PS for 4/11/91

It's Time to Abolish the "Ministry of Art"

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has just demonstrated again its complete irresponsibility and contempt for the American people. Chairman John Frohnmayer held an arrogant news conference in Washington last week where he went all out to defend giving $25,000 of the taxpayers' money to a disgusting movie called "Poison."

The theaters are advertising the movie as being about "deviance." Frohnmayer described the movie's three parts: in the first, the "poison" is the poisonous behavior of a young boy's parents; in the second, the "poison" is a weird concoction drunk by a medical scientist; in the third, the "poison" is a prison where one of the men is brutalized and raped by the other prisoners.

Just a few weeks ago, Chairman Frohnmayer gave a new $15,000 grant of tax dollars to Holly Hughes, who does lesbian feminist performances on stage. In her grant application, Hughes said it would be based on a lesbian vampire story and use two 12-year-o1d girls on stage.

Frohnmayer's NEA spokesman said the Hughes performance "has high artistic potential." When Holly Hughes was phoned by the press about this grant, she bragged that it "will deal with lesbian themes… All of my work that five ever done has talked about the issues of sexuality and sexual power and powerlessness… I am an openly lesbian artist."

Frohnmayer also gave a 1991 grant of $20,000 of taxpayers' money for a new performance by Karen Finley. You remember her -- she was the performer who last year di-d her tax-funded act on stage nude -- with her body smeared with chocolate and bean sprouts.

Do we object to having our tax dollars spent for such things? You bet we do. This has nothing to do with "censorship" -- the people who want to be "as nasty as they wanna be" can do so on their own nickel -- but **not** on ours.

The whole idea that a commission of tax-salaried bureaucrats should be able to give our tax dollars to **any** movie or stage performance is offensive to the American people. The taxpayers should not have to subsidize the (peculiar) entertainment tastes of Frohnmayer and his pals in preference to the tastes of the

American people -- who can support any show they wish by the simple act of buying an admission ticket.

Frohnmayer behaves as though he is the Art Czar of a U.S. Ministry of Culture -- he and his pals decide what is “art” and worthy of tax-funding, and then make us all pay for it. Then he cries “censorship” when the public objects to his choices.

That’s exactly the way “art” is determined and controlled in a Communist country -- and it’s un-American. The American way is to give tax deductions for private donations to art and let individuals make their own choices.

The entire NEA apparatus in which people who call themselves “artists” continue to con the taxpayers into paying for their stuff is a racket. James J. Kilpatrick recently exposed in his syndicated column how five of the six persons who served on a so-called “peer review” dance panel feathered their own nests with juicy grants: one got $55,000; one got $100,000; one got $820,680; one got $10,000; and one got $19,000.

The NEA receives thousands of grant applications so the way to get a grant is to get your pals on the panels that dole out the money. The artsy handout hunters play a game of “you vote for my grant and I’ll vote for yours.”

Just as one small evidence of the demoralizing effect of last year’s NEA grants, the magazine called **Metropolitan Home** - otherwise a respectable magazine -- suggests on its March cover that a book of Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs should be displayed as part of your living room decor. You remember Robert Mapplethorpe it was the NEA funding of his explicit homosexual S&M and child porn photographs which started the NEA controversy.

Last fall, 175 Congressmen voted for the Dana Rohrabacher Amendment to impose some reasonable guidelines to avoid such travesties, but they were outvoted by the liberal majority who said it was sufficient to request the NEA to respect “general standards of decency.” Frohnmayer responded by boasting that he was **not** going to be a “decency czar.”

It's now clear that there is only one solution to this national embarrassment -- abolish the National Endowment for the Arts altogether. Last year, this was the position of the 64 Congressman who voted for the Philip Crane Amendment, and time has proved that they had the more valid position.

The NEA will not respect reasonable guidelines because the “artsy” fringe groups are demanding that the public pay for their displays of immorality, crudeness, and deliberate flouting of civilized norms of behavior. Civilizations disintegrate when good people fail to stand up for what is right and good.