

NAPNOC

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CROSS COUNTRY CUTS: EARLY REACTIONS TO THE ERP

As this issue of NAPNOC notes goes to press, the fate of President Reagan's proposed "Economic Recovery Package" (ERP) is still up in the air: A strange-bedfellows coalition of Senators on the Budget Committee has voted to reject its first budget resolution (for a complete description of the Congressional budget process, see NAPNOC notes #10, "Congress & the Budget").

A few hard-line Republican conservatives opposed the ERP because it wouldn't produce a balanced federal budget; a number of Democrats joined them in voting no, but for an entirely different reason -- because part of the ERP is a three-year tax cut which Reagan hopes will stimulate spending and revitalize the economy, and which those who don't believe in Reaganomics dismiss as hocus-pocus.

The Senate will move after its Easter recess to agree on a new budget resolution. In the meantime, the White House is calling this setback a "bump in the road to economic recovery" while people who oppose the ERP see it as a sign that the opposition is gaining ground.

We suspect both sides are right: In past weeks, House Democrats have prepared an "alternative" FY 1982 budget, matching the ERP in the bottom line but removing an bit from increased defense allocations and replacing a bit of social services money. It now seems unlikely that Reagan's ERP will pass both houses intact, though it's impossible to predict at this point how far the final budget will diverge from the ERP proposal. There also seems to be a good possibility that the President will not get Congress to buy his three-year Kemp-Roth tax cut. But opposition to slashing federal spending on social services by billions of dollars seems neither powerful nor influential enough to reverse the ERP: The non-military portions of the federal budget will be cut.

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Meanwhile, in the arts, rumors abound. The Washington Post of April 15 confirmed that among the ideas the administration is considering for redirecting arts policy is the replacement of the Endowments by a quasi-public corporation like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Post says that an agency thus constituted "...could be run by a part-time chairman (who would hire an administrator) instead of by a full-time chairman as it is presently. It has been

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COME TO THE CONFERENCE

It's time to get together.

May 22-23 in Washington, DC, NAPNOC will convene a 1½-day conference on Building Cultural Democracy: Cultural Rights, Community Development and Public Policy in the '80s.

The conference is aimed to give neighborhood arts people and friends the opportunity to meet, talk, share perspectives and search for solutions to the future of the neighborhood arts movement -- at a time when changes are coming too quickly to comprehend.

The conference is being held in conjunction with NAPNOC's fifth annual membership meeting, set for the afternoon of Saturday, May 23.

The neighborhood arts movement was helped into being by infusions of urban development and social services money the federal government made available in the '60s and '70s. Since that time, most neighborhood arts conferences have been a matter of grants-getting tips; neighborhood artists' role has been to sit quietly and listen to bureaucrats tell us how to play the game.

Times have changed, and so have the rules. What game will neighborhood arts play now? It's up to the people who make up the movement to determine its future. Building Cultural Democracy will provide a forum for our

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INSIDE: BRITISH ARTS POLITICS

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CROSS COUNTRY CUTS (cont'd from page one)

rumored widely that if that course is taken, actor Charlton Heston would be offered the chairmanship."

Aram Bakshian, Jr., special assistant to the President in the office of public liaison for the arts, humanities and private foundations answered the Post's query on this rumor in the secretive way which has come to be typical of the Reagan administration: "until something is really decided, no one can talk about it."

The general tenor of Washington gossip is that the Reagan administration wants either to do away with the Endowments or to go beyond budget-cutting and make significant changes in the agencies. With the exception of the Charlton Heston flurry, there's been relatively little speculation about the administration's choices to replace NEA Chairman Biddle and NEH Chairman Duffy.

Some people think this means that Biddle and Duffy will remain in place 'til their terms expire, having proven their willingness to cooperate in Stage One of Reagan's reducing plan for the Endowments. Others predict that the President has no intention of replacing the Chairmen, intending instead to use them to preside over the demise of their agencies. Reagan's not talking.

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Every group with CETA jobs we've heard from is preparing to lose those jobs. Some have lost CETA employees already; for them, even more damaging than the loss itself was the unexpected speed with which it hit.

