

Humanities

From Centennial to Bicentennial

by Daniel Aaron

The Philadelphia Exposition of 1876 marked the official opening of the nation's first century celebration, and millions of visitors came to gawk and marvel at the profusion of exhibits. In his Centennial speech President Grant reminded his countrymen of the nation's stupendous progress since the days when it was new and partially settled. The United States, he asserted with pardonable exaggeration, now rivaled Europe in the arts and sciences. "Whilst proud of what we have done," he concluded, "we regret that we have not done more."

For those of us today who think the nation is morally if not economically bankrupt, it is worth recalling that many Americans in 1876 felt the same way. They worried about the economy and labor unrest and wholesale immorality; they gagged at the squalid scandals of the Grant administration. Politicians close to the President were being jailed or threatened with impeachment. The country had already suffered three years of depression; and by the Centennial failing banks, falling wages and rising unemployment seemed to foreshadow even darker days ahead. Then as today the older generation agonized over the "youth problem" and "crime in the streets." And what was to be done with the unruly women liberationists, demanding the vote, some even threatening to foment a rebellion? No wonder many Americans looked longingly back to what they believed to be a simpler and less harried past.

"A Nation's Banquet"

America in 1876 had less reason than we to fear the future. Its enormous power would soon dazzle the world. If skeptics asked even then how this power would be used, few questioned President Grant's boast that the nation need no longer defer to the Old World. To paraphrase the speech of one poetic United States Senator, the tree of liberty planted in 1776 was "bearing golden fruit," and a grateful people now gathered around its trunk to feast on "a nation's banquet."

The exuberant ceremonial rhetoric inspired by the Centennial may seem out of keeping with the tone and mood of the Bicentennial. Doubts about the national purpose that troubled a thoughtful minority in 1876 are now shared by millions of our contemporaries. The already familiar questions they raised in that

year must be asked again. Does the safety of the nation depend upon the character and intelligence of the electorate? Can or should the states resist the pull of controlled federal authority? Will the convulsions resulting from thickening urban populations and bankruptcy of cities compel a hearing for radical social solutions? "Truly," said a famous English visitor in 1876, "America has a great future before her; great in toil, in care, and in responsibility; great in true glory if she be guided in wisdom and righteousness; great in shame if she fail."

A Bicentennial Course

These and other themes will pervade this third series of Courses by Newspaper—The American Issues Forum I—on the making of American society. The 18 "lectures" or articles comprising the Course have been synchronized with the first four topics of the Calendar of the American Issues Forum, a national program for the Bicentennial year. They are intended to provoke as many questions as possible even if few are fully answered.

What *does* it mean to be an American? Why did the acute American novelist, Henry James, say that being an American was a "complex fate"? Why is the American system of government still referred to as an "experiment"? And more to the point, why at a time of recession at home and misery, hunger, and war abroad should we celebrate the Bicentennial at all? Are the American people really interested in conducting a national dialogue about their history, their

This is an excerpt from the opening article of the third Course by Newspaper, "American Issues Forum I," which will begin in September 1975, a course prepared specifically to help implement the American Issues Forum and so to encourage a dialogue among Americans on some of the issues fundamental to our society.

Courses by Newspaper is a project of University Extension, University of California, San Diego. Daniel Aaron, Professor of English and American Literature at Harvard University and author of this article, is coordinating the courses for 1975-1976.

(BICENTENNIAL, Continued from page 1)

social institutions, their values? Is the Bicentennial merely to be a mindless whitewash—an effort to convince the unconvinced that all is right with the Republic?

It's not hard to understand, for example, why some black Americans (as one black journalist put it) aren't "going around saying, 'wow, great, we were slaves in 1776.'" National holidays don't make second-class citizens, white or non-white, women or men, feel less second-class. History offers small consolation for the insulted and the injured. Yet historical excavation can often put the troubled present into clearer perspective.

