

Helms amendment on art funding bill needs support, criticism too

by D. Stephen Pepper

Senator Jesse Helms (R) of North Carolina surprised the Senate some weeks ago when he attached an amendment to a bill regarding funding of the arts, in which he required that no public monies go to "art" that is homoerotic in nature, or which offends the religious, patriotic, and racial values of any section of the population. In his amendment he seeks to deny funding to institutions which have hosted exhibitions of such works. Not surprisingly, Sen. Patrick Moynihan (D) of New York stepped forward as the champion of the "gay" community and of the radical art establishment in heaping abuse on Helms's initiative—not surprisingly because throughout his checkered career Moynihan has been both the sodomizer and the sodomized politically, as exemplified by his famous remark of treating the black problem with "benign neglect."

Surely no rational citizen could object to Helms's amendment; in fact, it is an example of how far we have fallen that what should be obvious requires legislation. Representations that promote obscene acts, or sacrilege should not rightfully be considered art, and should certainly not have any claims on public money. But this is exactly the case that Helms does not make, for the senator is actually a Victorian liberal, who wishes to save the main body from cancer by surgically removing only the worst parts of the diseased tissue. In this case, the cancer is the radical expression of the liberal philosophy known as modernism. Helms does not contest the basically immoral definition of art under liberal tyranny, but he does wish to deny the use of public monies to fund its most egregious aspect.

Nevertheless, the Helms amendment is useful because for the first time it places the role of art on the agenda of public debate. An example of this was a commentary that appeared in the *Houston Chronicle* and was syndicated in the *Washington Post*. The author, Frederick E. Hart, a sculptor who designed a memorial to the men who fought in Vietnam (apparently not the wall of inscribed names of the fallen in Washington, D.C.), contrasts contemporary art practices and those of the Renaissance. He describes "the sorry moral condition of art today . . . making it less and less a meaningful endeavor." By contrast, during the Italian Renaissance "art was not thought of as an end in itself but as another form of

service." Hart eloquently continues, "The measure of achievement in art was determined by the degree to which that art was considered ennobling. Art and society had achieved a wonderful responsibility for each other. Art summarized with wonderful visual eloquence born of a sense of beauty, the striving of civilization to find order and purpose in the universe. This service to truth was more important than the endeavor of art itself. And it was this dedication to service that gave art its moral authority."

Toward a genuine public policy on art

To say that Hart's essay does not go far enough in no way denies the value of it. He says things in it which are remarkable to find in the newspapers of this country today. From it one can extract the outline of a genuine public policy for our republic, and not just the eclectic mess funded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Where it falls short is that he has no adequate explanation for how our society went from the magnificent outlook of the Renaissance to the squalid conditions of modernism. I could not possibly do justice to the entire story here, but it is sufficient to point to the crucial period of the mid-19th century when John Ruskin and his Oxford movement, animated by a fanatical hostility to modern industrial progress, launched a virulent pagan movement dedicated to primitivism in all things. From this beginning, there was inherent in all modern art a Satanic current.

Although it hasn't always been apparent as it is today, liberalism, modernism, and Satanism have shared values. The very Satanic character of Robert Mapplethorpe, one of the "artists" singled out by Helms, has made it clear that an art premised on the permissiveness of the absolute right to self-expression will eventually arrive at the condition of the outright assertion of evil. For the first time, the larger public, which up until now has experienced an inarticulate unease in the face of modernism, is beginning to see more clearly and fearfully what the Devil has wrought.

At the same time there is stirring an as-yet-unformed yearning in the larger public for a new beginning, a rebirth or renaissance, that would promise for future generations a love of beauty which today is so blighted by modernism. For

this to come into focus, a campaign will have to be launched that carries forward a renaissance public policy for the arts. The foundation of this policy is the absolute identity of real works of art and breakthroughs in the realm of science. This was the underlying condition of the great achievements of the Renaissance by Brunelleschi, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Rembrandt.

Such a policy should be based on three pillars.