NAPNOC notes has relied on the Center for Community Change's CETA Project, which has been publishing a newsletter called catalyst, for information on CETA. Last week we talked to Ronnie Kweller of the CETA Project who explained something of the haste with which CETA changes were made.

She said that under the Carter administration Congress was late in approving CETA appropriations; the program was authorized by continuing resolution, extending its prior-year appropriation for short periods of time. So the national CETA office couldn't complete new contracts with grantees until CETA was reauthorized, and by the time that became possible the Reagan administration was in.

Ronnie's project got "a three-month extension under the continuing resolution for November, December and January...then we got another two-month extension for February and March and then by about March 30 the Reagan people had finally completed their review on us and everybody else and informed us that we would just have two months more." So by the end of May, the CCC's CETA Project will be no more.

June Gutfleisch is head of Community Arts of San Diego (CA) County, one of the neighborhood arts programs for which CETA has been the mainstay. June's support situation changed with lightning speed.

Pete Wilson, Mayor of San Diego and chair of a Reagan transition team, recommended last November that CETA public service programs be eliminated. When the San Diego

CETA prime sponsor got word of this recommendation, "they suspended all contracts they'd approved to begin January 1. We had signed a contract with them for \$200,000. The Marquis Public Theater, which is the other large CETA arts program, signed one for about \$150,000 and those contracts never went into effect. In other words, they exercised their option to cancel before they were started...Under our (CETA) regulations the Policy Board has ten days to review any contracts they've approved over \$10,000. They put them on hold when the Bill cutting Title VI came out of conference and then said they were not going to execute any contracts because they didn't know what the new regulations on unemployment taxes were, how they would affect them, how much money that would cost them... All the PSE Special Projects slots in San Diego are gone forever...."

Misha Berson of the Theatre Communications Center of the Bay Area in San Francisco tells the same kind of story elsewhere in California: "...a lot of people were expecting to have a little breathing space -- this happened to a lot of people, like the Los Angeles Theatre Alliance, which was very CETA-heavy, it had something like 40-50 CETA jobs. They had a contingency plan about how they would get out of the hole if CETA was cut off, but it got completely ruined because they lost everybody at the end of March or April. Their contingency plan was that they would have people until September who could do some kinds of fundraising...."

* * *

We talked to Judy Baca of the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) in Venice (Los Angeles County), CA. SPARC has lost its 20 CETA staff members already, leaving a paid staff of two, and three or four others who run workshops and volunteer substantial amounts of time.

SPARC is trying to make the transition from running as an ongoing program to functioning as a kind of cooperative for artists who want to do socially-relevant public artwork, something Judy feels is feasible. She sees real possibilities for working with advisory committees that help with special projects, and for raising money on a project basis instead of having to maintain staff and funding for a year-round program.

SPARC is sited in an old police station leased from the City, complete with jail and sergeant's desk; they share the building with the Beyond Baroque Foundation and Artists in Prison. The City has planned eventually to tear down the jail and build a new library. SPARC and friends are pushing for a West Side Cultural Center -- including a library -- utilizing the existing building, and have a plan and architectural renderings they've offered as an alternative to the City Council. Convincing the Council is the hurdle: But if it's successfully cleared, Judy thinks SPARC can use the opportunity to interest more private money, which so far has been as difficult for neighborhood arts groups in Los Angeles to come by as it has been elsewhere.

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SPARC's optimism and resiliency in the face of drastic changes in support -- and therefore the organization itself -- is not

unique. The Theatre Project in Baltimore will lose its 25 CETA employees by May 7. According to Director Philip Arnoult, the Theatre Project is not alone: All 3,000 CETA PSEs in Baltimore will be out of work by then; the City is letting them go in the order they were hired.

After the CETA cuts, the Theatre Project staff will number 20 performers, administrators, technicians. The Theatre Project will abandon one neighborhood history theater project entirely, and cut back on others.