The Present in Perspective

As we ponder the meaning of the Bicentennial, do we not unthinkingly take for granted an important fact: that American society—though it limps and coughs and is speckled with warts—still functions reasonably well compared with most other societies and at a time when the majority of the world population is living under authoritarian rule? If Americans are less enlightened, fair-minded, unselfish, and efficient than their flatterers have claimed, are they any worse than the rest of what Mark Twain called "the damned human race"? We are the beneficiaries and victims of a past we did not create. We can't claim credit for the enormous natural resources that made our country rich and powerful; or for Old World institutions that changed and developed in a New World setting; or for the honorable achievements of our remote and recent forebears. Neither should we be held responsible for the folly, ignorance, shortsightedness, or cruelty of dead Americans.

Our turbulent history can be instructive. It furnishes excellent examples of what can happen when ugly passions get out of hand. It also reveals how heroically—and with what energy and resolution—a sometimes foolish and forgetful people have faced their crises. □

Currier and Ives print, 1876, for the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia



NEH Notes

Gifts to NEH in Fiscal 1975

Thanks to hundreds of donors, the Endowment was able to receive and match \$6.5 million in gifts in Fiscal 1975. This amount represents a steady increase in gifts received since NEH began operation from a modest \$100,000 in Fiscal 1967. Gifts were received from individuals, from private foundations and business corporations, from educational, civic and cultural institutions, from state and local governments in response to specific matching offers made by the Endowment in support of over 100 projects recommended by the National Council on the Humanities.

Many donations for the State-based Humanities Committees in each state support community discussion of public policy issues. Others assist educational film productions for nationwide broadcast, museum exhibitions, the development and improvement of humanities instruction in major educational institutions. Gifts are used to train humanists beyond the post-doctoral level, to enhance the capabilities of college libraries to serve their students, to support humanistic work at medical and bioethics centers. They support archeological work of many kinds, preservation of film and collections of other historical documents such as the private papers of scholars, writers and statesmen.

NEH Application Deadlines—1975

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|-------------|--|
| October 14 | FELLOWSHIPS
Fellowships in Residence for College Teachers, 1976-77
Summer Stipends, 1976 |
| October 15 | PUBLIC PROGRAMS
Media, Museums, Program Development beginning after April 1, 1976 |
| November 1 | EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Education Projects Grants, beginning after May 1, 1976 |
| November 10 | RESEARCH GRANTS
Research Tools and Editing, beginning after July 1, 1976 |
| November 15 | YOUTHGRANTS
Projects beginning after April 1, 1976
EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Planning Grants, beginning after May 1, 1976 |
| December 1 | EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Humanities Institutes, beginning after July 1, 1976
RESEARCH GRANTS
General Research, beginning after July 1, 1976 |



American Issues Forum—Off to a Flying Start

Hardly a man, woman, or child in the United States is now alive—or will be as the fall season gets underway—who has not been exposed to the American Issues Forum.

The activities devised to inform people about, or involve them in, the Forum, which was developed under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities and co-sponsored by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, range from television series to Forum Calendars stuffed in August-September bank statements to nationwide debates for both high school and college-age students to the inserting of the Calendar (in a pullout version) into *Time*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Ebony*, *National Geographic*, *Reader's Digest* and *Scholastic Magazines*.

In discussing the projects already underway or being planned, Ronald S. Berman, Chairman of the Endowment, has said, "These ideas are intended to encourage every citizen of this country, as well as many from other lands, to take part in a serious dialogue about the fundamental issues of American society. The success of the Forum will depend upon the degree to which the nation—through its organizations, institutions, corporations, foundations, communities, neighborhoods, groups, families, and individuals—develops programs under the calendar of topics which the Forum affords." While none of the programs can be carried on without cost, the Forum was designed to run without any great infusion of either public or private funds. "Rather," Dr. Berman said, "it provides a means of ordering and concentrating, to the nation's advantage, serious interests and programs which might otherwise have been diffuse, scattered, miscellaneous during the Bicentennial year."

