

NAPNOC

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THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION: A Stalking Horse for Reagan's Policies?

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While President-elect Ronald Reagan caught up on his reading in California and the nation's press was consumed with speculation about cabinet appointments, the "New Right" launched a major attack on cultural democracy and so far, has had no problem handling the opposition.

On November 26 the New York Times carried a front-page article on recommendations for the new administration's arts and humanities policy made by the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank headquartered here in Washington, DC. The next few weeks brought a stream of articles and editorials, most favorable to the Heritage report, notably a Times editorial citing too much "politicization" at the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, to the detriment of "quality and competence" and calling for funds not to be cut, but to be "redeployed."

This surprising concern about cultural policy -- not usually a front-page issue -- stirred up a small storm of alarm and speculation. Though there are no formal links between the Heritage Foundation and the new administration, rumor in Washington has it that the Foundation's 20-section Mandate for Leadership report was requested by Edwin Meese III, Reagan's closest advisor and head of the transition effort. Whether or not this rumor is true, there are many direct connections between the project teams that prepared the Foundation's "blueprint for a conservative American government" and the actual Reagan transition teams. For example, Michael Joyce, chairman of the Heritage Foundation arts and humanities committee, also appears on Reagan's transition team for the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities.

A Clever Strategy

Whether carefully planned or just a lucky break, the Heritage Foundation's report could hardly be improved as a strategy for Reagan's New Right supporters: Have a private institution front for New Right critiques. If poorly received, they can easily be repudiated. But if they win public acceptance, the administration's most conservative elements will have accomplished a great deal of basic policy restructuring even before the inauguration.

The use of a private agency for policy development also obscures some conflict issues that might have arisen if this work had been carried out by a public agency. The ever-useful Michael Joyce provides another example: We find that his credentials include directing the John M. Olin Foundation, whose support
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THE CONTINUING SAGA OF THE HISPANIC AMERICAN ARTS TASK FORCE

In the case of the Hispanic American Arts Task Force and the National Endowment for the Arts, the jury is still out. A committee drawn from the Task Force will present its proposal for an Information Center for Hispanic American Arts to the National Council on the Arts (NCA) meeting here in Washington February 13-15.

That proposal -- and the way it came into being -- are now the subjects of heated controversy among Hispanic American artists across the country. Not until the proposal is put forward and we hear the response of both the National Council and the many artists and groups concerned will we be able to evaluate the outcome.

The seeds of conflict which have plagued the Task Force were sown at its inception. In October, 1977, Acting Chairman Michael Straight (formerly Deputy Chairman under Nancy Hanks) responded to criticism of the Endowment's lack of support for Hispanic American arts by inviting some artists and administrators to spend a day at Washington's Mayflower Hotel, preparing to make a presentation on the subject at the National Council on the Arts' November meeting. Straight invited Jacinto Quirarte (Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Texas at San Antonio and head of the Research Center for the Arts there) to head the panel making the presentation. Straight's choice of panelists leaned heavily westward; but after pressure from Puerto Rican and Cuban groups in the east the panel was ex-
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HERITAGE FOUNDATION, cont'd

of the Heritage Foundation is boasted in brass at the entrance to Heritage's Capitol Hill headquarters. (No mention has been made of this interesting relation in newspaper coverage.)

Throughout this key transition period Heritage's tactical control of information has been astounding: Shortly after seeing the Times article we called the Foundation to ask for a copy of the recommendations. We were told they would not be available to the public for nearly two months; the report is scheduled to appear in book form late this month.

But as other media began to pick up on the Heritage report -- and particularly its cultural recommendations -- our concern for reviewing the report grew. We learned that the Foundation had begun to allow the public to read selected portions of the report in its offices. Calling the Foundation, we were told that the person in charge of scheduling these readings was going on vacation for three weeks and we'd have to wait. More phone calls, more pressing, and we were able to go down that very afternoon. Armed with pens and paper, a tape recorder and a set of snappy comebacks should the Foundation decide its report was once more unavailable, we raced to Capitol Hill.

Going Through Changes

We weren't sure what to expect upon our arrival at the Foundation's headquarters, a row of recently-restored town houses on the speculative fringe of Capitol Hill. We had been told in advance that we were not to Xerox or remove material from the premises; as we hadn't been specifically banned from doing so, we were prepared to read sections of the report into our tape recorder.

While we waited we perused a small brochure entitled "Where The New Ideas Are Coming From...", which sketched the functions of the six year-old "public policy research institute." Though no financial information was included (nor, we were told, are there any available copies of the annual report), brass plaques throughout the office bore legends attesting to the support of various members of the Coors family and other right-wing family and corporate philanthropies.

Once escorted to the reading area (which we shared with a Heritage staffer), the KGB-like atmosphere which greeted our efforts to win access to the reports fell away: We were even given permission to plug our tape recorder into the wall socket.

We made another trip to the Foundation office a week or two later. Once again, we were first told it would be impossible to schedule a visit for a couple of weeks. Again we pressed and again we were able to review the reports we wanted that day.

We concluded that the Heritage Foundation didn't want to deny us access to its reports, but just wanted to make sure we had to work for access -- and that we knew by whose graces permission had been granted.

