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26 June 1985

Dear Colleague:

We write you about the proposed appointment of Edward Curran as chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Because of the MLA's concern for the future of the NEH, the Executive Council, at its May meeting, agreed that the MLA should urge the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, which is responsible for conducting hearings on this appointment, to question Mr. Curran, as the nominee, about his goals for the NEH and his understanding of and attitude toward scholarship in the humanities.

We should make it clear that the MLA is not necessarily opposed to Mr. Curran's appointment. He may, in fact, be the best person for the job, but we need to know more about him. A serious hearing would provide Mr. Curran with the opportunity to talk about his views on the future of the NEH and would give the Senate committee the information it needs in order to decide whether to confirm his appointment.

Mr. Curran's nomination raises a number of questions. Before his confirmation as head of the National Institute of Education, he testified that the NIE was a "paradigm of appropriate federal involvement in education." Nevertheless, after assuming office, he recommended to the President the abolition of the NIE. Will he similarly recommend the abolition of the NEH? Will he understand and appreciate the work of those he will be called on to judge and can he protect the intellectual integrity of the NEH? Finally, can he effectively represent the humanities and the work of scholars in the humanities to the Congress and to the American public?

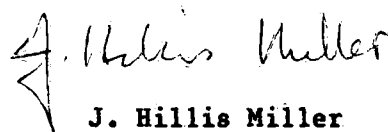
Staff members of several senators on the committee have indicated that letters from MLA members could influence the seriousness of the hearing on this appointment. They say that thus far members of the committee have received almost no letters on this appointment and have therefore concluded that the academic community does not care about it.

Since your state is represented on the committee, your letter will be of special significance. If you wish to write about the importance of this appointment, we urge you to do so immediately. We enclose a list of the members of the committee.

Sincerely yours,



Theodore J. Ziolkowski
President



J. Hillis Miller
First Vice-President

Enclosures: Fact sheet about Edward Curran
List of committee members