The Calendar of Forum topics runs for the nine months from September 1975 to May 1976 corresponding with the school year, the club and organization year, the broadcast year. The Calendar and some of the major programs developed under the Forum have been presented in previous issues of *Humanities*: the list of Calendar topics was printed in

the December 1974 issue; the Adult Education Association Community Leaders Workshops and the Bicentennial Youth Debates were discussed in the February 1975 issue; Courses by Newspaper (University of California, San Diego Extension) and the American Library Association reading lists were described in the April 1975 issue. Other major programs will be featured in the newsletter throughout the AIF year.

The Calendar for the American Issues Forum was developed by NEH under the guidance of a small National Planning Group. Each of the nine monthly topics is divided into four weekly subtopics so that the framework of the dialogue is available for whatever use individuals or groups wish to make of it.

While it is impossible to describe all the programs being undertaken in response to the Forum, a sampling of those not previously mentioned will suggest the variety of participating organizations and activities already underway. National Public Radio will present nine monthly three-hour radio forums, including presentations, discussions, and national call-in sessions to be broadcast on the first Saturday of each month. Commercial television will have public affairs programs, specials, news broadcasts, talk shows and sit-com entertainment programs tied in as much as scheduling allows to Forum topics.

The Adult Education Association is preparing a Spanish version of the full Calendar with supporting materials for the use of local community groups. Screen News Digest/Hearst Metrotone News has prepared a 20-minute color film documentary on the Forum to introduce interested community organizations and groups to the Forum, with Summary Calendar/Discussion Guide. Scholastic Magazines' *Scholastic Voice* will have monthly statements on the Forum's topics relating various literary works and trends to the monthly issues.

National organizations will be preparing specific Forum material for their memberships; among them are the American Association for State and Local History (assistance to historical organizations); AFL-CIO (labor perspectives); Foreign Policy Association (discussion materials); National Association for the

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Humanities Revolution in Denver

Isn't it stretching the truth to find analogies between the history of Ancient Greece and the Vietnam War? Forty-five students and five faculty members, representing the history, philosophy, theater, language and art departments of the University of Denver, didn't think so. All of them were engaged in a 10-week, full-time program devoted exclusively to the study of Classical Athens. The Vietnam War was still in progress at the time and when the discussion of Athens' abortive invasion of Sicily in 415 B. C. came up, the parallels seemed striking.

The class immediately saw Athens as the counterpart of the United States and Sicily as Vietnam. Like Vietnam, this was an overseas war with people of an alien culture whom the Athenians did not understand and underestimated. Athens was sharply divided between the hawks who favored an all-out attack and the doves who urged a peaceful approach. Partly because the rival factions could not work out a united policy, the war failed. Sparta, Athens' rival, supported the Sicilians in much the same way, the class agreed, as the Soviet Union supported North Vietnam and some even saw the role of Carthage as similar to that of China. To clinch the argument, one student obtained some film clips of the Vietnam conflict and coupled them convincingly with a narration from Thucydides' account of the Sicilian involvement.

Obviously, something unusual was going on in this classroom along with the normal academic routine of listening to lectures, absorbing information, and reading books. A matter of great immediate personal and social concern to students and faculty alike was given a new perspective in the light of an ancient historical event. In the creative Humanities Program of the University of Denver, now beginning its fifth year of operation, such happenings are the rule rather than the exception.

Cultural Crisis and Creativity

This intensive, in-depth study of late fifth century Athens is only one of 11 such programs made possible by a 5-year, \$1,200,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and a much larger investment from the University itself. Outside donors

have also made substantial contributions. Other periods covered are Julius Caesar's Rome, Medieval Paris, Elizabethan England, Goethe's Germany and the French Revolutionary period. These programs, however, are not confined to Western civilization. The student may elect to study the ancient civilizations of Gupta India or Sung China. If he has a contemporary turn of mind, he may choose "Mexico in the 20th Century" or "Black Culture in Modern America."