The Arts & Humanities According to Heritage

The Heritage Foundation's arts and

humanities recommendations comprise little more than was reported in newspaper accounts. They reveal no evidence of research -- no statistics, examples or quotations (save a citation of the Endowments' enabling legislation) and plenty of glaring errors -- certainly none of the "scholarly excellence" invoked on every page. The report is a collection of its authors' opinions.

An admonition early in the report sets the tone: *"As a true friend of democracy, the NEH can teach the nation the limits of equalitarian impulse."*

The Heritage Foundation puts forward the notion that the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities have gone too far in the "equalitarian" direction: Instead of supporting "projects and programs which truly are in the realm of humanities," they have supported "sociological crusades, political action, or political education."

"The NEA," it continues, "spends millions of dollars yearly to fund programs and policies which are unconcerned in any way with enduring artistic accomplishments." Instead, "vastly larger funds are allocated to satisfy yet another demand, that of politically-powerful groups who expect to receive public funds in an amount commensurate with their strategic electoral strength, and with how loudly their self-appointed spokesmen can complain."

Decoding The Report

On December 15, after the NY Times' favorable editorial, Mr. Joyce was pressed by National Public Radio commentator Sanford Ungar to offer examples to substantiate his claims: Who are these "politically-powerful groups"? What are these "sociological crusades"? Joyce said that the NEH had made a grant to Working Women, a Cleveland-based organization of office workers, for research and study into the history of their struggle to improve conditions. He also said that the National Endowment for the Arts had supported prison arts programs -- and that neither of these grants had "anything to do with our cultural heritage in the highest sense of that word."

Since the Heritage report itself lacks specifics, these two examples are quite illuminating: They make clear the meaning behind code words like "excellence" and "politicization" by demonstrating the bias against women, poor people, minority people and the institutionalized that runs through Heritage's recommendations.

The arts section of the report recommends that *"...in the next administration, distinctions be made between serious art for art's sake and art for the sake of social service, and the NEA set priority on, indeed exist for, the cultivation of serious culture."* The humanities section likewise notes that *"A major issue in redirecting and reorganizing the agency will be to establish the principle of scholarly excellence as the criterion for budgeting and program definition."*

Seen in light of these examples of unacceptable grants offered by Mr. Joyce, Heritage's calls for "scholarly excellence" and "serious art for art's sake" are unmasked as nostalgia for a dream of traditional cul-

tural institutions, where the humanities are the exclusive province of the academies, and the arts the property of high-culture institutions. That other people in the society have a right to their own histories and cultures is nowhere mentioned.

National Endowment for the Humanities

The Heritage report on arts and humanities is low on specifics, but here are some additional recommendations it makes for NEH:

"A terrible disservice has been done to the humanities by the expectation -- and sometimes the insistence and demand -- that they be integrated into public policy...Such situations have occurred with regrettable frequency in the state-based programs."

"The current fascination with media and public programs must be reversed."

"An immediate administrative act consistent with the policy direction set for NEH would be to rescind guidelines for racial or ethnic quotas applied to the grant review and evaluation processes...If excellence is the measure, then competition before academic peers must be the gauge."

"In 1977, the academic community became fearful that the new NEH administration would neglect research and scholarship in favor of popular activities. While this change has indeed occurred, the effects...are still not fully apparent...to obtain funds for increased Research support...two larger programs could be folded into other budget line items: The State and Local History program, which has turned into a program of 'outreach' for often unqualified recipients, and the Translations program, which is an idea in search of a definition as well as scholars. Abolishing these two artificially constructed program categories would not in the slightest affect the availability of support for research, but would save money going to contrived or third-rate projects."

* On the Division of Special Programs: *"It is likely that all the programs in this Division, upon scrutiny and evaluation, will prove to be unjustified."* These include the NEH's Youth Programs, Science, Technology and Human Values Program, and Program Development/Special Projects program, about which the report says: *"It is in this area that most of the politically-motivated funding originates."*

"Resolution of the problems described in this report should improve the work of the National Endowment for the Humanities, but it will take time to reverse such undesirable current trends as declaring all NEH meetings public and releasing panelists' names before review sessions."

National Endowment for the Arts

Heritage's recommendations for NEA are even less detailed than those for NEH, but again their message is clear:

"...under its current leadership, the NEA is more concerned with politically calculated goals of social policy than with the arts it was created to support...The arts are asked to be everything for everybody, at one and the same time to remedy the perceived ills of society, employ all who want to be artists,

and fill up the leisure hours of an entire population."

"If indeed the next administration's position with regard to NEA shall be characterized by (a) a first priority commitment to the support of serious culture, (b) the promotion of the long-term fiscal health of arts institutions, and (c) cultivation of audiences with a true desire for high quality artistic experience, then certain budgetary reforms may be appropriate."

"The activities of the NEA must be based in the future on a decision to turn away from the goal of public success and approval, toward the support of artistic creation. The arts that NEA funds must support belong primarily to the area of high culture."

"The present exploitation of the device of matching grants as a means of directing private funds to the accomplishment of government goals must be ended, and the commercial media, most importantly in the area both of pay and broadcast television, must be urged to present art under commercial sponsorship rather than be allowed, as they have in the past, to abdicate their cultural responsibilities to the public communications empire."

Additionally, the report bemoans the growth of arts bureaucracy; criticizes politicians for taking credit for NEA and NEH monies flowing to their constituents; criticizes the NEA for having too much part-time staff; says that senior staff at NEH ought to rotate, that media programs should be more cost-effective, that audience development must be downplayed in recognition of the small, select audience for high art, and that private support needs to be cultivated.

