Who is making money at this event -- a capitalist theater or a workers' collective? Is this a fundraiser for a group or cause worth supporting? Is this a political education? In the end, the money that is spent goes for a few games of Pacman and a beer, not to a political art event."

In other words, brainstormers kept coming back to that fact that activist artists don't enjoy any sort of immunity from the conditions that affect the entire society: few people spend money on artwork to begin with; worsening economic conditions exacerbate the situation; and socially-conscious artists, already in a marginal position, suffer the consequences.

Brainstormers didn't agree on the question of marketing artwork. While Tim Rollins of Group Material and some People's Theater Festival participants thought progressive artists needed to change their ideas about marketing, some of the Advance artists suggested that "marketing" was an inappropriate description of the way we need to reach potential supporters -- that "organizing" fit better.

For Charles Frederick, the real question is what function arts work is able to perform: "Culture provides for a symbolic arena; a cultural language -- a language of symbols -- allows for contradictions to be playful. It allows...the questions of the society to be given play safely, within a bounded object....So if we talk about a leftist culture, we're talking about the fact (to me) that we have a left which is in incredible disarray. We have a kind of distorted mirror image of the mainstream society in the left....We are isolated from one another...according to various issues and various positions of struggle." For Frederick, then, progressive artists have the opportunity to provide such a symbolic arena for the left -- but have so far not grasped that opportunity.

Jim Yates works with Partners in Learning, a Florida popular education project, and sees a contradiction in the support for his work that carries over into other areas of cultural action as well: "The present educational system is very much a part of

the dominant social, political and economic order, though it may appear to be autonomous. We liberating education folks realize that our programs are reinforcing and serving this system....We need to develop an empowering organizational base independent of the educational system....We must be prepared to go it alone when the money dries up because of our continual challenges to the present social order." Yates suggests that cultural action groups need to "Create alliances with local activist organizations such as community organizations, unions, feminist and civil rights groups. We could work with these groups to develop education programs and projects which serve and involve their membership and the surrounding community."

Up Against Ourselves

Most brainstormers looked toward aspects of the artist's own attitudes and practice to lay the blame for non-support. John Greyson criticized the movement for being reactive and too thinly-spread: "We're up against a bucks blockade which controls every viable venue of distribution in this country and culture, and our 'networks' of umbrellas' of 'coalitions' must be recognized as reactive responses to this very political stranglehold....My point is that we are still a small handful, and while we may be trying to make up for the vast inequities of silence that typify status quo culture, we could well be undermining our effectiveness by gadflying from issue to issue, forgetting to do effective community outreach."

Brainstormers at the People's Theater Festival thought that much political art simply isn't good, and pointed to the scarcity of resources for training artists working outside of mainstream traditions. PADD also considered the forces that limit artists' development: "In the U.S., progressive and activist art has a relatively short history since it was cut off in the '40s. Effective forms take long, hard work to develop; activist artists tend to give studio time to organize and support organizations, depleting their own creative energy and fragmenting their individual developments. There are few effective models and many progressive groups work in isolation, unaware of the models that do exist because of lack of mainstream media coverage."

But then the confusion and lack of unity on the left must be taken into consideration. Charles Frederick tells a story: "A friend of mine just got back from Nicaragua, and we were talking about the problems.... One of the extraordinary problems for any third world country which has waged a revolution is that they're left with no infrastructure -- no way in which resources are organized, in which information, material, etc., flows through some organized means. And what we don't have right now is an infrastructure to support leftist art. And that infrastructure is essential. The reason we don't have the infrastructure is because the left is in disarray."

Similarly, Tim Rollins writes that

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creating markets for progressive artwork
"...will be difficult given the tortured
and suppressed history of progressive poli-
tics in the U.S."

Both the Advance and People's Theater
Festival discussions noted that the weak-
ness of progressive movements in general
is felt as a lack of support for opposi-
tional art. Lucy Lippard and Greg Sholette
simply raise the question: "An aspect that
is too complicated to get into here, but
should at some point be addressed by all of
us, is the question of why the Left itself
has not supported political art and why
working people in general shy away from it.
It would be extremely useful to have a 20th
Century history of the relationships of
various artists and art styles to various
leftwing parties and political groups --
who has supported whom, and why, and when."

Xchange points to a decline in progres-
sive culture "...reflecting overall disil-
lusionment and apathy in these hard times.
...It appears that many people are so con-
cerned with minimal survival that there are
fewer risk-takers making and/or consuming
political art that advocates systemic change."

Lastly, competition among progressive
artists takes precedence over cooperation,
according to the Advance artists. Tim Rol-
lins agreed: "...perhaps the greatest de-
terrent to our financial support has been
the cultural left's total lack of realist-
ic, cooperative organization. All our lit-
tle groups across the country must compete
for those few token grants and foundations
that are available." And from PADD: "One
of the great economic hardships we impose
on ourselves in the duplication of effort,
competing for the same bit of the unwhole-
some mainstream pie instead of uniting to
bake our own."

