

from Stanford to Los Gatos to receive her blessing as one of the sturdiest links with Wellesley's past. I did feel that I had her blessing, and this was one of the most important things I brought back East with me."

For some years Louise had teasingly chided me about not paying a visit. In the summer 1981, I went to her hilltop home. What pleasure! We discussed myriad subjects from politics and international affairs to the reprinting of three of her books as classics in the late 1970s, the brilliance of Nan's appointment. Charming and witty as ever, she posed cheerfully for my new camera.

This warm wonderful woman—we shall miss her.

Her legacy remains. □

## Defending the Humanities

**Moira Egan\***

National Humanities Alliance

One frequently observed phenomenon in Washington is that when a program or agency comes under attack, its supporters who may previously have been in torpid disarray suddenly are galvanized. The sweeping changes proposed by the Reagan administration have provided ample opportunity for this kind of reaction from a variety of groups—environmentalists, students, and the handicapped, to name only a few. The administration's decision to reduce by half the budget of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has brought about a high degree of concern among scholars and other supporters of the agency. The result has been the formation of a coalition dedicated to preserving federal support for the humanities and a subsequent string of successes in both the legislative and the executive branch.

---

\*Moira Egan is executive director of the National Humanities Alliance.

The NEH was founded in 1965 and for the next 15 years attracted extraordinary bi-partisan support. Both the NEH and its sister agency, the National Endowment for the Arts, enjoyed their greatest growth when Richard Nixon was President, but found support from every administration. In the Congress, senior members of both parties in the House and the Senate were committed to the agency. Although the NEH was at times the subject of controversy over the selection of a chairman, its policies, or its individual grants, the precept upon which it was founded, that "it is necessary and appropriate for the federal government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent," was never seriously questioned.

### Punitive Cuts

The earliest inkling that after January 1981 this would not long continue to be the case came when the Heritage Foundation issued its report recommending a wide range of changes in government agencies to President-elect Reagan. The section on the NEH, while affirming the basic mission of the agency, was highly critical of current policies and programs. But even this report did not prepare supporters of the agency for what followed—the announcement by President Reagan that he would seek a cut of 50 percent in the NEH budget. The justification for this action, that the humanities should be a low priority, that the NEH had become the "patron of first resort" for the humanities, and that the NEH had discouraged private donors, seemed flimsy at best, outright wrong at worst. The cuts were not simply part of government-wide reductions but were so large and so carefully targeted as to strike many observers as punitive.

Distress at the disproportionate size of the cuts and the harsh language of the justification was widespread and, as might have been expected, bipartisan. Among those most concerned were directors of scholarly organizations in the humanities, who had believed that the rationale underlying federal support for

scholarship had been so firmly established as to transcend political trends. These organizations banded together with like-minded groups representing libraries, museums, universities, and state humanities councils to form a coalition called the National Humanities Alliance (NHA). This coalition had as its primary goal the reversal of the proposed cuts. Its formation marked the first time that many of these associations had participated in legislative activity. It was also the first time that associations representing the full range of enterprises in the humanities had cooperated on a major venture.

### **Organizing the Humanities**

The National Humanities Alliance immediately busied itself with the kind of work so common among those who try to get their point across in Washington. Panels of testimony were organized, letter writing campaigns were orchestrated, meetings were held with senators, representatives, and their staffs. Evidence that scholars in the humanities can participate in these activities every bit as successfully as other citizens came months later when the NEH appropriation for 1982 became law. It was \$130.56 million, not the \$85 million requested by the administration. This victory would not have been possible without the strong support for the NEH of several key congressional leaders and the lobbying efforts of scholars and other concerned citizens from throughout the country.

During the course of 1981 several developments internal to the administration occurred that altered its approach to the two Endowments. One was the appointment of the Presidential Task Force on the Arts and Humanities. This presidentially-appointed commission, which was co-chaired by Hanna Gray, president of the University of Chicago, was charged with examining the operations of the Endowments, recommending needed changes in their structure and policies, and finding ways of increasing private support for the arts and humanities. At first there was widespread concern that the task force would be the vehicle by which the administration would work its will on the Endowments. However, the

task force's final report was an affirmation of the concept of federal support for these areas and of the basic structure and mission of the Endowments. If the administration had ever had thoughts of altering the NEH radically, this report made such a move all but impossible.