Cultural Policy in Other Agencies

The Heritage Foundation recommendations on the Endowments are only part of its statements on cultural policy. As every neighborhood arts person knows, public policies and programs in many areas -- jobs, housing and recreation, for example -- affect cultural development and provide potential support for community cultural work. We looked into some of the other Heritage reports and, not surprisingly, found them cut from the same cloth.

The Department of Labor's Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) has been perhaps the largest single source of support for neighborhood arts work. CETA has provided support for jobs in neighborhood arts groups when the NEA and other arts programs have been unable to see past their "professional quality" judgements.

The Heritage Foundation is unhappy about the Department of Labor as a whole: *"The Department of Labor has allowed a general bias to develop in favor of organized labor"* which Heritage believes is reflected in DOL's *"general mistrust of the motives of business."*

But CETA gets the Foundation's strongest disapproval: *"The Employment and Training Administration is currently one of the poorest managed, confused and directionless agencies in the government."* Heritage distrusts the decentralized administration of

CETA, expressing "concern that local elected officials are not in a position to run a good, objective program" and invoking the "need to re-examine CETA as the framework for achieving employment and training."

The report calls for "a firing of all top level personnel, with possible a few exceptions" and especially notes that "The Office of National Programs must be Cleaned Out." It talks about "welfare types" and asserts that CETA has failed in the important mission of teaching people on welfare "how to look for and obtain work" -- no mean feat with double-digit unemployment. Finally, it charges "politicization," especially in Title III programs.

The Heritage report on the Department of the Interior is largely devoted to elaborating the opinion that DOI ought to support "multiple use land management and maximization of resource values, rather than single use and preservation." There are pages and pages of discussion of mineral rights leasing, the Department's role in mineral and oil development on and offshore, and the activities of the Office of Surface Mining and its regulation of strip mining of coal and other minerals.

The Heritage Foundation thinks that the Department of the Interior has been too restrictive and -- here it comes again -- "politicized" in its regulation of minerals development. Heritage sees nothing incompatible about recreation and strip mining, and can't understand why DOI has supported preservation of wilderness over "national needs for energy resources."

The code words here are illustrated by this quotation concerning the Fish and Wildlife and Parks Division, of which the Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS) is a part: "Through its constituent agencies (the Fish and Wildlife and Parks Division) caused more disruption to other programs with (sic) the Department than any other in government...Disruption has occurred primarily due to policy decisions formulated with a mind-set of preservation and enhancement instead of conservation and multiple use (emphasis ours)."

Though HCRS is mentioned for its land use and land acquisition involvement ("HCRS administers the Land and Water Conservation Fund whereby federal dollars are used as a carrot to tantalize state and local governments into developing comprehensive outdoor recreation plans. While this has resulted in a limited degree of environmental enhancement, it has also adversely impacted social and economic values as well as personal freedoms... The continued existence of this agency under a new administration should be carefully evaluated.") no mention is made of its urban recreation program support, nor the arts and recreation pilot program discussed in NAPNOC notes #6.

Reading Between the Lines

This is typical of the Heritage reports: Apparently, they found the arts-related programs of non-arts agencies -- and the cultural impact of these agencies' policies -- too trivial to mention. But if the Heritage recommendations were to become pol-

icy -- if, for example, HCRS was abolished because the administration agreed with Heritage's estimate that it hindered resource development and local initiative -- its cultural programs would surely be abolished too.

In some areas the sub-text of the Heritage reports is even clearer. For instance, the Department of the Interior report has much to say about Indian Affairs, which is typified by the recommendation that the new President should "actively support the policy of Indian self-determination established during the Nixon and Ford administrations," especially by assisting in the development of "their vast mineral resources which consist of one-third of the nation's strippable coal west of the Mississippi and include significant resources of oil, natural gas, uranium, and other important minerals."

This report even offers helpful hints for implementing policy, for example: "When speaking to the question (of Indian land and water rights claims) avoid use of the words 'negotiated compromise' which in the Indian lexicon are equivalents of 'sellout' and 'giveaway.'"

The strategy laid out here is perhaps the baldest directive of any of the Foundation reports we read: Make deals with Indians who want to develop the mineral resources they control under the banner of "self-determination." Cultural questions take a distant back seat to the considerations of profit.

The Heritage Foundation report on the Department of Housing and Urban Development takes as its basic question "Whether or not HUD's primary role is to be that of a fair housing 'enforcement agency,' maintained and strengthened as a 'production agency' or given both responsibilities..." and beyond that, whether the new administration will give "localities the greatest amount of responsibility in the administration of their housing programs..."

Heritage concludes that "the principal deficiency of existing policies in each major area of HUD activity is an excess of federal government control over, and intervention in, what should be local government or market decisions."

The report calls for cutting or eliminating the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Neighborhoods, Voluntary Associations and Consumer Protection; those programs it wishes to preserve it recommends be consolidated with other program offices, including the Office of Neighborhood Self-Help Development.

A major emphasis is placed on "urban enterprise zones" -- severely distressed inner city areas where an array of incentives and indirect subsidies would be offered to attract private business development. The enterprise zone idea is a favorite of the New Right in general: Opposed to direct subsidy for poor neighborhoods, they propose that the federal government make these neighborhoods fair game for speculators and investors by offering tax breaks and possible exemption from minimum wage, environmental and safety regulations.