The students to whom these offerings are available are not graduates or seniors or the specially gifted. They are designed for any freshmen or sophomores willing to devote one academic quarter to the study of a society during a period of cultural crisis and creativity. For this, they receive 15 credits and are freed from other assignments. The only exception to the culture-in-crisis pattern is the later addition of "Images of Man," which explores the fundamental question of all the humanities—"What is Man?"—by studying some of our significant attempts at self-understanding and self-fulfillment.

Since the winter of 1972, about 500 students have chosen this way to fulfill the humanities requirement of Denver's College of Arts and Sciences. During the 5-year period in which the University will be receiving Endowment support, about 90 faculty members and more than a thousand students will have participated. To date, continuing evaluations, including lengthy questionnaires filled out by the students at the conclusion of each program, are overwhelmingly favorable. The faculty has been equally enthusiastic. With one year to go in its trial period it is already clear that this new approach will continue as a permanent part of the University's curriculum.

More than that, it has already had a profound effect on the entire educational structure of the university. Several departments outside the humanities are planning their own courses along similar lines. The science faculty has completed a highly successful course on "The Age of Newton" which it intends to repeat. As a result of the increased popularity of the humanities, the University has instituted new majors in Chinese, Classical Studies, and Medieval Studies. Fourteen new full-time positions have been created

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and more are contemplated.

In fact, the influence of this pioneer method of teaching the humanities has gone far beyond the confines of the campus and in one notable instance has actively involved thousands of citizens in the Denver community. It all happened because a class related to the Sung China program, given for the third time last spring, coincided with the opening of the Peking-sponsored Art Exhibition in Kansas City. This program focuses on the dynasty which ruled China from the 10th to the 13th century A. D., a colorful era of great scholarship and creativity in the arts carried on in the face of constant threats of barbarian invasions. "Pretty far out," was the opinion of the dubious, but the course has already proven one of the most popular on campus.

Series Geared to China Exhibit

With the help of NEH funds, which enabled the University to add to the faculty several leading authorities on China and to obtain outside speakers, the decision was made to organize a series of lectures and discussions geared to the upcoming exhibition, and including the general public. Not anticipating a particularly large response, the first lecture was scheduled in a 200-seat auditorium. About 20 minutes before starting time the hall was overflowing and the event had to be moved to the largest facility on campus, which at that could hardly handle the crowd. Before the series was finished 6,000 persons had attended one or more of the lectures and a number of mass tours was organized to fly the 600 miles from Denver to Kansas City to attend the exhibition. The project was the most popular event initiated by the University in years.

The man most responsible for the realization of this new approach to the teaching of the humanities is Edward Lindell, Dean of the University of Denver's College of Arts and Sciences. Several years ago Dean Lindell came to the conclusion that something had to be done about the fact that the college was too weighted toward the sciences, that a balanced curriculum required that the humanities be upgraded and given more visibility, and that the sins of the fragmentation of the disciplines should be ameliorated. He envisioned a new bachelor's degree that would subordinate discipline-oriented specialization to an interdisciplinary approach to liberal education. The Dean invited faculty proposals. One submitted by History Professor Robert Roeder aided and abetted by his colleague, Allen Breck, seemed most promising. In essence, the proposal offered an alternative to the traditional survey approach in which the humanities are studied either through separate courses in specific disciplines or by means of an introductory course which attempts to cover the entire history of mankind from the primordial ooze to the atom bomb.

Roeder's and Breck's idea was to narrow the focus and concentrate on studies of relatively short epochs, exploring each from the perspective of a number of

humanistic disciplines. The criterion for selecting these periods was that they should involve societies in times of high creativity, yet faced with pressures to make critical choices, necessitating basic changes in their institutions and values. The presumption, verified in practice, was that the "cultural shock" of a really serious effort to understand such a society would produce in the students new insights into their own humanity and the contemporary social and ethical problems they face as individuals and citizens. Specific curricula would be developed by faculty teams representing those fields with the greatest bearing on the particular culture.

