

Wednesday • July 22, 1997

# Taking the 'A' out of 'Art'

Eliminating the National Endowment for the Arts rids America of creativity

English poet Austin Dobson once said, "All passes. Art alone endures." As the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) teeters on the brink of eradication, these words ring true. The end of the NEA would seal the United States' fate as a nation of cultural dregs.

In 1965, Congress recognized that "an advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity." Out of this sentiment, the NEA was born. The NEA has been a driving force in making art available to all Americans. The organization, under the leadership of the Department of the Interior, allocates federal funds to benefit art education, theater, literature, symphonies and visual arts.

Since the NEA's inception in 1965, the non-profit arts in the United States have flourished. Before the NEA, only five state governments had agencies dedicated to arts; now all 50 states report having state art agencies. Theaters have multiplied eight-fold, and the number of orchestras has quadrupled. American dance companies have grown from 37 to 250 nationwide.

Professor Joseph Hutchinson of the College of Architecture wrote his thesis on the NEA. Hutchinson said the organization was created to "help grassroots arts and organizations get started."

Over the years, the program has funded everything from public art museums to puppet shows. In addition to public art, the NEA is involved with education, urban design and preserving our cultural heritage. In recent years, the NEA has come under fire from conservatives. The debate came to an apex with an exhibit by Robert Mapplethorpe that depicted graphic sexual imagery, including homosexual encounters. Opponents barked that the NEA was promoting questionable or obscene material, and vowed to close its doors.

Hutchinson said funding an exhibit such as Mapplethorpe's probably was bad judgment by NEA administration, but said we must look at the larger picture.

"The world we live in is complex," Hutchinson said. "Diverse sexual lifestyles are mainstream today." A common gripe of NEA opponents is that the organization is economically imprudent. This simply is not true. Recipients of NEA endowments must match federal funds at least dollar-for-dollar, and sometimes as much as three-to-one, ensuring tremendous returns for en-



Columnist  
**MANDY CATER**  
Senior psychology major

dowments. The nonprofit arts as a whole generate \$37 billion in economic activity and return \$3.4 billion in federal income tax to the U.S. Treasury each year. In other words, art makes money in the United States. In fact, in recent years, art attendance is more than attendance for all professional sports combined.

So, despite all the hubbub of NEA opponents, Americans have indicated that art is important to them. Under current legislation, American citizens spend an average of 38 cents per capita to support the arts annually. This amount is embarrassingly low when one considers that Germans average \$27 per year, and French and Canadian citizens annually average \$32 each.

According to a recent Lou Harris poll, 57 percent of Americans said that "the federal government should provide financial assistance to arts organizations, such as museums, dance, opera, theater groups and symphony orchestras." Furthermore, the study found that 61 percent of Americans would be willing to pay \$5 more in taxes per year to support federal government efforts in the arts.

Apparently, when Americans speak, their legislators do not listen. The House of Representatives recently passed a bill that completely eliminated funding for the NEA for next year. On a more hopeful note, a strong bipartisan wave in the Senate promises not to let the bill pass there, and President Clinton said he will veto any budget that does not include funding for the NEA. As for what will really happen, Americans must just wait and see.

No matter what the NEA's opponents cry is foul, the facts show that the organization has been a national success. NEA funds have helped create works that earned numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Awards, Academy Awards, Tonys and Emmys. Works such as *Driving Miss Daisy* and the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial probably would not have been possible without the support of the NEA.

What conservatives fail to realize is that art is simply a reflection of society. Doing away with the NEA is not going to eliminate the alternative lifestyles that make conservatives so uneasy. These depictions may seem radical today, but many past masterpieces seemed scandalous in their own times, as well. Hutchinson said these artists are probably "depicting life as honestly as they can, and may have their thumb on the pulse of society."