A general trend proposed for HUD (and

for social welfare and education programs too) is to replace categorical grants programs with unrestricted bloc grants to state and municipal governments. Theoretically, this will allow for greater local autonomy in allocated public funds. In fact, the federal government has often been an advocate for minority interests against unresponsive state and local governments; proposed changes raise fears that, to paraphrase a recent NAACP statement, "state's rights" will once again mean "state's wrongs."

A Clouded Crystal

The Heritage Foundation recommendations are important as indications of New Right thinking on cultural policy, not because they are certain to be adopted as public policy. So far, we have little indication of what the actual transition teams will recommend; at this writing, we understand that no one at NEA and NEH has seen their agencies' transition team reports. In fact, the reports themselves may not have much effect: Veterans of the Carter administration's transition have files full of reports -- many of them making recommendations that might have supported community cultural work -- which were never implemented.

The terms of NEA Chairman Livingston Biddle, Jr. and NEH Chairman Joseph Duffey don't expire until next fall; though either might be pressured to resign earlier, they may well serve out their full terms. If Biddle and Duffey do serve their remaining terms, major changes in the Endowments are probably going to be postponed. At Interior, Labor, and HUD, on the other hand, the new administration will probably be free to move more rapidly.

Though the two Endowments have taken different lines in response to the New Right attack, people are taking the Heritage reports seriously.

The New York Times printed editorial page responses from both Biddle ("*So let us celebrate at this time the manifold wonders of all the arts.*") and Duffey ("*Your December 15 editorial...was misleading and in error on a number of crucial points.*")

Duffey has also prepared a detailed and respectful response (longer, in fact, than the Heritage report on NEH), as its closing demonstrates: "*I hope you will accept my comments in a spirit of respectful difference and exchange. I hope others in examining both our comments will continue this dialogue with the imputation of good faith to those who may hold differing views.*" Biddle's office has told us that he is not planning a response, and other NEA staffers have advised us that they are expected to "keep a low profile."

A One-Sided Debate

Even if it can't be guaranteed that the Heritage reports offer us a preview picture of Reagan's cultural policy, we have a great deal more to learn from them. The New Right has a strategy for affecting public policy, and so far, it seems to be working.

The Heritage Foundation report hasn't been officially released yet -- only "leaked"; the actual transition team reports have yet

to appear; yet the Washington Post and New York Times alone have carried a dozen major articles analyzing the contents of key sections -- especially the arts report and the report calling for an increase in surveillance of "domestic dissidents." This New Right campaign for public policy has been waged entirely in the media. In fact, most of the government agency people we talked to in preparing this article -- staffers at NEA, for instance -- hadn't seen the Heritage Foundation report, only the newspaper coverage.

The New Right and its spokespersons -- mostly men like Michael Joyce, well-to-do, well-credentialed, white, middle-aged and older -- have easy access to the media. The New York Times editorial endorsing Heritage's recommendations was so similar in style and vocabulary to the report itself that it could only have been drafted by the same people. Mr. Joyce was interviewed on National Public Radio, which picked up the story from the Times -- and so it goes.

In contrast, we've been unsuccessful in our own attempts to publicly respond to the Heritage material: Though the Times printed letters from Biddle and Duffey, they've yet to print something from people like ourselves who have yet another perspective on the situation. When we've asked for time to respond on the radio, we've been told "But we already have a response from the Endowment."

Thus the New Right has been permitted to set the terms of this debate on policy. So far, these terms have been limited to charges authored by the Heritage Foundation-- the government's arts and humanities policy is too "politicized," to the detriment of "professional excellence" -- and responses from the Endowments -- that they're not too "politicized" and they do base their judgments on "quality."

Can the Closed Circle Be Broken?

What we are lacking in this closed circle of argument is the other side: The National Endowments are already dominated by an old-boy network of big institutional interests. As it is, they have a shamefully clear record on the issue of cultural democracy: Insignificant support for community-based activities, insignificant recognition for the multicultural nature of our society, and a program skewed toward the demands for expansion of the ever-hungry major institutions.

The New Right wants to undo even the infinitesimal progress we've made in moving public policy toward the goal of cultural democracy, and is pursuing a time-honored tactic toward this end: Greatly overstate the progress made by your opponents, then let them deny it -- and take a step toward your side in the process.

How is the New Right able to so definitively set the terms of the public debate on cultural policy? First, the low level of public consciousness of cultural issues is on their side. This is the first time we've seen cultural policy make front-page news: For many people the Heritage Foundation's critique provides their introduction to

cultural policy as an issue.

Second, the most quotable of the Foundation's arguments confirm our suspicions. We are all willing to believe that the work of government agencies is too "politicized"; the picture of the bureaucrat running unnecessary programs and expanding his power with grant-bribes is easily brought to mind and not so easily dispelled.

Third, the Heritage Foundation recommendations are put forth in a kind of code likely to lull the uninitiated into a reasonable-seeming calm. How can anyone object to a call for "quality" and "excellence"? How about "Indian self-determination"? Or "enhancing local governments' flexibility"? Or "improving the nation's productivity"?

And fourth, they propose seemingly rational structural solutions that make problem-solving in public policy sound as easy as 1-2-3. For example, a favorite solution posed by all the Heritage Foundation reports is shifting responsibility for a troublesome program to another department of the government.