But it was evident that to carry out such a comprehensive plan would require outside financial sup-

Understanding a culture through exploration of its cultural activities, students participate in a calligraphy workshop.



port. Faculty would need time to plan the syllabi and arrange for others to take over their regular teaching assignments. In certain instances, new personnel would have to be hired, outside speakers selected, and additional material resources obtained. Building facilities for a Humanities Center would have to be provided by the University to make possible the close association between teachers and students desired. Since the National Endowment for the Humanities was instituting a new grant program at the time for just such broadly based approaches to humanities instruction, the University of Denver applied for and received one of the first of these Institutional Development grants.

The decision was made to devise 10 to 12 courses, each to be offered in some quarter of the academic year so that they would be available to all qualified applicants. A Humanities Council was formed, including the eight chairmen of the departments concerned, to review the proposals and determine which ones would be implemented.

Once the general lines were laid down, Dean Lindell decided to leave the matter as much as possible in faculty hands. The results were highly encouraging. The teams came up with more proposals than the college could handle. They spent untold hours in developing their syllabi. Commenting on the general reaction, Dean Lindell said, "It has proven the easiest job I've ever had, because it has been faculty-developed, faculty-supported and faculty-implemented."

An Interweaving of Perspectives

The idea of a team of teachers regarding it as their constant responsibility to attend each others' lectures may be hard to imagine, but the Denver experiment proves it can work. Not that it didn't require adaptation. Both in the program-planning stage and in the first actual run-through, a great deal had to be learned. And the learning process is still continuing. At first, individual professors on a team had a natural tendency to try to carve out their own niches from the point of view of their particular expertise, a problem that has proved a stumbling block to the effectiveness of so many attempts at interdisciplinary education. But sooner or later, the team found they couldn't get very far with this kind of compartmental attitude. Instead, it became standard practice to start out by defining key problems, themes, and questions raised by the particular society under study, and then have faculty members contribute to their understanding by an interweaving of perspectives. In "Elizabethan England," for example, an understanding of Elizabeth was deepened by seeing her, not just in her political and historical role, but in the context of the music, literature, and art of Tudor England.

To fully appreciate Thucydides, one had to understand not only his history of the Peloponnesian War, but the religious and philosophical milieu of Athens expressed by Plato and Aristotle, the great Greek dramas, Greek art, sculpture and archaeology.

Experience led to the general policy that, despite

the difficulties for first- and second-year students, primary sources should be stressed. This meant that students with only high-school French were confronted with having to read Voltaire in the original; and, in the German program, teen-agers with practically no philosophical background had to come to grips with some basic ideas of Kant and Hegel. Such demands are usually expected to apply only to seniors or graduates and, to be sure, about 10 percent of those registered dropped out in the early stages. But to the surprise of many, those who stuck it out were usually able to rise to the challenge and most found these courses, despite their toughness, among the most rewarding of their college careers.

Emphasis on Contrasts

One of the features of the methodology for the Denver program was to emphasize contrasts rather than to draw parallels with the contemporary world. To dramatize the elaborate formality of 12th century Chinese society in contrast to the hang-loose style of American youth, the Sung Chinese class decided to simulate a Chinese civil service examination, first instituted during that period. Candidates were required to wear formal dress. Punctuality to the minute was required and no one came late. Applicants had to compose in advance a nine-line poem with a strict rhyme scheme and memorize long passages from Confucius' "Analects." Those who passed the written test were then required to submit to an imperial oral examination presided over by an upperclass major in Chinese studies in the role of "Emperor." By regulation only five Chinese could be selected at the end of this elaborate process; at Denver the student-examiners passed only three.

One factor important to the success of the new humanities program is the spirit of cooperation and sense of community that usually develops. When four to eight faculty members live a substantial part of their lives together, first to hammer out a syllabus over a period of many months, sometimes stretching to more than a year, the feeling that they have a stake in the outcome is bound to be unusually high. And when the plan is carried out by these same individuals with a group of 20 to 60 students all working together at least 5 days a week, 6 hours a day for two-and-a-half months, the stimulus becomes contagious and produces some extraordinary phenomena. To put their newly-acquired musical knowledge to use, a group of students in the Elizabethan England class appeared in the Tudor Room of the Denver Art Museum without prior arrangement to sing a program of madrigals for the rest of the class and a group of surprised museum visitors.