First, the creation of meaningful public monuments. A relatively recent example would be the Lincoln Memorial by Daniel Chester French, which can not fail to stir ennobling emotions in every schoolchild who sees it, as I did with my father at the age of 10. It still stirs those emotions at age 50. I also find the Iwo Jima memorial's great popularity well deserved. By contrast, the monument to the Vietnam war in which the names of the dead are inscribed, reenforces the sense of desolation of the living, and offers no relief to them through imparting a sense of meaning. And of course we reach the nadir with Oldenbourg's Toothpaste Tube which celebrates the meaninglessness of human pursuits.

Second, the support of well-ordered public museums viewed as institutions of public learning. In the Renaissance, with the Medici collections, the idea of a systematic preservation of worthwhile creations of the past and present became firmly established public policy. In such museums the importance must not be primarily on individual works, but on the coherent process of development that can be found in peak periods of human achievement. Nevertheless we must never lose sight of the role of the individual masterpiece that creates a genuine sense of awe in the viewer.

Third, we must put art academies back on a firm footing. This can only be done if the work of art is seen and judged as a scientific breakthrough. In the current outlook, the work of art is considered a product of fantasy, and the artist has no obligation to fashion a statement regarding reality. In the Renaissance period, as Leonardo da Vinci insisted, not only was painting a science whereby the causes of things found in nature could be discovered, but it was the greatest of sciences because it made these otherwise invisible processes accessible to vision, the most powerful of human instruments. Academies in the sense of those founded by Gottfried Leibniz are based on the view that art obeys lawful principles and therefore can be taught.

This is a very schematic outline of how a public policy could be achieved that would rapidly contribute to a new renaissance. While Helms's proposal frames the question wrongly, it has the virtue of opening issues of art to debate. The quality of Frederick Hart's response suggests that there are still in this country individuals who can contribute to such a debate, and there may be a broader public ready to pay attention and respond.

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U.S. press blackout of KGB-Palme story finally broken

Weeks after the publication in major newspapers across Europe of the shocking story of Soviet KGB foreknowledge of—and probable involvement in—the 1986 assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, the blackout of these revelations in the U.S. press has finally been broken. Major articles appeared in the Sept. 8 *Washington Inquirer* and the Sept. 14 *New York City Tribune*; the *Washington Times* ran briefer coverage on Sept. 11.

The story, as *EIR* reported in our Sept. 8 issue, has the potential to rock the foundations of the "New Yalta" deal between the U.S. Establishment and the Soviet Union, by exposing the fraud of Mikhail Gorbachov's *glasnost* policy—that *glasnost* which allows the KGB to plot the assassination of foreign heads of state.

Sweden's largest-circulation daily *Expressen* first published the revelations in its Aug. 24 issue, under the headline, "The Soviets Knew That Palme Would Be Murdered." According to the newspaper's intelligence sources, the Swedish Security Police (SÄPO) had wiretapped the apartment of a Soviet intelligence officer stationed in Stockholm, and overheard him discussing the Palme murder before it occurred, on Feb. 28, 1986. The information was relayed at the time to the CIA, but both the Swedish and U.S. governments chose to cover it up.

Instead, as *EIR* documented in our last two issues, a massive Soviet disinformation campaign was launched to accuse Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. of masterminding the assassination. This was picked up by news media throughout the Western world. The outrageous slander of LaRouche in turn provided a basis for his railroad prosecution on bogus "national security" grounds.

LaRouche, now a political prisoner, is also a candidate for the U.S. Congress. His campaign committee, LaRouche for Justice, distributed half a million leaflets on the Swedish revelations throughout the United States (as of our press deadline). The leaflets are currently circulating throughout the Pentagon, the Justice Department, the Congress, and the Washington press corps, among other targeted locations.

Thus, although U.S. State Department spokesman Margaret Tutwiler responded to repeated questions from *EIR* on the *Expressen* story by saying State has and will have absolutely no comment, the circulation of the leaflets succeeded