II. WHAT STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTED SO FAR, AND HOW HAVE THEY SUCCEEDED OR FAILED?

Based on the responses, this question
might have been rephrased to read, "What
have you tried already?" because almost all
the brainstormers stuck squarely to their
own experience. On the one hand, this was
a strength of the responses: people really
knew whereof they spoke. On the other hand,
it pointed up a deficiency of the movement
that was also revealed by the answers to
the first question: the movement's history
is largely unacknowledged. So while we
might have something to learn from the la-
bor theaters or political musicians of the
'30s, or the Mexican muralists, those les-
sons didn't come to the minds of the brain-
stormers.

The Community Murals Magazine groups a-
gain put their response to this question
quite simply: "Look to people, not founda-
tions....Remember, 10,000 people at \$1 each
is \$10,000." Their plan is to expand dis-
tribution of the magazine; if they continue
to donate labor, they believe costs can be
covered though subscriptions and sales.

PADD has a laundry list of sales possi-
bilities to generate earned income, with a

caveat at the end; their experience, like
some others', is that such projects have
eaten time and returned less than might be
hoped: "Strategies may not be exactly the
right word, but an attempt to apply vari-
ous marketing devices has been the Left's
main response to self-support, aside from
applying for grants and looking for the
mythical patron or matron...."

"Here are some of the things we've all
tried to market: Publications, T-shirts,
buttons, posters, tote bags, calendars,
bumper stickers, and mailing lists. Here
are some other ways: Benefit parties, auc-
tions (including skill auctions), art sales,
bake sales, craft sales, rummage sales,
fundraising letters to a broad audience,
donations in kind from local merchants for
events, events such as poetry readings, per-
formances, film showings, dances, concerts
...begging in the streets...."

"Most of these seem like stop-gaps.
They take a lot of work from which most
people get little satisfaction, and don't
make huge amounts of money (though some-
times a benefit auction can reap up to
\$35,000 when the cause is as popular as
what can be bought; we're thinking of an
art sale for Chile right after the coup)."

Tim Rollins shares Group Material's
strategy: "Group Material does theme ex-
hibitions. We devise a social theme -- a
context -- in which a huge variety of art-
works can take on political meaning. (If
'they' can neutralize our political art, we
have found that we can often politicize
their 'neutral' art as well!) Group Mater-
ial also borrows different sites for exhi-
bitions -- we negotiate with the administra-
tion of a middle-class neighborhood shop-
ping center (where we're planning a show
about consumer society) as well as with the
headquarters of an anti-imperialist coaliti-
on (where we've just finished a show in
solidarity with Central American Struggles).
In both realms we've encountered an avid
interest in a critical (but, please, enga-
ging and entertaining) art." He adds
that artists ought to look to "the encour-
aging successes of 'art stores' selling in-
expensive multiples by members of Co-Lab,
Fashion Moda and Group Material here in
New York."

Some Advance artists also pointed to
the success of income-generating businesses,
for instance, the Women's Graphics Center
at the Woman's Building in Los Angeles.
And they again supported the idea of sell-
ing small, inexpensive art objects -- per-
haps reminiscent of larger projects. Some-
one pointed out how much money establish-
ment artists like Christo made selling books
and souvenirs and artifacts of their larger
installations.

Dig Where You Stand

John Greyson believes the focus should
be on clearly identifying one's community
and working with it, and points to "...signs
of hope (including) the gay and feminist press
where reviews of more 'experimental' work
are starting to sneak in....More and more
gay cultural workers seem willing to active-

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ly integrate their day-to-day struggles into the work they produce. Two friends recently held a fund-raiser for their documentary Before Stonewall, concerning an American century of struggle for gay rights. It was sold out -- featuring early films and more recent documentaries, it was a recapturing of a lost history that New York's community was obviously ready for. It was also a very effective community fundraiser....Another friend is working on a documentary concerning the assassination of Harvey Milk, the gay supervisor in San Francisco. Richard has just launched an extensive fundraising campaign, aimed at those in the gay community with bucks..." John sees this as a risk because "...like other minority business communities (Black, Chinese) the gay businessmen tend to be very conservative, primarily because they are vulnerable to straight white male controlling business interests. Nevertheless, these non-governmental, non-corporate/foundation community fundraising efforts demonstrate an alternative to the suicidal depressions that set in when your third NEA grant in a row is turned down. It involves a process of simultaneously identifying support systems and developing audiences from a community standpoint. It means getting closest to what's close to you, instead of jumping around from cause to cause."

Both the People's Theater Festival and Activist Artists Advance groups emphasized the importance of such linking up with "natural constituencies" -- people who share your concerns -- with reports on experiences that ranged from "going to where you find people -- conferences, picket lines" to "workplace programs" to emphasizing the "secondary 'saleable' aspect of work inherent in your goals" -- for instance, anti-vandalism or anti-arson groups have supported arts work that helped to educate people about their concerns.

Charles Frederick shared his experience: "I'm working with religious imagery. Now why do that? Because socially there's going on in this country one of the main forms of reactionary ideology, it's happening in a religious image arena. So it's important to be able to make some kind of comment with the images to break them open so they can be thought about differently....Also to make sure that people understand that this is a real question -- the question of what is of spiritual value, what images hold in the society -- and begin to look at them rather than simply...to pooh-pooh them.... So there are a lot of progressive churches around. They have space, they have resources, they have organized communities, and...they tend to be more open to a particular debate than a rigidly materialist leftist would. They've got alternative resources around if you know how to make use of them."