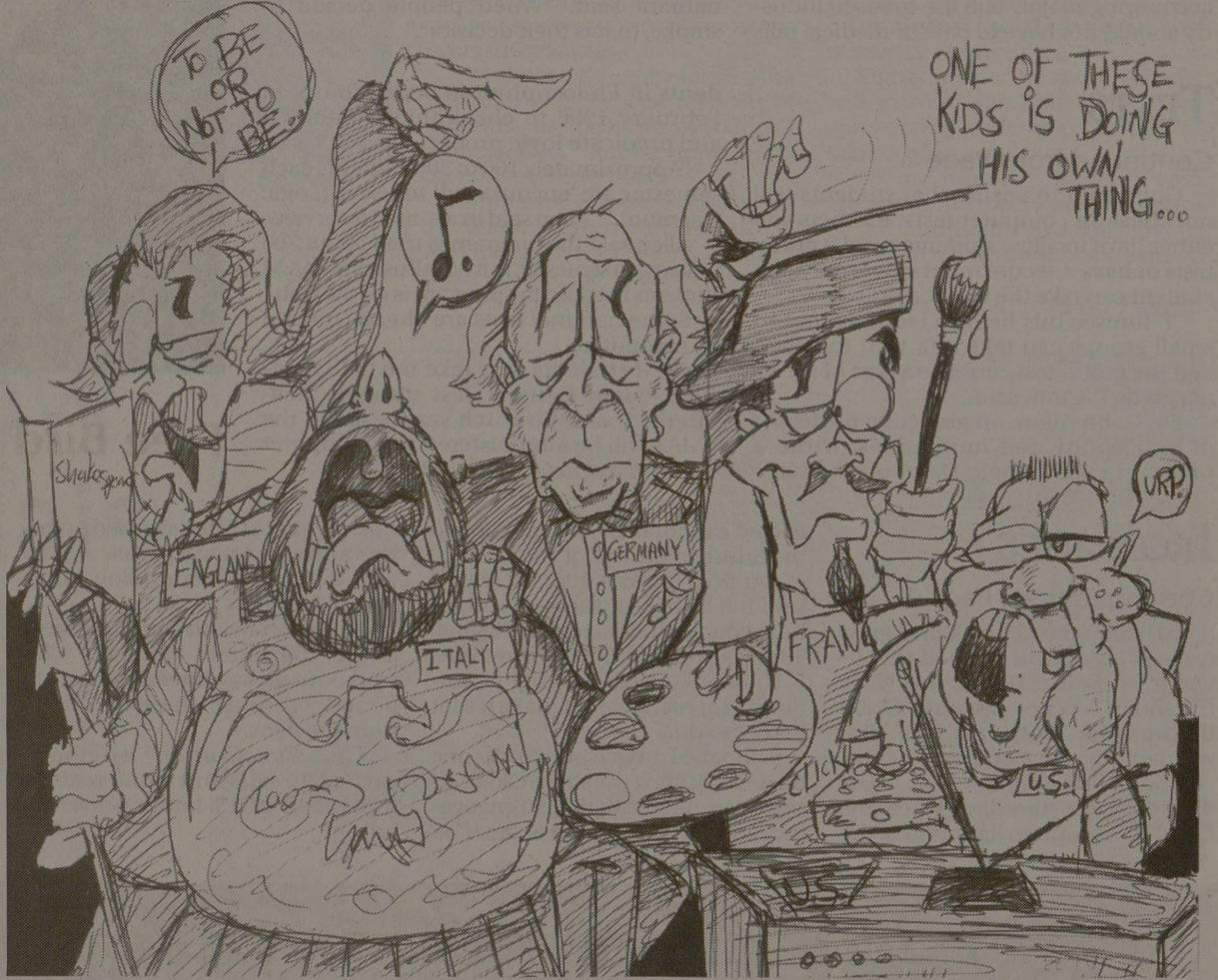
Eliminating the NEA will not make uncomfortable

changes disappear. It will simply take art out of the hands of the public and make it accessible only to the wealthy. Average Americans will not even be able to afford to take their families to the local museum. One can only wonder what will happen to the 1.7 million Americans who make a living in nonprofit arts.

By shutting the doors on the NEA, we are, in effect, taking one more step toward cultural obliteration in America. Culture is what binds us together as a people. It gives societies history and identity. Art is an in-

tegral part of civilized societies. It encourages contemplation and creativity. It makes us laugh, it makes us cry, it makes us remember.

Hutchinson best sums up the value of art: "Art allows us to understand better who we are and where we've come from. We better understand others in this global community, and I think it's also a view to the future. The human spirit is balanced by pragmatism and creativity. We need the arts as well as we need engineering if we're to survive into the next millennium."



GRAPHIC: Brad Graeber

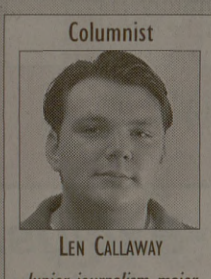
# Private school for lesbians, gays provides student equality

With all the talk recently about equality and non-discrimination, the group has consistently failed to be left out: homosexuals. Last week, three educators in Dallas, Texas announced that they will open a private high school for gay and lesbian students.

Alternative high schools are not new, and neither are high schools for gay and lesbian students. This program is already in place in one form or another in New York, Los Angeles and Toronto. It's about time for one to be created in Texas.

Last week, an Associated Press report dealing with the idea of a gay and lesbian high school said 28 percent of gay and lesbian students drop out of high schools because of peer harassment. This is a sad statistic.

Gay and lesbian students must be guaranteed the same right to education



Columnist  
**LEN CALLAWAY**  
Junior journalism major

as everyone else, because without education, an individual cannot hope to become a responsible and contributing member of society. Students who harass and berate gay and lesbian students should be the ones made to have a hard time at school. As far as any evidence can suggest, a person's sexual orientation has no bearing on his or her ability to learn. An individual's sexual orientation, therefore, has no business being a topic of conversation in the classroom.

