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1982

# Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (1979-1992): Memorandum 05

Alexander D. Crary

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M E M O R A N D U M

December 2, 1982

TO: Senator ✓  
FROM: ADC  
RE: R.I. State Council on the Arts

There is a disturbing situation at the RI State Council on the Arts and the article which you refer to in the Journal just touches on some of the problems.

In answer to your question about the closing of the recent Council meeting - no, they cannot legally close it. Channing Grey, the Journal writer, knew that the session in question had been posted as "open" (as all should be), but when he arrived he was turned away. He went immediately to the Attorney General's office and was told that this was a violation of the law. The Journal is now awaiting a written ruling.

The interesting issue, however, is not the legality of closing the meeting but why the meeting was closed. Trouble began when Council members themselves decided to reverse a number of decisions that panel reviewers had made regarding certain institutions that these same Council members are closely linked with. The situation became so sensitive - with panelists and staff lined up against the Council - that the only way the Council could proceed was to close the meeting. It was a sloppy way to cover their tracks.

One of the reversed decisions concerned an application from the RI Philharmonic to subsidize tickets for the disadvantaged. This looks good on paper but apparently the program has been very poorly managed. The panel felt that it was one of the weakest applications and recommended \$1800 rather than the requested \$4000. They wanted to give the balance to a well-run Newport-based music group.

It is customary for Council members to leave the room when institutions with which they are connected are under discussion. In this case Dotty Licht and Ernie Falciglia, both Philharmonic directors, stayed in the room - as did Roberta Holland whose husband sits on the board. Frank Licht, in addition, is the orchestra's attorney. When the meeting was over, no minutes had been taken, there was no record of how members had voted but the Philharmonic had its \$4000 and Newport had nothing.

This same conflict and confusion occurred in a number of other cases. Channing Grey is preparing a long investigative piece for the Journal which will go further into these conflicts of interest, the tight circle that dominates the Council and the perversion of the panel review system.

who?

Very interesting.