A Little of Everything

Xchange, like many progressive arts groups, has relied on a diversified fund-

ing base. Beyond NEA grants, this is how Jean Catellani lists them for the group:

- "1. Soliciting donations from groups with an interest in the issue;
- "2. Selling memberships in Xchange;
- "3. Sponsoring events and charging admission; and
- "4. Personal tithings (of great joy??!!) from Xchange members."

For one event, the Art Politik conference, Xchange "broke even using this combination of grant money, admission fees, donations and barter." For another, the "Chained Reactions" series of disarmament events, Jean says, "If we had done more advance planning and aggressive fundraising prior to the events, we wouldn't have ended up using our own pennies to cover costs." One Xchange member had recovered costs in producing and distributing an audiotape by writing letters soliciting underwriting from potential sponsors; they were made to see that their donations would result in the wide distribution of the work.

Some Advance artists had tried traditional fundraising devices like direct-mail campaigns, but with disappointing results. One participant suggested that non-arts groups found that direct-mail could be very important if a few conditions were met: you need enough capital to do several mailings and to keep up contact with donors; telephone follow-up insures a much higher return; and much care and research goes into the preparation of a successful direct-mail appeal.

Responses to these questions revealed that activist arts groups haven't been very imaginative in their fundraising so far. By and large, people have tried the same few strategies: apply for grants or make something to sell. Though in their analysis of the problem many brainstormers called for educating prospective funders about the movement's history and impact, few have undertaken this work; and though almost every respondent emphasized the notion of identifying and cultivating a community where there is an affinity and a commonality of concern, translating this into concrete action is slow going.

But these groups, whose stock-in-trade is creative problem-solving (and we would be hard-pressed to better describe the territory progressive artists have carved out), are just beginning to apply that imagination to the problem of support, as responses to the third question will illustrate.

III. WHAT PROPOSALS CAN BE OFFERED FOR NEW STRATEGIES?

PADD is developing its own strategy for long-term self-support. The organization is divided into five committees, "...each of which contains possibilities for supporting itself. The newsletter -- Upfront -- has in fact paid for itself so far. The Archive committee is a potential coppermine; when the Archive is large and well-organized enough, we will ask for donations from scholars using it, charge for re-

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productions, loans, etc. We are just beginning work on a series of slide-show packets about various issues and aspects of political art; these will be for rent or sale and be accompanied by an audiotape or written text, which could be sold as pamphlets. The first of this series, being developed this summer, will be a 150-slide overview of visual culture in the June 12th march; cable TV is also being considered, combining slides and videotape.

"Eventually a mailorder catalogue could be developed from the archive... We have also discussed publishing a bibliography and a catalogue of the archive (this might be done by the PADD Study Group). It could include multiples for sale, perhaps by non-member artists as donations to PADD.

"We also have a huge mailing list of people interested in left art from all over the country. Proceeds from selling it might be contributed to the Networking Committee.

"The only continuing project of our Public Works Committee is the monthly Second Sunday forum. Next year we hope to develop a mini-lecture series within that framework, charging a subscription fee and selling transcripts. Another possibility is to hire ourselves out to unions, universities, schools and political groups as curators of exhibitions geared to their own interests and needs."

And PADD has had no shortage of other ideas for its own support: "Other ideas that have come up: get progressively-minded night clubs to hire us to do temporary decorations for specific events; do publicity and stage-work for political bands or music groups, slides, etc.; lease and renovate a space and then rent out gallery and studio space to artists; offer workshops or classes for 3-month periods on skills PADD members already possess (carpentry, graphics, photography, writing, languages, art, research, pasteup, typography, video, etc.); open a coffee shop; start the multiples project with some catchy anti-muke object (bomb in plastic ice cube???)".

Lucy and Greg note, as have many brainstormers, that "Distribution is the area in which coalition or cooperative work would be most effective."

Tim Rollins sees most future promise in the sort of strategy he is pursuing now: "...our work has to change and the challenge of our job is how to create affordable, appealing cultural products for a broad audience without over-compromising the political purpose behind our work."

Xchange used the opportunity of the round-robin to examine its own possibilities for new income: "At present we're trying two routes: applying for foundation grants and brainstorming on what 'service' to offer the community to drum up some bucks....Three possibilities for a service were suggested:

--nonprofit production company;

--profitmaking enterprise that benefits the community (e.g., a restaurant or silkscreen workshop);
--coordinating body of an alternative arts fund."

Of the first possibility, Jean writes, "Our focus would be on producing topical, political, and environmental issues, being careful not to duplicate the efforts of other existing local production groups (Stepping Stone, Wise Women Productions, Good Fairy Productions). Long-term planning would be essential, beginning with researching who has already attempted this around the country, and what the successes/failures have been. We see ourselves running big-name headliner performances to make enough profit to allow production of less well-known, more marginal artists."