On one occasion, the faculty of "Images of Man" were treated to the incredible spectacle of watching their charges eject a classmate because he was "wasting the class' time" with a poorly prepared assignment. In another program, the spirit of camaraderie grew so close that students held a reunion party six months after the conclusion of the course.

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But students aren't the only ones to profit from this sort of educational experience. New and creative insights broaden and enrich faculty perspectives, and teaching styles can be enormously influenced. One professor, who was criticized for talking over the heads of the students, decided to try an experiment. In the next period, announcing himself as a Greek sophist, he offered his teaching services to the class, using the Socratic method of answering their questions with questions of his own. The ensuing dialogue and arguments were most invigorating.

Another professor, stimulated by the lively interest of both his associates and his classes in applying the new science of ecology to the environmental problems of past cultures, embarked on a program of research on the subject. As a result, he has already published several articles and a book, "Ecology in Ancient Civilizations," an account of noise and air pollution, deforestation, and the general deterioration of the environment by man in the Graeco-Roman world.

Need for Flexibility

But every creative idea has its price and Denver's experiment in the humanities is no exception. The total commitment necessary to the realization of any of these courses causes a sharp break in educational continuity. Some professors not in the program aren't happy to lose their students for 10 weeks. In particular, the stiff requirements for those majoring in science discourage many from electing this way of studying the humanities. From the beginning the administration as well as the faculty was aware that offering these courses would pre-empt important freshman and sophomore English requirements. Special efforts have therefore been made to give frequent writing assignments in which papers are judged not only for content but for good English usage, grammar and style.

The inordinate amount of time required to prepare and teach these programs poses another serious problem. Even more basic is the fact that the unconventional demands of this approach are bound to disrupt established educational philosophies. To overcome such reservations is more than a matter of funds. The idea has to be sold, sacrifices must be made, and compromises reached. Extraordinary flexibility is needed. But if Denver's experience is any measure, the achievements have made the efforts worthwhile.

The question arises as to whether the Denver plan would work as well in other colleges. According to Dean Lindell, this depends on the institution. Colleges which rely on commuting students or those who work part-time would have serious difficulties. So would small colleges without "the critical mass" of resources to get such a program started. Again, Dean Lindell is of the opinion that such an idea would be less likely to have an impact on large universities. But for Denver, which is a medium-sized institution with about 2,500 freshmen and sophomores, it has worked ex-

tremely well.

To begin with, a college which decides to give the idea a try should choose programs for which they need only call upon existing resources. Most medium-sized colleges would not have to go very far outside their own campus to develop courses such as Classical Athens or Imperial Rome, Elizabethan England or the French or English Enlightenment. Beyond this, to vary the fare, each institution would have to evaluate its resources and determine whether the necessary financial support would be available. Even though most colleges would be unlikely to select for study such cultures as Gupta India, Sung China, or Mexico in the 20th Century, they would in all probability have other specialties. But whatever decisions are made, Dean Lindell is convinced that for those willing and able to make the effort, this style of interdisciplinary teaching is transferable and can prove fruitful.

Professor Harry Klocker of the philosophy department is the present overall director of Denver's new humanities program. He is also one of the teachers of the course in Medieval Paris. He had this to say in his evaluation: "With three or four professors at the lectures each day, all representing their individual areas of expertise, it quickly becomes apparent to everyone that the professor of art looks at a cathedral differently than an historian, and both view Dante from different perspectives than a philosopher or theologian. The faculty responds to these changed perspectives with enthusiasm and their reaction causes heightened student response." It is the interaction between faculty and faculty, between student and student, and between faculty and student that makes the humanities so lively these days at the University of Denver. □

The above article was written by Roger Lyons, freelance writer and consulting editor for the Voice of America.