But Philip feels they've taken the cuts well. In his terms, the Theatre Project has been able to "aikido" it -- to take a punch and turn it into positive, forward energy. "We're really up here. Things have been cloudy since pre-November the fourth, right? But...we've been able to make the turn in terms of programming. The major programs that we've got are still in place. And the kind of clarity that we're finding -- and the aikido-ing of it all. Whenever we sit in a planning meeting now we have A.C. -- 'remember now, with is After CETA' -- and you look at things differently. I just hope that most of the institutions who have either been using CETA creatively -- or just using it -- have found themselves some alternative strategies, holding patterns, or whatever. My guess is that I'm afraid we're going to be in the minority."

Thinking about the meaning of the CETA cuts is more than plotting a new strategy for survival. In many places, an end to CETA support for neighborhood arts staff will be the end of an era in which neighborhood arts groups changed from tiny, flexible, catalytic organizations to staff-rich (if otherwise poor) employment and training programs.

In terms of the survival of individual organizations, long-lived neighborhood arts programs like SPARC and the Theatre Project may "aikido it" and temper their unhappiness over the demise of CETA with a sigh of relief in returning to an earlier, smaller, more flexible model of organization.

But groups for which CETA provided seed money -- those which owe their existence to federal job support -- may not find the resources to retrench and go on. And as to the question of growing unemployment among artists -- many of them neighborhood artists -- the loss of CETA is a crushing blow.

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From Joseph Richardson of Fargo, North Dakota, we have the following thoughts on the controversial issue of professionalization, stimulated by a reading of the NEA's 1979 Annual Report and NAPNOC notes #8's article on the Heritage Foundation.

"Out here, on the northern plains, our arts groups tend to be volunteer operations. There are less than five professional arts administrators in the state of North Dakota. The volunteer run organizations do not have the capital to hire professional staff to compete for the available grants. Without professional staff members, they are immediately disqualified to apply for many of the NEA grants. There are few foundations who will support start-up costs for arts organ-

izations. There is not one foundation large enough to be listed in the Foundation Directory located in North Dakota. An arts organization that does not have professional staff is thought to be inferior to those having staff. Capital concentrations large enough to warrant corporate or even independent giving programs are not to be found within the state. Most of our money goes to, and comes from, places like Minneapolis/St. Paul, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc. The small manufacturers in the state are owned by non-resident companies or mortgaged to Minneapolis banks (several of which have branches in North Dakota). Our coal (really just high-grade dirt) and oil fields are mined by large outside concerns. And, just to place the cherry on the cake, we are granted, by the Department of War, two wonderful Strategic Air Command bases and enough nuclear warhead capability to render the planet unsafe for human habitation. If ever there were a nuclear war, we would not have to worry about the wounded in North Dakota, we would all be vaporized. So, what we are is remarkably similar to what you might expect to find in a colony. O.K., back to the arts. Looking at the NEA 1979 Annual Report, I find one category that says something for us:

'...recognize that Expansion Arts is a point of entry for developing groups that are established in and reflect the culture of minority, blue collar, rural and low income communities.'

"This is for us, right? Wrong. In fact this works out to be pretty close to a lot of other bull shit put out by the NEA to sell rural, blue collar and minority liberals in Congress on the NEA program. If Expansion Arts is what it says it is, then why is there only one panel member out of forty-four from a city with a population less than 150,000? Not one panel member is from a community with a population less than 50,000. How receptive will Expansion Arts be toward proposals written by rural blue collar volunteers? I looked. Pretty dismal. Now turn to Expansion Arts' latest guidelines and you'll find that we must have professionally directed organizations. Well, no wonder blue collar rural groups have scoring grants from this source. In 1979, 25% of the Expansion Arts panel members were from New York; 22% (21.79%) of their grants went to New York. Well, hell, that's not too bad. New York has an average representation on all NEA panels (according to the 1979 report) of 26.96% for which they received 23.95% of all reported grants. If the NEA is cut back to discipline panels only, New York should do even better. For individual arts disciplines, New York's average panel membership is 30.4% for which they received 30.3% of all individual discipline grants. If they had their calculators running, they could not have worked a closer relationship of money to manpower. I believe we will see even a greater percentage of the NEA budget poured into the Manhattan Province in the future. New York is the center of this country. It is both the center of culture (which is spooned out to us bimboes over the networks, touring programs and publishing) and the center of commerce (major corporations headquarter there)."