The second possibility seems less likely to Xchange: "We aren't all that keen on the idea of operating a profit-making enterprise for the simple reason that we'd get bogged down with all the incredible hassles of operating a small business. The present economic depression hardly seems like a good time to attempt this, and our handful of active members could not sustain the necessary energy to pull this off. Some members of Xchange are also reluctant to directly participate in capitalism in this way, even if our goal is to survive as a radical political art group.

"The final alternative discussed was operating an arts fund, which would offer money to qualifying art/political groups doing progressive work. The recipient would later restore these funds through fundraisers or grants. Xchange could also coordinate essential technical services (e.g., bookkeeping), solicit donations from individuals, etc., and be compensated for our work."

Xchange was the only group to raise the possibility of a loan fund. But a number of brainstormers said that their organizations lacked the capital to undertake fundraising through benefits, direct mail, or the manufacture of objects for sale. It's conceivable that the availability of a fund -- and technical assistance -- for such ventures would be a wise investment.

Attitude Adjustment

Many round-robin participants recommended some form of attitude adjustment -- and not necessarily a new device or technique. At the People's Theater Festival, several people said the artist's vision of making money has to change. Some of the Advance artists said that progressive arts groups often present themselves to the public as "marginal"; their graphics or written materials or other aspects of their public presentation promulgate the message that "we are just about to go under", which is unlikely to be appealing to donors.

And over and over again, people recommended that progressive artists help funders change their own attitudes in a variety of ways: besides providing solid information about the movement's impact and history, (continued on page eight---)

(continued from page seven---) Brainstorm

some brainstormers urged progressive artists to give up all forms of self-censorship: give full value to all your in-kind contributions when making proposals; don't forego applying or edit all the social content out of an application in anticipation of disapproval; share information and collaborate on projects when possible; get other social institutions to advocate for you (churches and other non-arts community groups can help convince funders that cultural projects should be supported -- and you can reciprocate when they go for funding).

Some brainstormers touched on the possibility of raising support through access to commercial culture industries or distribution systems, but this extremely touchy question wasn't given the consideration it would warrant. We think it would be a good topic for a future brainstorm, but for now it's just a kind of wish: people would like to use the mainstream productions and distribution systems, but not if they have to surrender the values and consciousness they now bring to their work. Some people think this is possible, and some think not; but by and large, none of the brainstormers has the direct experience to answer this question for certain.

Artists Building Culture

John Greyson maintains that "Our concepts of 'community' must...be rethought" and shares his own experience to illustrate: "...as a video artist...working within the independent film/video community, I'm appalled by the lack of internal critical debate and dialogue....I'm also active in the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Filmmakers, and am even more appalled at the low level of critical dialogue which accompanies gay lib media production. Nevertheless, I feel this is a place to start -- more and more gay and lesbian cultural producers are working with the community, bringing gay folks into the traditional venues as gay people (galleries, theaters, dances) while at the same time trying to develop alternative venues within the gay community (so far primarily through special events at conferences and community meeting places -- in larger cities, some non-commercial institutions have begun to rear their heads)." John says this "getting closest to what's closest to you...shouldn't be seen narrowly, but instead strategically -- and it could mean replacing 'correctness' with 'commitment'."

Charles Frederick suggests that the left constitutes a primary community for progressive artists, and proposes that the task is to "...create artwork which is of a progressive aesthetic (by a progressive aesthetic I mean an artwork which recognizes and makes use of...the experience of alienation, pluralism and a struggling -- however atomized -- spirit of democracy in this country). Such artwork allows the various subjects to be in an entertaining conflict with one another and that will allow, on the left, a place where the different points of view can happen freely -- without

rancor, without defense -- because it happens within a symbolic arena rather than in the...fractionalized disputing arena we usually see on the left. It allows people to see that there is some way they can all talk....It's as much a work for the left right now to organize itself as it is to organize what they feel is another society." As Charles sees it, "One of the ways in which the left can overcome some of its disarray...is to provide an infrastructure for leftist cultural work.

"The result of societal change," says Frederick, "would be that we would probably have the richest, most resourceful infrastructure in the world....On the other hand, we don't have it yet. And one of the ways in which you can train people to take it over is by creating an alternative infrastructure right now, to give more and more people a means of support so they can be making this alternative -- which becomes something that people can see. It's there. It belongs to people."

And for now? "Get that vision out...at least raise the question of a possible infrastructure from among the various fragments that presently lie on the floor.... The left should become a massive network so that work which is done will affect the left. Present a question to every isolated, alienated leftist in the audience and then fight about it, so that the work becomes open-ended because it reaches into the audience in terms of their own experience as well as their wish for something to happen in the world....The artist can be someone who has a power or talent for a certain kind of articulation which is needed in a community of people....The more you can do in certain ways symbolically, the more you can prepare for less misunderstanding and miscomprehension when it comes to activism. Once you can try and create on some symbolic level the notion that there is a people growing in the midst of oppressive conditions, then I think you are on the way to really helping a political program..."