The humanities recommendations suggest shifting NEH's efforts in conservation and preservation of research materials, and its intercultural research programs -- among others -- to other agencies. The arts report recommends shifting a whole spectrum of programs: *"It is certainly valid that the arts be a part of social service programs, be they in disadvantaged communities, prisons and hospitals, for the aged, the infirm or the handicapped. Decisions on their use, however, are properly a function of social service agencies...programs at NEA which are concerned primarily with the social benefits of art should be restructured to emphasize their strictly artistic components and arrange the transfer of their other functions to the appropriate governmental agencies..."*

Passing the buck seems to be a favorite problem-solving device of the Foundation's experts, but picking it up is apparently out of the question. Interestingly, not one of the reports we read contained a recommendation that the agency of federal government under consideration should assume responsibility for the neighborhood, or civil rights or social action-oriented programs that other reports had sent their way. Apparently they know that once jettisoned from their current homes, such programs will not be welcome in other agencies of the Reagan administration.

We Need A Strategy

The battle over cultural policy is being fought now on two fronts: The media, and the Congress. Getting access to the media for a neighborhood arts perspective on cultural policy will take concentrated effort. Most newspapers and broadcasters seldom cover neighborhood arts events, let alone stories on the important role of neighborhood arts work in their own communities, and on the current controversies in cultural policy.

Similarly, only a few prescient neighborhood arts groups have been able (and lucky enough) to succeed in educating their legislators about community cultural work and the importance of public support. Most have to

fight hard to overcome the biases and barriers of unfamiliarity -- not to mention the substantial lobbying and public relations budgets of their opposition.

For the last few weeks we've been getting calls from people around the country concerned about these issues, and eager to work out a cooperative strategy for addressing them. Most recognize that the New Right's attack on cultural democracy has gotten over so well not only because its authors are better-funded and better-connected, but also because they are better-organized and able to speak with a single voice to the media and to the Congress.

Some of our callers want to defend Expansion Arts at the NEA and other government programs from which they've derived support. People we talked to in these programs suggest that press coverage of the good work they support and continuing education of legislators are the best strategies to pursue. Others look to the long-term: At NEA and NEH, for example, it will be most of a year before new Chairmen are appointed; to some people, it makes sense to concentrate on the issue of who should be appointed -- and who shouldn't.

Time To Act

For the neighborhood arts movement, opposing the New Right's attack on cultural democracy may be a survival question -- not only because the right threatens the few sources of neighborhood arts support currently in government, but because its dominance of the debate on cultural policy also threatens to effectively silence our side.

Key to the future will be neighborhood arts people's ability to build coalitions that transcend simple self-interest: On the question of CETA -- and all programs that have provided jobs for community organization workers -- we have a dozen ready-made alliances with other social action groups. Even on arts-related issues we have a long way to go before we cross the barriers that have prevented effective cooperation among neighborhood arts people from different kinds of communities and backgrounds.

We will keep you informed of coalition-building efforts, of new information on the Reagan administration's policies and programs, and of major initiatives in the New Right's anti-cultural democracy campaign.

NAPNOC is also prepared to provide assistance for neighborhood arts people who want to organize to oppose the New Right's campaign: We will provide you with resource material for regional meetings; we will consult with you about organizing strategies; and provide you with contact information if you need it.

If you have ideas that should be passed on to other neighborhood arts people, call or write and we'll help you spread the word.

*Do you know others who should be reading this article?
Send us their names and addresses,
and we'll send them a copy!*

HISPANIC AMERICAN ARTS TASK FORCE, cont'd

panded to include Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban and other Latino-Hispanic members.

The panel discussed the question: "What can the National Endowment for the Arts do for the Hispanic Arts?" They concluded that they had not been given sufficient time to gather information -- to document the experiences of Hispanic artists in all parts of the country and to formulate recommendations that took these experiences into account.

The Birth of A Task Force

By the time the November NCA meeting rolled around, Livingston Biddle, Jr. had taken office. He heard the panel deliver brief recommendations on the most pressing problems concerning the Endowment's responsiveness to Hispanic artists: Hispanics needed to be represented in the Endowment's staff, panels and policy-making bodies, and in state and regional arts agencies too; and the Endowment needed to look at its own technical assistance support for Hispanics and its support of "networking" among Hispanic arts groups around the country. There was a need for coordination of the NEA's efforts with state and regional agencies; for new pilot programs that implemented these recommendations; and for better Hispanic participation in programs like the Endowment's Fellowship (formerly Intern) program.

The panel designated the following areas as needing "immediate attention": Identifying prospective grantee artists and organizations; and providing them with information and encouragement. It recommended "that a task force on Hispanic Arts comprised of appropriate representatives from the diverse Hispanic communities be created to gather adequate data on which to base recommendations for consideration by the National Council on the Arts." The National Council accepted this recommendation.

In January, 1978, Jacinto Quirarte convened a meeting of the panelists in San Antonio, and this group selected twenty-three individuals to serve on the Task Force. Besides Quirarte, the group leaned heavily toward academics and administrators (more than half of its membership); fourteen of its members were from west of the Mississippi; and there was some duplication -- two representatives each from the Plaza de la Raza in Los Angeles (Margo Albert and Frank S. Lopez) and from the University of Texas at San Antonio (Jacinto Quirarte and Tomas Rivera). There were also some committed neighborhood arts people, Judith Francisco Baca of SPARC in Los Angeles and Carmen Lomas Garza of the Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco among them.