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Appalshop in Whitesburg, KY is located in a rural region too, one in which the economic circumstances are remarkable similar to those Joseph Richardson relates. The difference is that central Appalachia has been the target of many federal programs: Rep. Carl Perkins (D-KY) estimates that 80% of his East Kentucky constituents receive some kind of federal subsidy.

Appalshop has been able to find federal help to build its programs, including support from the NEA. Appalshop has no CETA money, so hasn't felt the early effects of the ERP, but if the ERP passes and the Appalachian Regional Commission is eliminated and NEA and other federal agencies cut, the change in Appalshop's financial base will be considerable. According to Marty Newell, "We're looking at a much more conservative approach to production and project development -- the high-risk cash seems to be going the way of the dinosaurs."

Dudley Cocke of Roadside Theatre at Appalshop was one of several neighborhood arts people to respond to an editorial in the Knoxville News-Sentinel which condemned the Endowments for "acting like Medicis with tax monies. They have, in brief, been using revenues from the working class to serve the cultural elites."

"No doubt dreadful howls," the News-Sentinel continued, "will greet the effort to withhold a \$750,000 handout to the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Just think -- the Met may have to curtail its season and the poor will have fewer opportunities to don tiaras and ermine wraps and attend performances of 'Carmen.'"

From Dudley's reply: "I agree with the implication in your Feb. 21 editorial 'Reagan and the Poor People' that it's wrong for the tax dollars of Tennesseans via the National Endowment for the Arts to go to support opera in New York City. But in the last five years the Metropolitan Opera has become less of a representative example of what the Endowment funds, although I believe it and like institutions still receive a disproportionate share of the Endowment's budget..."

"There has been a growing awareness in most all of the Endowment's programs of the cultural diversity of this nation. So now there are programs at the Endowment that support bluegrass music as well as opera, professional theaters in Knoxville as well as New York City. For many of the smaller, community-based theaters, like the one with which I am associated in Kentucky, the Endowment was the leading partner in what has grown into a three-way partnership of state and community support."

"The danger in President Reagan's proposed halving of the Endowment's budget is that it will cause a return to the old arts policy of 10 years ago when it was the 'metropolitan operas' that got all the money -- this at a time when the money is just beginning to be divided more equitably...."

Wanda Cody Harding of the CityArts Program of the Greater Knox Council for the Arts responded to the same editorial. Here are some excerpts from her reply: "While I agree with President Reagan's attempts to reduce the budget, I do feel that it is some-

what inequitable that the Arts Endowment, whose budget represents only one five-hundredth of the total proposed cuts, should be ridiculed so unjustly. The Expansion Arts program of the NEA is committed to quality arts programs on a neighborhood level. If the proposed cuts become a reality, I am afraid that these are the programs that will be the first to go."

CityArts is funded by a grant from Expansion Arts matched by the City of Knoxville; the Greater Knox Council for the Arts has also gotten CETA support, making federal sources account for most of its budget -- and most of these sources are jeopardized by the ERP.

Ruby Lerner, Director of Alternate ROOTS (Regional Organization of Theatres - South) told the Times-Sentinel that the work of ROOTS companies stands "...as living testimony to quality arts at the community level and we have made great strides in reaching new, non-traditional audiences and in promoting indigenous cultural opportunities in the South."

"We have made these advances due, in large measure, to the vision and leadership of the National Endowment for the Arts, particularly through its Expansion Arts and Folk Arts Programs. The Endowment has provided support prior to the funding of these efforts by state and local arts agencies. There is no question that the substantial percentage of Endowment funding has gone toward the support of major cultural institutions patronized by the 'cultural elites.' However, over the last few years, a new consciousness has emerged at the Endowment -- an awareness of the importance of support for community-based arts efforts. But their work in this area has scarcely begun. Without a history of the 15 years of continuous support the Endowment has provided institutions like the Metropolitan Opera, community-based organizations are not yet in a position to generate support from other sources."

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Ruby also sent us what she calls "a statement in support of indigenous art" to share. The following is from an essay entitled "The Regional Motive" by Wendell Berry.