Envisioning the Future

The national brainstorm has made several things clear. First, it must be noted that no more than a hundred people, all told, participated. At its inception, one goal of the round-robin was to demonstrate -- or at least develop -- the movement's capacity to cooperate on a common project. At the conclusion of this first brainstorm, we've learned that that capacity needs a lot more development: whole sectors of the movement -- musicians, for instance -- had no voice in the brainstorm; and few of the participants looked beyond their own direct experience for guidance. If our ability to engage others in dialogue needs so much work, it should be no surprise that our ability to earn others' financial support is weaker still.

Second, the brainstorm pointed up a rather surprising quirk of the movement for cultural democracy: while activist artists are resourceful and ingenious in creating their artwork, not much of that imaginative

(continued on page nine---)

Brainstorm (continued from page eight---)

quality rubs off on fundraising. Most of us try the same six things, over and over again. Perhaps the solution's as simple as utilizing the same methods to develop a fundraising project that we utilize in planning an arts project.

Third, the round-robin reminds us how progressive artists must swim in the same social and cultural sea as all the other poor fish. When people have less money, they spend less money on activist art; when government moves to the right, progressive arts projects lose out along with other socially-constructive work; when government talks up the primacy of the private sector and the marketplace, even activist artists hear the call of the cash register.

Fourth, the most-used word in the entire brainstorm was "community". People blamed their lack of support on the lack of a strong community base; they told stories of their own experiences in community organizing; and they called for a redefinition of community -- and of the artist's relation to it -- as the solution for the future. This should come as no surprise to our readers: the antidote to the alienated, individualistic genius notion of the artist must be the artist who is in and of a community of fellows, and whose work does all of them some good.

But we would all do well to remember that we live and work in a society that discourages the development of the kind of supportive, self-determining community on which the notion of cultural democracy is based. No artist -- regardless of the nature of his or her commitment -- can call a community into being where before there was only a collection of atomized individuals. Building a more humane society is irrevocably a group project -- and not a test of the talents or capabilities of an artist.

And finally, the brainstorm reminded us of how difficult it is to imagine a future not completely circumscribed by the limitations of the present. Some kinds of speculation were entirely omitted by the brainstormers: for instance, no one considered what cultural democracy might have to offer the movement for economic democracy. Progressive artists today might dream of a future in which the decentralization of production and distribution also meant decent work for artists in their own communities -- as artisans, as teachers, as neighborhood workers, as programmers for community media, as planners of public environments and buildings, and so on. Dreaming doesn't guarantee the future we desire; but without dreams, we'll have no voice in the future at all.

Please pass this issue around. We'll be glad to send extra copies if you need them. And if something you've read here infuriates or pleases you, if your imagination is engaged by this exercise in putting our heads together, send us your thoughts and the discussion will carry on.

--Don Adams & Arlene Goldbard.

VITAL SIGNS (Continued from page one---)

The Advance brought together upwards of 50 people, mostly visual artists, for a week-end of sharing and discussions at a summer camp in the high desert northeast of Los Angeles. The People's Theater Festival combined performances -- at three theaters in different parts of the city -- with discussions among participating theater workers and their local counterparts.

The Question of Structure

The structures of these two events could not have been more different -- one a fairly small meeting at a quiet enclave, with a highly-structured agenda throughout; the other a completely decentralized event, with informal time accounting for most of the get-togethers, and a tightly-structured performance schedule providing counterpoint. Before we get into the particulars of each event, this question of format needs a few words.

As everyone who's attended an arts conference knows, the format of a meeting is bound to create more controversy than the subjects discussed. Whatever the reasons, we have never been to a conference where people -- ourselves included -- didn't cluster in little groups and whisper resentfully about the agenda.

So what are the qualities of a good meeting? Some people like the cloistered style, where participants are forced by the sheer lack of distraction to talk with each other. Others like a meeting right in the thick of things, with lots of alternate possibilities if a conference session doesn't sound appealing. Some like a lot of structure, the kind that sweeps participants along on an agenda that promises one activity after another; others like a very loose agenda with plenty of room for spontaneity. And so on.

We think both these meetings worked in some ways and didn't work in others -- as is the usual case. But we could all save a lot of time and teeth-gnashing if we could come up with some better models. If readers have ideas or experiences to share, drop us a line; we'll put together a compendium of responses for a future issue.

THE ACTIVIST ARTISTS ADVANCE

The Advance, held June 18-20, was the 4th in a series of meetings on art and politics which brought together both avant-garde and community-oriented artists to discuss common concerns. Its predecessors were "Art as a Vehicle for Social Change," held in Cincinnati in June, 1980; the "Art Politik" conference held in Seattle in June, 1981; and the February 26th Movement sponsored by Political Art Documentation and Distribution in New York this year. The Advance was the first of these conceived largely as a working session, perhaps as an antidote to the frustrations of protracted talking about differences without an anchor to concrete practice.

The idea of the Advance, summed up on wall posters throughout the conference, was:

"o To advance the state of the art
--by drawing on ourselves as resources
(continued on page 10---)

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D.C. UPDATE

--Arlene Goldberg & Don Adams.

For more information about the People's Theater Festival, contact coordinator Bob Martin at 50 Water Street, San Francisco, CA 94133...phone 415/776-8118.