Mary Lanius, an art historian at the University of Denver, discusses the sculpture of Gupta India.





Grant Profiles

"I'll Never Look at Movies the Same Way!"

Ever since (back in '94) the first foot of film was shown to the first paying customer in a musty New York kinetoscope parlor, Americans have been treated to a grand cinematic time: mass-produced amour, glamour, dreams, visions—anything to please, amuse, excite, or divert. Yet the average person has been relatively unaware of the *manipulative* power of those perforated strips of celluloid. For through the years motion pictures, apart from offering just plain fun, have been: reflectors of social consciousness, barometers of changing sexual attitudes, tools for propaganda, molders of public opinion, and much, much more.

To demonstrate the huge influence exerted by movies, 25-year-old Gary P. Collins, an honor student and film studies major at Northwestern Connecticut Community College, was awarded a grant by the NEH "Youthgrants in the Humanities" program to conduct a Film Influence Study Project which, he feels, helped the participants "develop a new awareness of films as an aesthetic and manipulative medium." A typical participant comment: "You know, I don't think I'll ever look at movies the same way!"

Twice a week for 12 summer weeks in 1973 students of NCCC and citizens of the town of Winsted, site of the college, sat through screenings, short lectures, and seminar discussions to explore the influence of such classics as: the 1939 German film "Triumph of the Will" (to show movies as propaganda); 1935's "G-Men" and 1967's "Bonnie and Clyde" (to show the contrast in attitudes toward crime); 1959's "The Defiant Ones" (to demonstrate a new awareness of blacks and an attempt to get beyond stereotypes); 1933's "I'm No Angel" (to depict the censorship problems Mae West ran into); 1939's "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" (to display film as a molder of public opinion).

Questionnaires filled out before and after all the films had been shown revealed, said Collins, "a shift toward an admission on the part of the participants of the impact and the extent to which they had been influenced in these various areas by films." He added: "The project made them a more discerning audience of the visual mass media, and enhanced their under-

standing and appreciation of the medium."

Apart from showing the influence of films, the project achieved the second of its goals, said Collins: to provide other community colleges in Connecticut, as well as other interested organizations, with a model upon which they may pattern similar programs.

Now 28 and a regional sales manager for Universal films in New York, Collins said that as far as today's films are concerned: "There are still plenty of manipulative ones around, in the sense, for instance, of taking two hours worth of film to wring people out, guaranteeing to keep them totally involved, with constant build-up, small letdown, more build-up, more letdown—a very tiring experience!"

Yet somehow, for many, still "just plain fun."

—Gerald S. Snyder

Last Stand Farmer

Sitting attentively in the auditorium of the small-town Vermont public school, the assembled farmers and townspeople watch the screen as the last minutes of the film *LAST STAND FARMER* play out . . .

The lanky figure of 67-year-old Vermont hilltop farmer Kenneth O'Donnell is seen stomping through the snow on the path leading to the mountain pasture where the plow team spends short winter days. He takes down the rail gate and leads the two brown draft horses down the path and into the barn that he and his brothers built on the 180-acre farm 30 years ago. "People work a lifetime to save a little. I hate to see it all go down," O'Donnell says in a voiceover. "Some people wouldn't give a nickel for this place in winter. But after you've lived on it for a lifetime, it's the only place you'd want to be." He beds down the horses, stopping to pat the rump of one. "The horses don't look as good this year as last," he states matter-of-factly—with an irony not lost on the viewers who, in the 25 minutes of the film, have come to know him and his struggle to hold out against the social changes and escalating taxes that threaten his way of life. Film credits flicker by silently. O'Donnell moves off-camera, the image of the draft horses lingers a moment, then fades.

As the lights come up in the school auditorium the local moderator calls forward the four humanists introduced before the screening. They will participate



Suzanne Opton photos

in, but not lead, a discussion of the film which was produced with support from the NEH state-based program in Vermont—the Vermont Council on the Humanities and Public Issues—as a focus for local discussion of current public policy questions.