"The regional motive is false when the myths and abstractions of a place are valued apart from the place itself; that is regionalism as nationalism. It is also false when the region is made by the standard of its own experience -- when, that is, perspective is narrowed by condescension or pride so that a man is unable to bring to bear on the life of his place as much as he is able to know. That is exploitive regionalism. If they had written under its standard Faulkner would have had to disavow that part of his mind that knew the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'; Thoreau's knowledge of the Orient would have been a mere flourish, not useful; William Carlos Williams would have had to shrug off the influence of Villon and Chaucer and Fabre."

"The regionalism that I adhere to could be defined simply as local life aware of itself. It would tend to substitute for the myths and stereotypes of a region a particular knowledge of the life of the place one lives in and intends to continue to live in. It pertains to living as much as to writing, and it pertains to living before it pertains to

writing. The motive of such regionalism is the awareness that local life is intricately dependent, for its quality but also for its continuance, upon local knowledge.

"Without a complex knowledge of one's place, and without the faithfulness to one's place on which such knowledge depends, it is inevitable that the place will be used carelessly, and eventually destroyed. Without such knowledge and faithfulness, moreover, the culture of a country will be superficial and decorative, functional only insofar as it may be a symbol of prestige, the affectation of an elite or 'in' group. And so I look upon the sort of regionalism that I am talking about not just as a recurrent literary phenomenon, but as a necessity of civilization and survival."

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The San Francisco Bay Area has one of the densest concentrations of neighborhood arts activity in the U.S. It was in San Francisco that the use of CETA to support neighborhood arts work was pioneered; by the end of March, many Bay area groups that depend upon CETA support found themselves playing in a whole new ballgame.

The loss of federal funds will have more significant consequences in California than in many other states, because neighborhood arts groups there have few local grant sources since the passage of Proposition 13, which limited property taxes in 1978. (Copies of NAPNOC's August 1978 report, "California Community Arts Under Proposition 13," are still available at \$1 for members and \$3 for non-members, postage included.)

When Proposition 13 passed, there was much talk of the tax savings "windfall" corporations would receive, and much speculation about the likelihood of private business using this "windfall" to make contributions to nonprofit groups. But as Bob Martin of the People's Theatre Festival in San Francisco says, "most people feel that certainly community arts hasn't made any progress here yet."

So neighborhood arts people in California are skeptical about the possibilities for finding corporate support to replace lost federal funds, though all the Reaganomics rhetoric of course calls on "the private sector" to pitch in and fulfill formerly public responsibilities. Misha Berson of the Theatre Communications Center of the Bay Area notes that even the theaters that have found corporate support in the past will have a difficult time getting it again if they lose "leverage like NEA funds," and notes that "CETA will really hurt community arts folks the worst and I don't know what alternatives are available...."

On the question of private support, Misha notes "people are not getting anything from private sources. It's very interesting because we get all the OOBA and TCG material and they do a lot better with corporate sources back east than we do. In fact, I noticed one giant insurance company had given TCG quite a sizable grant, and I checked it out on our end because it's a national organization and I called their main office and they don't even have a community contributions or corporate contributions depart-

ment on the West Coast...that kind of giving is very centered in world headquarters...."

Another Californian told us that corporate support for neighborhood arts is unpromising there: "I think that's bullshit, but of course I'm trying. I mean I really think that's a crock...but I am certainly making every effort. I think I picked up about \$800 the other day to pay off a typewriter or something like that...that's doing it the hard way but I guess if I want to try it, that's the way to do it...."

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For many neighborhood arts groups the question of corporate support is not purely a matter of finances. Some groups' work carries an anti-corporate political message; others have reservations about accepting funds from big business.

Several people we've been in touch with express the hope that progressive institutions and organizations within the community will take increasing responsibility for supporting related cultural work. Bob Feldman of the United Mime Workers in Champaign, IL, has written "we plan to try to work more with labor organizations. Unions are just beginning to become culturally involved, and funding exists, but the precedent is just being established."

For a group like United Mime Workers, which according to Bob depends "largely on people sponsoring us for residencies...as cuts begin affecting them it will have a definite effect on us."

A politically-conscious neighborhood artist writes: "We intend to cut costs: give up our office, switch to a P.O. Box and message machine and perhaps give up writing grants altogether -- i.e., return to a loose co-op group for ad hoc 'guerilla' political projects and for helping each other with gigs, etc."