And as with the Advance, criticism was an issue. How to criticize others' work without being dismissive or destructive? How to let yourself hear criticism of your own work without defensiveness? This has emerged as such a large and unresolved question for our movement that we think it deserves special and careful attention; we'll try to give it that at NAPNOC's annual Conference in October.

"Burn-out" was an issue. Many of the assembled theater workers were feeling the toll of time and deprivation. People wanted to survive and maintain their work; so there was more enthusiasm for sharing wisdom about how that might be accomplished than for speculations about the movement's role in building cultural democracy.

VITAL SIGNS (continued from page 12---

Since we last reported on Reagan's proposed budget for 1983 (see "Guns and Butter" in issue 19), there have been mixed messages about funding levels for cultural agencies. In March and April, it seemed that both the House and Senate would support keeping the budgets of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) at the same level as 1982 -- \$143.04 million and \$130.56 respectively. Budget subcommittees in each house recommended maintaining these current-year levels to the House and Senate Budget Committees in March.

The Senate's first budget resolution (which sets budget authorization "targets" prior to the actual appropriations process), passed in late May, included maintenance of current-year levels for NEA and NEH. But the House on June 10 passed its first budget resolution, calling for adherence to Ronald Reagan's budget proposals for the "Function 500" programs. (These include the two Endowments and other federal cultural programs, along with much larger programs in health and education.) Reagan's proposed figures for NEA and NEH call for cuts to \$100.875 million and \$96.0 million respectively.

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Senate staffers contend that the higher NEA and NEH budget assumptions of the Senate still stand, while House staffers claim that the House's lower budget figures should apply. Who is right? The answer to this question is moot, since the actual figures will be worked out by the appropriations subcommittees and committees in each house in coming weeks and months. (The House appropriations subcommittee had been scheduled to "mark up" the Endowments' on July 20, but this meeting was postponed indefinitely.) In the ab-

(continued on page 14---

Two months prior to the end of fiscal year 1982, the budgets for federal cultural agencies are still very much up in the air. And with just 3 months to go before the November elections, posturing and public relations are taking up most of the attention of the Congress which must deliver a budget for Ronald Reagan's signature.

son raised an issue that was to reappear throughout the Advance: Judy Chicago, the artist best known for "The Dinner Party," a monumental assemblage of neglected craft forms mounted to honor women in history, said "I don't agree the artist is in the service of a group. Historically, there has been a dialogue -- and dissension -- between the individual and group. Collectivity is interesting, but not where the most important work comes from. Being an artist means making individual choices, taking a stand, within a framework."

Ed Bereal, a Los Angeles artist best known for his work with the group Bodacious Buggerilla, responded: "There's a lot of mystification around collective work...my own work was improved by involvement in a collective. Idealistically and artistically, Bodacious Buggerilla was guided by our neighborhood; we saw continuing growth through commitment to community."

Performance and conceptual artist Suzanne Lacy and audio artist Doug Kahn from Seattle Xchange had different ideas about effectiveness. Doug asserted that: "Activist art can subvert media images. It can add politically insightful information and change advertising images to social critique." Suzanne responded: "I want to challenge Doug. We just don't know about effectiveness. We think fuzzily about how change occurs, and need to clarify our thinking."

The groups that participated in this conceptual mapping exercise came up with widely varied projects. One group comprised members of the Sisters of Survival; in their recent action, "Shovel Defense," the Sisters, dressed in their customary colorful nun-style habits, presided over a mock graveyard designed to dramatize civil defense propaganda about surviving nuclear attack by digging into the dirt. They used their group time to plan their next project, part of the "Target L.A." prodisarmament actions to take place August 7 and 8. Because they planned an actual project, their map was much more specific than most.

Another group comprised relative strangers. They found themselves drawn together out of political commonality and created a large conceptual model that was very general, adaptable to a great variety of projects. Our group chose "gentrification" as its issue, wanting to pick a problem in which artists commonly had a hand, and also wanting to assist one of its members, San Francisco artist Jo Hanson, whose work has dealt with issues specific to the changing urban neighborhood.

The issue of collaboration came up again when the group which included Judy Chicago emerged with a conceptual map drawn in concentric circles, with the artist in the center. This visual aid became the object for a heated, and unresolved, discussion of just what collaboration really is -- and what role the artist plays in it. Marshall Mayer, a Los Angeles photographer, said the concentric circles spoke of a corporate model and ought to be compared to the notion of cul-

tural democracy. "Not everyone had access to the inner circle; this implies the artist is the leader, the true believer, who convinces the rest." Tim Drescher of Community Murals Magazine said prepositions gave it all away: "To work with a community or to speak of work by a community is very progressive; to work for more often means onto or at the community." Suzanne Lacy, who presented to concentric circles model, responded by pointing to "continuing feedback within this system; there is not a single person at the center, but things have to start somewhere."

One group was dissatisfied with the assignment and decided, instead of designing a conceptual model, to criticize the proceedings. They said that criticism was discouraged and isolated from the outset, when it should be an integral part of events like the Advance; they felt that psychological jargon and principles had been utilized in discussion where more rigorous discourse should have been the aim, and charged anti-intellectualism, along with a misguided sense of the artist as leader, the "audience" as passive follower.