The other development that indicated a moderation of the administration's negativism toward the NEH was the appointment of William Bennett as chairman of the agency. Before Bennett was nominated, there had been some concern that the next chairman might be someone not familiar with the humanities, or someone committed to the dismantling of the NEH. The appointment of Bennett, an experienced scholar and administrator in the humanities, signified the President's commitment to the agency's continuing existence and to its basic mission.

As these two developments were unfolding, the NHA was active behind the scenes. NHA members and staff contributed ideas and information to the work of the presidential task force. A letter from the NHA to members of the White House staff outlined suggested criteria for the selection of the new NEH chairman. These and other activities were part of the NHA's developing role as the vehicle through which citizens concerned about the humanities could make their voices heard in Washington.

In spite of the cessation of adversarial policies toward the NEH on the part of the administration, the agency was not spared major budget cuts in the development of the 1983 budget. A reduction from \$130.56 million to \$96 million has been proposed by the administration to the Congress. While this is not so dramatic a cut as was proposed last year, its size, 27 percent, is large enough to demonstrate that this administration is still not fully convinced of the need for federal support for scholarship and teaching in the humanities. If implemented, this reduction would result in cuts in every program at NEH, most especially those programs having the general public as their primary audience.

The NHA has once again been actively involved in a campaign of support for maintaining current funding at the NEH. A broad range of the NHA's member

organizations have participated in presenting testimony and writing letters in support of continued federal funding for this area. At this point, the administration's proposed cuts for the NEH do not appear to have strong support among members of Congress. The NEH's excellent record, coupled with the efforts in the past 18 months by supporters of the agency, seem to have left a very favorable impression with most lawmakers. However, the peculiarities of this legislative year make predictions as to the final outcome almost impossible.

### No Retrenchment

At the NEH itself, the prospect of budget cuts has not led to a mood of retrenchment. Chairman Bennett has not hesitated to take new initiatives in areas he sees as important. Programs initiated in the past year include special grants on the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, a series of summer seminars for high school teachers, and competitive awards for excellence to five state humanities programs. In addition, guidelines in the Division of Education Program have undergone a thorough revision, and the Special and Public divisions have been combined into the new Division of General Programs. (For information on programs and procedures at NEH, see "Those Aspects of the Social Sciences. . ." by Cynthia Wolloch Frey, *PS*, Winter 1980.)

One area that has received special attention is the relationship of the social sciences to the humanities. The legislation that created NEH defines the humanities as including "those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods." Traditionally, methodology has been a primary means of determining what is and is not in the humanities. At a recent meeting of the National Council on the Humanities (a presidentially appointed body that advises the chairman on policy and programs), a lively discussion resulted from questions raised by the chairman about how to pin down more precisely this distinction.

Further discussion of this issue is evolving toward a policy that will place its em-

phasis on the content of the proposed project rather than its methodology. NEH assistant chairman John Agresto has said that those applications in the social sciences which pose the questions of meaning and understanding that are central to the humanities will be welcome to apply. In fact, Agresto says that the agency wants to offer active encouragement to scholars of social and political theory, cultural anthropology, economic history, and their colleagues.

Organizations representing scholars in the humanities have found a new sense of common purpose in the past 18 months. Their members have become aware of the need to look out for their own interests in Washington, both specifically by lobbying for NEH funding and more generally by promoting understanding of the humanities. They have learned that they can be most effective when cooperating with their colleagues who share the same interests. They have found that representation in Washington can be helpful in any number of ways. For these reasons, there is every indication that the National Humanities Alliance will continue to exist, crisis or no. With hard work, imagination, and perseverance, a broader and deeper understanding of the importance of the humanities will be built among Washington's policy makers.

*(Editor's Note: APSA is a member of the National Humanities Alliance.)* □

## Politics and the Future: A Report on the World Future Society Conference

Howard J. Silver

The World Future Society held its Fourth General Assembly in Washington, D.C. from July 18-22, 1982. More than 3,500 participants attended over 250 panels examining aspects of the theme "Communications and the Future." Major topics of interest to political scientists included: (1) economic dislocation and social divisiveness, (2) decentralized