The Pitfalls of Task Force-ism

The conflicts which have dogged the Hispanic American Arts Task Force center on three themes which have dominated all of the task force-type efforts the Endowment has undertaken to respond to pressure from the excluded and ignored:

1. The task force model used by the NEA takes a group within the society--Blacks, Hispanics, Community Artists -- and ignores its internal diversity. This task force mod-

el prefers single solutions and formulas; it likes unanimity and treats disagreement or difference as failure.

2. "Representatives" to a task force are chosen by the NEA -- that is, the agency which has been pressured to create the task force. They "represent" the agency's idea of "the field"; they are not chosen or elected by the represented.

3. Because task force members are invited to participate by the powers-that-be, they are vulnerable to flattery or bribery -- or perhaps even more dangerous, empathy. task force members can come to sympathize with the problems of the agency which appointed them; they can be encouraged to soft-pedal criticism out of sympathy for the agency's own difficulties, and to design easily-implemented and administered solutions that respect the problems of the agency, more than the concerns of its constituency.

All of these considerations boil down to the question that is foremost in the thoughts of anyone invited to participate in a task force or to support its efforts: Is it better than nothing?

Opponents of the task force model believe that these three pitfalls -- we'll call them the "single-solution orientation," the "problem of representation," and the "temptation of empathy" -- are unavoidable. Critics believe that the task force inevitably co-opts its members -- that they are forced to fight with each other to achieve an inadequate but easily-administered solution to a complex problem, that they would accomplish more by organizing on the outside and pressing their claims.

Advocates of the task force model believe its pitfalls can be heeded and overcome. They believe that the task force is one way to achieve progress, albeit gradual, and that any process which increases access to grants and policy-making agencies is worth it.

The Task Force Process

Beginning in March, 1978, the Hispanic American Arts Task Force held meetings in Los Angeles, Tucson, Denver, Chicago, New York, San Antonio, Miami and San Juan. At each meeting, artists from the region offered oral and written presentations on the question of NEA and Hispanic arts. In addition, the U.S. was divided by the Task Force into seven regions -- Great Lakes, Northwest, Southern California, New Mexico, South/Central Plains, El Paso, and Northeast. In each region additional hearings or meetings were held under the sponsorship of local Task Force members.

While gathering data for its final report, the Task Force also strove to address "the immediate problem of increasing sensitivity to Hispanic arts within and outside the Endowment...1) Within the Endowment, and on an immediate basis, the Task Force pushed continuously to have Hispanic representation at all levels of the Endowment. 2) On a broader level, the Task Force investigated the nature of the aesthetic that underlies Hispanic American arts by bringing together scholars and artists as participants

in the symposium 'An Analysis and Interpretation of the Hispanic American Aesthetic: Origins, Manifestations, and Significance'..."

It is to the first of these points that defenders of the Task Force point with pride: Since the Task Force was constituted, three Hispanic American Regional Representatives have been hired by NEA (Louis LeRoy, whose territory includes New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming and Utah; Virginia Torres, who covers Southern California and Nevada; and Eduardo Garcia, whose area includes Delaward, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania). Task Force member Margo Albert (also a member of the California Arts Council) was appointed to a seat on the National Council on the Arts; and according to Joe B. Rodriguez, Special Assistant to the Endowment's Office of Human Rights (formerly Office of Minority Concerns), the number of NEA grants to Hispanic artists and organizations increased by over 30%.

A Professorial Look At Hispanic American Culture

The second point -- the elaborately-titled symposium sponsored by the Task Force in San Antonio on April 28-30, 1979 -- is more complex. Broadly described, the symposium was intended to address three questions summarized in the Task Force's report as follows: "1) the state of development of the material under discussion (various Hispanic American art forms) and its history (the tradition within which a particular art fits and the conditions under which it has been and continues to be created); 2) the purpose/s and audience/s for whom it is created; 3) and an overall assessment of the material."

The clearest message to be garnered from the Task Force's report on the symposium is one which appears throughout the Task Force materials. Here's how it's stated in the report on "Hispanic American Arts in the United States" presented to the NCA: "There is no single Hispanic American aesthetic which can encompass all the groups brought under the rubric of Hispanic (Chicano, Chicano-Latino, Hispano, Mexican American, Puerto Rican Islanders, Nuyorican, Cuban, and other Latino Hispanic groups). Nor is there one aesthetic which cuts across the various arts (the visual, performing and literary arts)."

Five of the symposium papers were included in the Task Force's report to the National Council on the Arts. Quirarte's offers a scholarly dissertation on Pre-Columbian aesthetics, the aesthetic impact of European colonization, and the "instrumentality" of Pre-Columbian and Hispanic arts. A paper on music by Juan Orrego-Salas of Indiana University is largely devoted to the use of Hispanic traditional themes in the work of non-Hispanic composers such as Louis Gottschalk and Aaron Copland.