The Issues Surface

These discussions were very useful for us because they highlighted some of the key questions progressive artists must ask today, including perhaps the most important question: from what source do ideas in political art emerge? Does the artist do independent research, wait for inspiration, try to work side-by-side with organizers? Or is the process of identifying issues and creating artwork to be, from the outset, a group effort in which the artist's role is facilitative? Needless to say, there are many intermediate positions on this continuum, and there likely to be as many models as positions.

The balance of the weekend was taken up with workshops, discussions, meals, entertainment, between-workshop conversations, joke-telling sessions, and little time left for sleep. It closed with a Sunday morning session aimed at evaluating the Advance.

There were numerous structural suggestions that might be taken into account by readers out to plan the perfect meeting: Send out materials for discussion beforehand, so we don't have to spend so much time building a common basis for talking. Provide better opportunities for criticism, so critics aren't bad guys, and so they have a chance to develop alternative proposals and not simply react -- perhaps have workshops on criticism. Some people were distressed by the anger expressed by critics; others wished more overt controversy would surface, instead of innuendo and indirection. There was discussion of the differences among participants: some people were surprised and pleased that radical feminist artists and old-style left artists could maintain a considerate and productive exchange; others wished there had been more opportunity to air differences in background and direction, and less assumption of political commonality -- did we all want the same thing when we talked about "social change"?

The State of the Movement

With perhaps fifteen minutes to spare, the agenda raced around to its last topic, the direction of the movement -- when a very interesting thing happened. There we were, miles from any town in a very quiet and rustic setting, when suddenly a deafening *WHOO-O-OOSH!* drowned out all other sound. To a person, everyone ducked and yelped at the same time, creating instant pandemonium. Apparently, a jet fighter, perhaps on maneuvers from a nearby base, flew low over the camp. After some moments, when the din had quieted, Jim Prigoff, a documenter and supporter of mural work from San Francisco, asked, "*Who didn't think it was The Bomb?*" Very few hands were raised -- and we all got perhaps the truest possible insight into the fears and thoughts of the activist artist/USA.

The discussion of the movement, unfortunately, told us much less. For one thing, a good number of the assembled artists were reluctant to admit the existence of a movement: some because they doubted others' commitment; some because they felt too isolated to be part of something so significant-seeming; some -- unfortunately -- because they felt too superior in terms of talent, direction, or reputation to join a group. But most of the Advance artists did feel themselves to be a part of the movement, though they called for principles of unity or an agreement on direction to give it shape.

Among the suggestions offered: Continue to draw up conceptual models for progressive arts projects, and forward them to SPARC for dissemination; hold regional meetings like the Advance; publicize progressive cultural practice in the broader, "non-cultural" left -- and with other cultural groups, across discipline lines; form consciousness-raising groups to discuss the questions raised at the Advance on an ongoing basis; mount national, cross-disciplinary projects to build cooperation; subscribe and contribute to progressive arts publications; and take up strategic questions on a regular basis.

For more information about the Activist Artists Advance and follow-up projects, contact SPARC at 685 Venice Boulevard, Venice, CA 90291...phone 213/822-9560.

PEOPLE'S THEATER FESTIVAL

The People's Theater Festival always has a dual purpose. On the one hand, the Festival exists in order to present interesting current work in people's theater; on the other, it provides a forum for activist theater workers in northern California (plus some visitors) to get together and talk about what's on their -- and the movement's -- minds.

The Festival is a regional event; that is, most participants come from the San Francisco Bay Area or somewhere nearby. This year's Festival, held June 22-27, was therefore something of a departure, since most of the featured performers were from other parts of the U.S. The program included several NAPNOC members, each in extended runs as opposed to the usual one-time fes-

tival gig: the United Mime Workers from Champaign-Urbana, IL, doing "Mime Is No Object: The Reproduction of a Working Day"; John O'Neal of the Free Southern Theatre in New Orleans, doing "Don't Start Me Talking or I'll Tell You Everything I Know: The Life and Times of Junebug Jabbo Jones"; and Roadside Theater from Whitesburg, KY, doing "Brother Jack." The other main Festival attraction was the New York Labor Theater's "Jack London" piece; and there were several local groups, including the Asian-American Theater, Teatro Latino, and Theatre Unlimited on the roster for one-time performances interspersed with Festival discussions.

The presence of so many outsiders also meant this year's Festival discussion groups were different in tone. Aside from the visiting performers, Festival participants met David Olson, who came from Cherry Creek in St. Peter, MN, with a rough-cut videotape of The Gathering; and Ruby Lerner, who came from Atlanta representing Alternate ROOTS (Regional Organization of Theatres-South).

On the one hand, this diversity of participants meant that there were many different views expressed -- and many stories told to explain those views -- when an issue came up. John O'Neal shared the Free Southern Theatre's intention to dissolve after twenty years, and invited the assembled to participate in the celebration planned next year to commemorate the event. Debra Ballinger shared the story of Red Balloon Theatre's own decision to disband. And others were prompted to talk about their fears, their fatigue, the search for ways to remain alive as people's theaters in an extremely inhospitable climate.