* * *

Courtesy of Hamish Sandison of Washington, DC, the first entry in our "One Law for The Rich" Department:

"Penny-wise and pound-foolish? Critics are grumbling over the Reagan's decision to give back the \$50,000 appropriated by Congress to redecorate the White House and instead rely on private donations. The complaint: Since most of the \$823,000 donated so far came from individuals in the 50 percent tax bracket, the deductible gifts are costing the Treasury \$300,000 or more." (from U.S. News & World Report, April 6, 1981.)

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Keep NAPNOC notes posted on the ERP at home. If you have reactions to the proposed cuts, strategies for replacing lost funds, reports on current events in your part of the country, send them along to NAPNOC notes, P.O. Box 3036, Washington, DC 20010, or call NAPNOC at (202)667-4200.

Thank you and good luck.

BRITISH ARTS POLITICS: HUGH JENKINS' STORY

"...there is no line to be drawn between the arts and entertainment; high skill can be wasted on trash: and trash can be transmuted by skill into something like art; all art has an economic base; the sources of finance for art and entertainment must be various; in the arts there must be many employers and consumers; artists can easily be corrupted by money and even more easily lost for ever because of lack of money; that to produce an apex of high art it is necessary to have a wide based pyramid of competence; that geniuses do not spring out of nowhere; art reflects the society that begets it but also influences that society; art can as easily be killed by Government neglect as by Government suppression; it is the duty of Government to provide all those art forms which cannot be sustained by other sources of finance and to provide means for all its people to have access to them; that developments in the arts and communications frequently foreshadow the general trend and the direction in which society is moving. As Oscar Wilde said, life imitates art."

These are the words of Hugh Jenkins, Minister for the Arts in Great Britain during the Labour Government of Harold Wilson in 1974-76, Labour Member of Parliament for many years, officer of British Actors Equity, socialist and anti-nuclear activist.

The structure of British government is different from our own: Political differences between the Arts Council (whose funds are granted by Parliament through the Arts Minister and then sub-granted by the Council and its panels) and the Arts Minister -- and indeed, between the Arts Minister and his own civil service staff -- defeated some of the proposals for change and reform made by Hugh Jenkins during his tenure as Arts Minister.

Nevertheless, it is not inaccurate to say that Jenkins' position in government paralleled the position now held by Livingston Biddle, Jr., Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Imagine these words from Biddle or any of the other plutocratic Endowment Chairmen of past years: "I was on friendly terms with a number of establishment figures but they did not like my policies and why should they? I aimed to take their power, their influence, their authority from them and who would not wish to get rid of a fellow who wanted to do that?"

The establishment did get rid of Hugh Jenkins as Arts Minister: Besides his "natural" opposition outside the Labour Party, he also faced difficulties ranging from incomprehension to active hostility inside his own party. He found what advocates of cultural democracy in this country have found: That even people who are normally thoughtful and progressive about social issues hold unexamined, elitist opinions on cultural policy matters -- if they are aware of them at all.

The quotations cited above are from Hugh Jenkins' book The Culture Gap: An Experience of Government and the Arts (Marion Boyars, 1979, 99 Main St., Salem, NH 03079, \$15.00).

The book makes interesting reading on several grounds: To see the intelligence, energy and conviction Jenkins brings to his work; to get a candid look at the workings of Britain's government, quite different from U.S. government; and to see how far Jenkins' concerns diverge from those of our public arts authorities.

Some of Jenkins' concerns have a familiar ring: For example, he struggled to make the Arts Council of Great Britain a more representative body, to dispel both the sense and substance of elitism. But he was opposed by entrenched authority and made little progress.

His other concerns are less familiar but nonetheless interesting. Jenkins favored the establishment of a Public Lending Right: He pressed hard, though unsuccessfully, for legislation that would establish that a royalty should be paid to authors each time their books were borrowed from the public library. A ceiling would be placed on royalty payments and the excess from the borrowing of blockbuster best-sellers would help to keep less commercial authors alive.