The theatre paper by Nicolas Kanellos of Indiana University Northwest is the first of the five to put Hispanic American art into a context of social and political struggle; colonization and the movement for cultural self-determination figure prominently in his argument. The fourth paper on the

development of Puerto Rican literature, by Ramon Luis Acevedo of the University of Puerto Rico, focuses on the search for a collective Puerto Rican identity through literature. The final paper is by Rupert Garcia of the San Francisco Art Institute, a muralist and poster designer; his paper is by far the most politically progressive and community-oriented, relating the development of Chicano-Latino murals and posters to social movements.

The Task Force Recommendations: First Round

In August, 1979, the Task Force presented the National Council on the Arts with its 130+-page report. It included this generally conservative symposium material along with the findings of the various regional meetings and a summary of the conclusions the Task Force had reached: "The Task Force's recommendations are here grouped into four broad categories...: A) increased funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, B) the development of individual artistic excellence, C) the development and nurturing of strong, well informed arts organizations, and D) the development of lines of communication and understanding in the field. Additionally, the Task Force feels that a small advisory committee (E) should be established to assist the Endowment with the specifics of individual recommendations."

Specific recommendations elaborated these broad categories. They included: bilingual NEA publications, workshops and meetings; more Endowment direction for Regional Representatives and state agencies concerning sensitivity to minority concerns; technical assistance in preparing grants applications; more education on Hispanic arts for NEA staff; Hispanic representation on policy panels and NEA staff; increased fellowship support; support for studio space; management assistance and training in arts administration for Hispanic groups; pilot, non-matching funds for new organizations and working capital for established groups; a directory of Hispanic artists and organizations; and support for networking among these artists and organizations.

NEA's Response

Instead of accepting these recommendations, Chairman Biddle recommended that the report be received by the National Council "with enthusiasm" and referred "to the appropriate committees for implementation." "There will be hell to pay in the field! That community out there will roar! We don't have enough to take back!" was Quirarte's response.

The NCA replied to these remarks by suggesting that an Ad Hoc Steering Committee of the Task Force continue to serve as a temporary advisory group while the rest of the Task Force would be disbanded. Ad Hoc Committee members were to be Margo Albert, Quirarte, New York photographer Roger Caban, Puerto Rican composer Hector Campos Parsi, Carmen Garza, Chicago muralist Jose Gonzalez, Florida composer and administrator Antoniono Hernandez Lizaso, and New Mexico sculptor Luis Jimenez (who was ultimately unable to serve). This Steering Committee definitely

represents the conservative wing of the Task Force, though it does include neighborhood artists. An explanation for this fact was offered by an NEA staffer: "Since the Committee was reimbursed for its meeting expenses after they were incurred, the Steering Committee had to include people who could afford to front the money."

Second Round

Between August 1979 and August 1980, the Steering Committee met four or five times with NEA representatives and drafted a new plan. It was to be presented at the August NCA meeting: An Information Center for Hispanic American Arts, located-- temporarily-- at the Research Center for the Arts (which Jacinto Quirarte heads) in San Antonio, Texas. The plan called for "borrowing" staff support from Quirarte's project for a year, while funds were raised and a permanent site found in Washington, DC.

The proposed San Antonio site triggered opposition from East Coast groups concerned that the Information Center be truly national in scope, not dominated by the West or Southwest. Elsa Robles, head of the Association of Hispanic Arts (AHA) in New York, approached Chairman Biddle before the Council meeting, raising these concerns, and asked that further consideration be given to the proposal before the NCA acted on it.

Biddle announced he was tabling the proposal until the November Council meeting; but when November rolled around, it failed to appear on the agenda. Instead, that meeting was dominated by post-election nervousness and much ado about the new NCA members sworn in. Among them: Margo Albert, one of the two representatives of Los Angeles' Plaza de la Raza to sit on the Hispanic American Arts Task Force, and member of the Steering Committee asked by the Endowment to formulate the Task Force's final proposal.

Third Round: The Current Proposal

The proposal for an Information Center for Hispanic Arts will be presented at the February NCA meeting, scheduled for Valentine's Day weekend at Washington's ultra-fancy Four Seasons Hotel. Though precise figures have not been released, we understand that over \$200,000 will be requested to provide start-up support for a program with the following features:

* It will be a nonprofit corporation with a twelve-person board of directors and a paid staff of unspecified size;

* It will coordinate a network of eight consultants working with Hispanic American arts organizations in the eight regions the Task Force has designated-- Southern Pacific Coast, Northern Pacific Coast, Southwest, South Central Plains, Great Lakes, Northeast, Southeast, and Puerto Rico;

* It will gather and disseminate information concerning the Hispanic American arts community through a quarterly newsletter, technical assistance publications and programs, and directories of Hispanic American artists and groups.

In addition to the support requested from NEA, proponents of the proposal hope to find foundation and corporate funding. While funding is being developed, the Research Center for the Arts "will provide a liaison and coordinating function...between the officers of the NEA, the Advisory Committee, the Washington-based planning unit headed by Joe Rodriguez, and the field. In addition, it will...(provide) outlines and information to be used for the following purposes: (1) recruitment of regional consultants; (2) updating of the Directory of Hispanic American Artists and Arts Organizations gathered by the Task Force on Hispanic American Arts; (3) establishing the format for a quarterly newsletter; (4) providing technical assistance through publications (pamphlets), workshops, and consultants."

Who's in Charge?