The atmosphere is decidedly informal as the moderator addresses the crowd, “Any reactions?” Six hands shoot up. The discussion is quick and articulate, led by the farmers who comprise 50 percent of the audience.

Reactions to the film and to the film's subjects, Ken O'Donnell and his wife Helen, are personal. At issue are questions of public policy important to all Vermonters: land use planning, taxation, stewardship of land, problems of the elderly, private vs. public support, and attitudes towards changing ways of life and agriculture.

Cinéma vérité, *LAST STAND FARMER* is an effective vehicle for public issues review. O'Donnell is a strong engaging character, a 19th century man in a 20th century world. Yet, judged by modern terms, O'Donnell is less than efficient as a farmer and his approach to dealing with the modern world could be seen as refusing to deal with it at all. The tractor he bought 10 years ago sits new and unused in the shed. He prefers the old ways and farms with a horse-drawn plow, eking out a living from the soil.

But, though O'Donnell lives the way he wants to live and has never asked for public assistance, he will soon be forced to give up his land. One of the last marginal farmers in his part of the state, he is getting old and taxes have risen beyond his reach. His way of life is obsolete, for in this state land is assessed at market value and the market caters to the developers. Good or bad, the days of farmers and independents like Kenneth O'Donnell are numbered. His circumstances and choices provide a way of revealing basic policy questions for all of Vermont and for other Americans as well.

LAST STAND FARMER will be distributed free of charge to interested groups in Vermont through ar-

rangements made by the Vermont Council on the Humanities and Public Issues. The film was broadcast over the seven transmitters of Vermont Educational Television June 19. Distribution rights of *LAST STAND FARMER* outside of Vermont are retained by the producer Richard Brick. The film was honored June 11 by a showing at the New York Museum of Modern Art and won a documentary award at a national film festival.

—Sally Ferguson

Preferring the old ways in a mechanical age, Kenneth O'Donnell uses the traditional methods to mow hay (above) and to stack it (below).



Advancement of Colored People, National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, and National Urban League (minority viewpoints); The National Council on the Aging (older Americans materials); National Federation of the Blind ("talking discs"); National Grange (rural and small town issues); and Women in Community Service, Inc. (women's viewpoints).

In response to interest from abroad, the U.S. Information Agency will distribute the Forum Calendar to U.S. embassies, along with video tapes, reading lists, and special discussion guides on Forum topics.

A final category of sponsors for the Forum consists of educational, civic and religious organizations which are concentrating on regional, state and community programs. State and regional Bicentennial Commissions will be setting up information networks to introduce the Forum to regions and states. State Humanities Committees will provide Forum information to the public through newsletters and other publications, will offer Forum film and literature to community groups, and will fund Forum projects. The University of Denver is developing a regional Forum program with supporting materials and coordination throughout a six-state region embracing Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

The Adult Education Association has scheduled 1350 workshops to assist community leaders in developing Forum programs for their localities. Project For-

ward '76 is promoting the Forum through the religious media and with a reader's guide for religious organizations, churches and synagogues planning Forum discussion and study groups. The National Congress of PTA is preparing taped radio interviews and discussion guides for schools and student organizations.

The Brochure for the American Issues Forum sounds the call for nationwide participation in these words: "An effort at orderly public discourse seems an especially fitting way to commemorate the nation's founding, for the Declaration of Independence was itself the product of well-ordered debate. . . . A free people, to remain free, must continually reexamine itself. . . . We may finally find the continuity of our experience, a sense of our tradition, to affirm and renew." □

Fiscal 1976 Appropriations

The House of Representatives on July 23 took action on the NEH appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 1976, voting \$72 million in outright funds for the programs of the Endowment plus \$7.5 million to be available for matching private gifts. This compares with \$67.2 million in regular program funds and a matching authority of \$6.5 million in Fiscal Year 1975.

The Senate is expected to take action on the bill in September. □

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