The new school's mission statement said that its purpose is "to create an atmosphere of tolerance, an acceptance of sexuality confusion and opportunities for personal growth, so that each individual student can become a fully functioning and healthy member of society." Becky Thompson, the school's director, said the most important aspect of the school is acceptance for all students.

"We want to be a school that people are saying, 'Oh, gee, I want to go to that school because it is tolerant.'"

Tolerance is an important virtue indeed, but at some point, the notion can be more of a hindrance than a help. If an individual dismisses conformity simply because non-conformity will be tolerated, then the main point of tolerance is lost.

All people are different, which is certainly a positive aspect of humanity. At times, however, a certain amount of uniformity is required to be accepted and successful in society. Schools such as these are important because they provide for flexibility. In a country where dropping out and goofing off seem to be trends among students who are not hell-bent on success, it is necessary to provide some sort of alternative.

It is crucial to do everything possible to keep kids in school, including granting accreditation for schools with the

main goal of providing an equal environment for gays and lesbians. As students grow and mature, they often realize the value of education and begin to excel in school. It is important to remain supportive of students when they have been put down by society, to allow them a chance to come back to the public eye and succeed.

The school in Dallas, as proposed, is private, and students who attend will be required to pay approximately \$7,000 in annual tuition. While schools such as these are important because they fill a need for some individuals, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to have these schools funded by taxpayer dollars. Other alternative high schools specialize in education for students with specific learning encumbrances, such as physical limitations, drug dependencies and behavioral problems.

A distinction must be made between physical or mental handicaps and voluntary lifestyles such as drug abuse, de-

pendencies, behavior problems, teen pregnancy and homosexuality.

Taxpayer dollars are freely spent without much cognizance or hesitation on all of the aforementioned situations and specialized programs required to accommodate these types of students — all except homosexuality.

The difference is quite simply that some of these situations are imposed without any conscious choice on the students' part. It is these conditions that are not particularly relevant to the course work of an educational facility, and they should be left outside with taxpayers' money.

We as a society must stop granting second chances and paying for the mistakes of students who do not handle their responsibilities of taking education seriously. If a society rarely holds people accountable for their actions, then it would appear that some people have reasoned that it is seldom necessary to do the right thing.



## MAIL CALL

### PTTS offers no parking solutions

In response to James Wallace's July 21 Mail Call:

Thank you, Wallace, for demonstrating exactly the kind of attitude that makes students at this university hate PTTS so much. In all of my encounters with PTTS "officers," all of them have had the same "holier-than-thou" attitude; most of them are down right rude.

The bottom line is this: The University is here to serve the students, therefore, PTTS is also here to serve the students. PTTS, however, takes the attitude that students here are no more than a source of revenue. Ask any student not employed by PTTS, and you'll get the same reaction. For us, PTTS still stands for "Parking, Ticket and Towing Service."

But here's a suggestion: How about taking all those millions of dollars that you steal from the student body and put them toward

something that will make our lives, and yours, a lot easier — more parking spaces. One new garage is not enough.

The fact that we have the second highest number of parking spaces in the nation is irrelevant. The simple fact is that 27,000 spaces are not enough for 42,000 students. This seems like simple math to me.

Until something helpful is done, I'll join many other students by emblazoning my truck with the motto "PTTS Sucks!"

Brian Bolstad  
Graduate Student

### Media coverage misleads society

In response to Steven Costello's July 17 Mail Call:

I find it rather absurd that so many people such as Costello take what the press says as the genuine truth. The press' primary goal is not to present the truth to the American public, but to sell panic and fear.

Panic and fear generate much more revenue than the truth. Costello described articles depicting a nuclear weapons build-up of the communist nations of North Korea and China and presented them as an immediate threat to the United States.

North Korea's last interest is to start a war with a country that set

up a nuclear arms program designed to annihilate the Soviet Union. Their economy is in shambles and they are more interested in the territory they lost in the '50s, namely South Korea. China is not interested in shooting itself in the foot by threatening its major trading partner with nuclear weapons. If anybody is threatened, it is Russia.

A perpetual animosity has existed between China and Russia over territory, and China, with its ever expanding population, will probably want to expand. The Cold War spanned five decades because the people gobbled up the fear that the government presented to the press and the press served up to the people.

Both sides wasted trillions of dollars building up the military over a paranoia, and we sacrificed thousands of young men's lives over a paranoia of communist expansion. Most people in the '50s and '60s did not even know what communism was, but they built bomb shelters and "ducked and covered" in the name of paranoia.

Governments start wars, but all wars, cold or hot, have to be sold to the public through the press. Whether the public believes them or not is up to the public. So, in the name of humanity, please do not believe everything the press or Costello has to say.

Randall Smith  
Class of '96

① OWN A YACHT?  
② PRIVATE JET SEAT EIGHT OR MORE?  
③ WINE CELLAR LARGER THAN A FOOTBALL FIELD?  
IF YOU ANSWERED "YES," CONGRATULATIONS!  
YOU QUALIFY FOR MY MIDDLE-CLASS TAX CUT!