But on the other hand, that diversity -- or at least the unfamiliarity of many participants -- made it even more difficult than at the Advance to raise and sustain the question of the movement. More than twenty theaters were represented at the introductory Festival meeting, but the atmosphere wouldn't permit much more than a lengthy round of introductions.

So the bottom line was that this year's People's Theater Festival was excellent for its performances, and for the informal opportunities to sit and talk with extraordinary people you get to see once a year -- if you're lucky. But something kept it from gelling the few times participants assembled in large groups, and whatever it was seemed to have little to do with Festival organization or structure.

We have some ideas about that, naturally. Competition was an issue. Some discussion groups were dominated by a few individuals, utterly convinced of the rightness of their own positions. For instance, Barbara Garson was flown in to cover the event for The Village Voice. Garson, a writer best-known for her Vietnam-era play "MacBird", practiced what must be the "new journalism", taking every opportunity to put herself forward when she might have been attentive to others, frequently offering the following advice: "Why, all you need is a good writer."

She (and some other Festival participants)

(continued on page 13---)

helped us to clarify a distinction we'd never seen so sharply before: There are some people who make political theater with the ambition to be the best there is -- the most politically correct, the most artistically gifted, the one next to whom there is no other. And then there are other people (a much larger number, thank goodness) whose aim is less egocentric and less trivial at the same time: they want to be as good as possible, to constantly improve their work of course; but rather than aiming to beat out the competition, their goal is to build a movement and to transform society. When next you meet someone who purports to be an expert on the inner life of the working class, consider which of these camps he or she would feel most comfortable in.

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D.C. UPDATE

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D.C. UPDATE (continued from page 13---)

sence of clear budget ceilings, appropriations committees have even greater leeway than usual to set actual figures. With heavy lobbying from Washington arts interests continuing -- and in an election year -- chances are the current-year figures will hold; the cuts involved are minuscule in relation to the overall budget and could alienate key political supporters. We will keep you informed.

* * * * *

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) has also been on a budget roller coaster since we last wrote. On March 31, a new continuing resolution for CPB and other agencies operating without approved budgets for this year set CPB's 1984 budget level at the lower \$105.6 million figure that Reagan had recommended; CPB has \$172 million this year. (CPB's budgets are approved two years before the time that they're expended.) But on June 10, a House-Senate conference committee restored CPB's budget to \$130 million, bringing it back up to the full authorization level set for CPB in last year's Omnibus Reconciliation Act.

NEW COMMITTEE ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

On June 15, Ronald Reagan signed Executive Order 12367, creating the "President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities", an advisory committee recommended by the Presidential Task Force on the Arts & Humanities last October (see issue 17 for a summary of the Task Force recommendations).

The Task Force had recommended that the Federal Council on the Arts & Humanities be reconstituted to add private citizen representatives to the Council, which was established by the same legislation which created the Endowments for the Arts and Humanities in 1965. The 16-member Federal Council, comprising representatives of federal agencies having some impact on the country's cultural life, is now inactive, though many of its members are now part of the President's Committee -- a wholly new group. Curiously, the President's Committee "shall terminate on December 31, 1982, unless sooner extended," according to the Executive Order.

The new Committee "shall analyze, and make recommendations to the President and to the (NEA and NEH) with respect to, (i) ways to promote private sector support for the arts and humanities, especially at the State and Local levels; (ii) the effectiveness of federal support...in stimulating increased private sector support, taking into account the needs and problems of the arts and humanities and their relationship with the private sector; (iii) the planning and coordination of appropriate participation (including productions and projects) in major and historic national events; and (iv) ways to promote the recognition of excellence in the fields of the arts and humanities." The Committee, whose administrative expenses will be covered by the NEA, was empowered to "collect, maintain and make available for appropriate distribution data on the sources and levels of public and private sector support for the arts and the humanities, and on the availability of cultural resources locally." The Committee is barred from duplicating any responsibilities of the NEA and NEH.

And who will be amassing and disbursing this cultural knowledge? The Committee will be chaired by Andrew Heiskell, former Time, Inc. chairman, with help from co-chairs Armand Deutsch (chair of Starwood Corporation and a member of Reagan's "kitchen cabinet"); and W. Barnabas McHenry, Reader's Digest counsel. Other corporations represented on the Committee are Neutrogena, Caban, Mobil Oil, Brody Investment of Beverly Hills and the Times-Mirror Company. One Hispanic -- publisher of California's La Opinion, Ignacio Lozano -- was named to the Committee.

These private citizens are joined by NEA Chair Frank Hodson, NEH Chair William Bennett, Interior Secretary Watt, Treasury Secretary Regan, Education Secretary Bell, and the heads of the General Services Administration, Library of Congress, National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian, and the International Communications Agency, as well as designees of the Secretary of State, House Speaker and Senate Majority Leader.

For the arts we have former NEA Chair Nancy Hanks, producer Robert Fryer, Isabel Wilson of the Houston Art Commission and representatives of the Performing Arts Foundation, the National Symphony along with the president of Spelman College. There is one individual artist -- Frank Sinatra. The Committee is not expected to meet until fall.

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