The key role of Quirarte and the San Antonio Research Center have spurred some controversy. One person we talked to criticized Quirarte's role, saying, "He has an attitude, a real attitude. He's into 'folk arts,' which means everybody else can drop dead...he's condescending, he talks down to people..." But another had nothing but praise: "I feel that the work he has done has been tremendous. The Task Force would not have been able to do the job it did without his assistance."

As has been true with every task force-type effort sponsored by NEA in the last few years, the very process seems to create suspicion of the motives of task force members-- and the central role of Quirarte's institution, like Margo Albert's well-timed elevation to the National Council, are no exception.

But the real conflict seems far deeper than personal motives. The December 1980-January 1981 issue of Hispanic Arts, published by AHA, carries a front-page article by Marta Moreno Vega, former Task Force member, AHA Board member, and currently director of the Visual Arts Research and Resource Center Relating to the Caribbean. Vega's article assigns ratings to the NEA and the Task Force:

"Green light-- With the support of NEA the Hispanic Task Force took six giant steps forward when it decided to have regional meetings to receive information from representatives of the Hispanic Arts Field.

"Red light-- The...Task Force took a giant step backward when it did not send copies of the report to the Hispanic Arts Field to review before submitting it to NEA.

"Red light-- Furthermore, the Hispanic Task Force took a giant step backward when it appointed an Ad Hoc Committee of its members to oversee the recommendations suggested in the report without first consulting the Hispanic Arts Field.

"Red light-- The Ad Hoc Committee took another giant step backward when it proceeded to submit a proposal to NEA for a National Hispanic Information Center

without a mandate from the Hispanic Arts Field.

"Yellow light-- NEA must be aware of the crucial role it can play in the recognition of Hispanic arts in this country. It must be fully aware that there exists a wide spectrum of Hispanic Arts activities which have been retained as an integral part of the lifestyle of a people. Furthermore, it must be recognized that a select group of people, however well intentioned, cannot be designated as representatives for a people without a mandate."

"The Field" Will Decide

Vega's article concludes that people in the field must be allowed to see the Task Force report, that "the proposal being submitted by the Ad Hoc Committee must be sent to the various regions for input and recommendations," that the regions "must be given the opportunity to select their representatives for the remainder of the implementation of the Task Force findings" and that the Ad Hoc Committee appointed by NEA must be dissolved or "function as an advisory body to the representatives selected by the field."

We talked with several proponents of the Ad Hoc Committee recommendations, and they responded to Vega's charges by saying that she, as a Task Force member, had the responsibility of disseminating information about the Task Force report in her region. But for Vega, this leaves aside the question of representation: "These people, including myself, were selected by the Endowment as being representative, (not by) the field... that is the major problem with the Task Force from the beginning... Therefore, anything that comes out of the Task Force has to be screened through the field before it can be submitted."

Vega said that she withdrew from the Task Force on these grounds, before the Ad Hoc Committee was designated. We asked whether she had accepted Task Force membership with the hope that it would run differently, and she replied, "As a matter of fact, we pressured our way in. The original Task Force didn't include any Puerto Rican representation or Cuban representation... and we had to lobby from the Northeast in order to include representatives that were Puerto Rican... Our participation was based on the

NEXT MONTH:

Some Related Resources

NAPNOC notes #9 will carry information on some of the Hispanic American arts service organizations that currently provide help for artists and organizations.

fact that -- if we were present-- certain things wouldn't happen."

And there the situation stands. Despite the Endowment's charge to the Task Force of coming up with a single solution to "the Hispanic American arts question," differences among the diverse Hispanic groups that populate the United States have arisen. The controversy can be drawn along east-west lines, along Chicano-Caribbean lines, or along established institution vs. community group lines. The issue of representation-- of who determines what is representative-- has been raised. And the motives of Task Force and Ad Hoc Committee members have been called into question.

It remains to be seen what are the particulars of the proposal the Ad Hoc Committee puts forward at the NCA meeting next month. It also remains to be seen how their proposal is received, both by the Council and by the many Hispanic artists and organizations concerned. One Task Force member phrased the problem this way: "Everybody has high hopes of things getting done... I think that it's very important for the Task Force to continue to struggle, to move on getting some of those recommendations fulfilled. It's crazy, absolutely crazy, to stop now." For Marta Vega, the particulars of the Ad Hoc Committee proposal are key: "I have to see the revisions to the proposal... Is in fact the Task Force looking to existing organizations that have already set up a network? Is it utilizing them as part of the process? Will the proposed service organization deal with more priority issues on the national level rather than dealing with things that organizations like AHA have already done?"

Learning from the Hispanic Arts Task Force

We will keep you posted on the Hispanic American Arts Task Force and its successors-- and let you know what follows from the February Council meeting.

In the meantime, we would urge readers to look at the three-year history of the Task Force not as a special case, but as yet another chapter in the continuing struggle for cultural democracy. Is the Task Force model an effective way to plead the case of an excluded constituency? How can the issues which have dogged every Task Force-- the "single solution orientation," the "problems of representation," and the "temptation of empathy"-- be resolved?

If you conclude they can't-- at least under the present circumstances-- perhaps it's time to consider how to bring organized pressure on the government from outside. Could a coalition of Hispanic groups (or neighborhood arts groups, or any other kind of affinity group) organize, hold its own regional meetings, appoint a representative steering committee and present its demands to NEA? Would it take three years? Would it produce different results? These are the questions neighborhood arts people need to consider before the next task force opportunity comes to light. Let us know what you think.