

NATIONAL LEGISLATION AFFECTING THE ARTS

(Remarks of Hon. Harris B. McDowell, Jr., Congressman at Large, Delaware, to the 36th annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, Palmer House, Chicago, Ill., second general session, Nov. 26, 1960)

It is a distinct pleasure to be with you of the National Association of Schools of Music. This is a wonderful opportunity for us who share a special concern for America's cultural destiny. Together we can consider in what direction this Nation is heading in the field of the arts and your particular role in shaping this course. As members of a professional organization dedicated to strengthening the quality of higher education in music, I know that you have a deep interest in efforts to insure a widespread recognition of the arts in this country. Since my election to the Congress, I have introduced and supported measures to advance this purpose.

You are already aware, I am certain, that throughout the country we are experiencing a stimulating growth in the arts. And the picture is getting better every year—despite the still prevailing fiscal undernourishment which, in my opinion, the Federal Government should help to remedy in the immediate future. I want to discuss with you today some of the efforts being made to further the national recognition and encouragement of the arts and artists. In the Congress some of these efforts have already achieved success. Others, I sincerely believe, will be accorded more serious consideration under the new administration.

I am firmly convinced that the immediate future holds great promise for recognition of the arts on the national level. Both of the presidential candidates, for example, recently assured citizens that they were aware of many of the needs relating to the arts and the Nation at home and abroad. Both thought that the Federal Government had a role to play in meeting some of those needs. Both concurred on the desirability of expending the present cultural interchange program. The two candidates, however, opposed the establishment of a Secretary of Culture of Cabinet rank and with broad authority in this field. Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Nixon expressed concern for maintaining the freedom of the arts and favored instead the creation of a Federal Advisory Council on the Arts. I am certain that such a council of experts would greatly assist in the evaluation, development, and expansion of the cultural resources of the United States. A bill (H.R. 7656) which would establish a Federal Advisory on the Arts was reported by the House Committee on Education and Labor during the past session of the 86th Congress. This Council would undertake studies and make recommendations relating to appropriate methods for encouraging creative activities, participation in and appreciation of the arts. It would be composed of 21 members appointed by the President from among private citizens who are widely recognized for their knowledge of, experience in, or their profound interest in one or more of the arts. The House committee reported that it—

“* * * visualizes the Council as a national clearinghouse for the consideration of methods by which the Federal Government might appropriately and effectively act to encourage and stimulate both artistic endeavor and appreciation on the part of our citizens.”¹

I am one of those who believe that the enactment of this legislation is long overdue.

In introducing one of the presentations of the candidate's views on the arts, which I mentioned previously, Irving Kolodin, music editor of the *Saturday Review*, makes the following observation:

“Among the subjects with which the next administration will have to deal is the claim of art and artists to Government recognition, encouragement, and assistance. Though not the gravest issue before the country, it is far from the least if our culture is to attain the growth of which it is capable * * *.”²

As President-elect Kennedy so ably states:

“The encouragement of art, in the broadest sense, is indeed a function of Government.

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¹ H. Rept. No. 1660, 86th Cong., 2d sess.

² *Saturday Review*, Oct. 29, 1960, p. 42.