Jenkins worked for the passage of a Wealth Tax whereby large accumulations of property would be subject to a tax of from 1% to 5%. Part of the debate on the Tax centered on the question of exemption for certain types of property. Opponents of the Wealth Tax sought to maximize exemptions and thereby to weaken the proposal. The most often-invoked exemption concerned "The National Heritage" -- works of art and antiquities. Jenkins sensibly felt that exempting works of art would accelerate the already-staggering inflation of the art market and encourage further hoarding of art objects in private hands. The public debate which ensued was heated and sometimes underhanded and the proposal died.

From a neighborhood arts perspective, Jenkins' omissions are significant too. His book makes no mention of community arts work (as neighborhood arts is called in Britain), though during his tenure as Arts Minister the Arts Council issued its report on Community Arts which first gave official recognition to the fact that the "Arts Council...would fail to carry out its duties under the charter if it did not give some support to community arts."

From our side of the Atlantic, the most exciting development in Britain during the last fifteen years has been the growth of its community arts movement and the pioneering work of its town artists; but Jenkins apparently doesn't concur in this assessment. He came to his role as Arts Minister from his work as Assistant General Secretary for British Actors' Equity; most of his attention as Arts Minister went to the concerns of conventional professional artists and institutions, building a new National Theatre, increasing its grant, and so on.

Though Jenkins' political opponents discouraged his activism, the structure of British government encouraged it. Harold Wilson became Prime Minister in 1974 because Labour had the largest number of seats in Parliament; it then became his job as Prime Minister to create a Government. Hugh Jenkins had been Shadow Spokesman on the Arts: That is, in 1973, Harold Wilson as the Labour Party's leader had asked Jenkins to function in

the Parliament as the Labour Party's counterpart to the Tory Arts Minister then in office. Often the Shadow Ministers become actual Ministers when control of the government passes from one party to another; the shadow system prepares the party out of power to take control of the government on-- by American standards-- incredibly short notice.

Thus, when Wilson became Prime Minister and appointed Jenkins Arts Minister, Jenkins knew that he had a mandate to push for Labour-inspired changes in policy and program -- and that since he might be opposed not only by the opposition party but by the civil servants within his new office, he had better push hard and fast.

We interviewed Hugh Jenkins here in Washington during his visit the week of March 22. He had come to this country in his capacity as head of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and to talk about his arts experience. We first heard Jenkins speak at a meeting of the National Endowment for the Arts' Fellows, and later in the week in a conversation arranged by Hamish Sandison of the British-American Arts Association.

Jenkins' book mentions ACES -- an acronym for Arts, Communications, Entertainment and Sport -- the idea that there should be a single Cabinet Minister with responsibility for government activity in all these areas, put forward by the Labour Party in the mid-'70s. Hugh Jenkins endorses this kind of broad thinking about coordinated policy, and in our interview said "...it is now an official part of the Labour Party program, so that there's a reasonable chance that it will appear in a Labour Party manifesto for an election...and so, if Labour gets back there's a reasonable chance that a more coherent policy toward the arts and entertainment area generally will come about...."

Again, it's most interesting to consider the differences between the British situation and our own: Though the Republican Party is currently in power, there is no Democratic "shadow" arts spokesperson, and the Democratic Party has no proposal for restructuring national cultural policy should it regain the Presidency. The Republicans are fast laying to rest the fiction that arts policy is a non-partisan, non-political area of government responsibility, but the Democrats have yet to show interest in developing competing policy.

We told Hugh Jenkins that a friend in Britain had written us that "community arts groups are dropping like flies" and we asked him to comment. In response, Jenkins mentioned the British Arts Council's traditional "arm's-length" policy, saying that the Council took the stance that it had no interest in the content of the work of the groups it has funded -- the Council ought to assure financial accountability and ascertain that an applicant organization has community support, but should not approve or disapprove of the politics of the plays a theater produces, for example. As a general rule, groups funded by the Arts Council go on receiving money year after year; the grant becomes a kind of entitlement.

Jenkins feared this policy was changing to one of greater control, and told a familiar-sounding story: He said that the British Arts Council had been threatened with heavy budget cuts by the Thatcher Government, and had prepared a plan for making cuts in anticipation of the budget reductions.

But the Arts Council's budget wasn't cut after all. Nevertheless, they cut some 40 groups "...off completely on their grant. It was a ruthless and brutal activity because without telling anybody they simply announced a few weeks ago that these organizations were to be dropped. Which means...in many cases the organizations will die...unless they're able to find money from other sources. In most cases, they won't be able to...."

Since the Arts Council's budget wasn't cut, what was done with the money saved by cutting forty-odd former grantees? Jenkins said the Council simply increased the grants of some recipient organizations. "What has happened is the Arts Council has become a much more selective organization as a result of this change and that seems to me to be a deliberate policy change and not one imposed by a cut from the government because in fact no such cut has yet been imposed."

Reaganomics and Thatcher economics spring from the same sources, and their programs for change in the U.S. and Britain are much the same. In Britain, the policies of the Arts Council were moved fairly far to the right with only the threat of a budget cut as incitement. We shall see how far the effort to make cultural policy through the budget process succeeds here, but we would do well to heed Great Britain's example. Hugh Jenkins sees the task thusly: During his tenure as Arts Minister "we had the basis upon which we could have expanded. Now, the basis has to be recreated afresh."

Don Adams
Arlene Goldbard

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Help the grassroots grow. Community groups in New York City are looking for films, videotapes and slideshows that relate to local issues and concerns. Some will be purchased. We're especially interested in works made for or about community groups in other cities.

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208 West 13th Street,
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(212) 620-0877

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COME TO THE CONFERENCE (cont'd from page one)

deliberations in these three main issue areas:

CULTURAL RIGHTS Federal cultural policy is rapidly moving to the right. It looks like arts support programs under the Reagan administration will become even more skewed in favor of major Western cultural institutions. What about cultural rights for the 98% who don't make up those institutions' audiences? What are the prospects and what can we do about them?

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Neighborhood arts groups have played a major role in the development of their communities, but the nature and purpose of public support is shifting. How will neighborhood arts people participate in community and economic development from now on? Are there new survival strategies to be explored?

PUBLIC POLICY From a neighborhood arts perspective, the last fifteen years have been a struggle to reform public policy to recognize cultural democracy -- with only minimal gains. Can the government just pack up its marbles and go home? What form should our work for democratic public policy take now? Where should we be working and how?

Discussion in these three areas, with keynote talks and presentations by activists to spur the conversation on, will fill the entire first day of the Building Cultural Democracy conference -- Friday, May 22. Saturday morning participants will focus on the future of the neighborhood arts movement and their own local programs. Throughout the conference people will be available to answer questions, make referrals and recommend publications and other resources to neighborhood arts groups with specific problems and interests.

On Saturday afternoon, NAPNOC members will hold their fifth annual membership meeting, which will decide the future role of NAPNOC as a national network of mutual support for the neighborhood arts movement. New Board members will also be elected at the meeting.

Both the Building Cultural Democracy conference and NAPNOC's annual meeting will be held in the Washington Humanities and Arts Center (the old Lansburgh's Department Store) in downtown Washington, DC.

Participation is free to paid-up NAPNOC members. Non-members are welcome to participate in the conference; a \$10 fee will be charged to non-members.

For more information about Building Cultural Democracy and NAPNOC's annual meeting, contact NAPNOC at P.O. Box 3036, Washington, DC 20010, or (202)667-4200.

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Building Cultural Democracy is part of CULTURAL DEMOCRACY MONTH, a nationwide celebration of cultural diversity and cultural rights. NAPNOC has invited people all over the country to use this opportunity to make their communities aware of their work, and aware of the threat to cultural democracy represented by the vocal and powerful far right.

We hope you will join NAPNOC in celebrating the strength of our multicultural society. Throughout May, dedicate your performances, exhibits, seminars, festivals, murals, publications and other events and activities to CULTURAL DEMOCRACY MONTH and to the simple but important principle it stands for. Let us know what shape your participation takes -- send us copies of flyers, programs, articles and any other documentation. And look for next month's special issue of NAPNOC notes, which will focus on cultural democracy in the U.S.

NAPNOC

neighborhood arts programs
national organizing committee

P.O. Box 3036, Washington, DC 20010