

an idea that was carried over from 1960 into 1961, and was supported by both administrations.
Dr. Singer?

TESTIMONY OF MAXINE F. SINGER, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, PRESIDENT, CARNEGIE INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON

Ms. SINGER. Good morning, sir. I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to the committee. Like all the members of the commission, I come from the world outside the Smithsonian. I myself am a biochemist, and as Secretary Heyman has told you, I am the president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington which is an independent institution that carries out research in astronomy, biology, and earth sciences. The institution is based here in Washington, DC, where I reside.

Two years ago I was asked by the regents of the Smithsonian to chair a commission of private citizens charged with an examination of the Smithsonian, its mandate, and its roles, and an examination of the cultural, societal, and technological factors that influence its capacity to act. Based on these examinations we were to provide alternative approaches to the issues facing the Smithsonian rather than making specific recommendations. Nevertheless, with a commission composed of a large number of independent people, making some recommendations was a temptation that the commission found impossible to resist.

The names of the 22 commission members are listed on page 3 of our report which we submitted to the regents earlier this month, and copies of the report have been submitted to the committee in lieu of written testimony. I thank the committee on behalf of the commission for this opportunity to describe the results of our work. I would like to summarize how we organized our efforts and the major points in our report.

Funds for the commission's work were provided by grants from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. At our first meeting in September of 1993 we determined the scope of our work and established three independent working groups to investigate in-depth three major areas: First, programs; second, outreach, audience and electronic communication; and third, management, administration and finance. The entire commission met on three additional occasions to hammer out a consensus.

In addition, members of the commission visited comparable institutions in Canada, England, and France. Throughout we had the full cooperation of the Smithsonian's Secretary and staff in providing information. Our study was broad and our focus was

on the future. We tried to peer out 10 to 20 years, although we recognized that we had no reliable crystal ball.

Remarkably, in view of the range of geographic and professional, not to mention social and political experiences, represented among the commission members we reached consensus. Perhaps this was because the Smithsonian represents to all of us our great and vibrant Nation in all of its perplexities and complexity. Perhaps this is also the reason that we found Twyla Tharp's words such an apt title for the report, "E Pluribus Unum: This Divine Paradox."

Our Nation, of course, has thousands of public and private museums, as you have already pointed out. But the Smithsonian is distinctive because it is the Nation's institution. It is also a part of a vast international network of cultural and scientific institutions and we can be proud of its outstanding reputation abroad for the excellence of its collections, exhibitions, research, collaborative efforts with many scholars in countries all over the globe, and exemplary training programs for young scholars and museum professionals.

Our Nation is a very different one from the young country that it was in 1846 when the Congress accepted James Smithson's bequest and established the Smithsonian as an institution for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." Those words nevertheless remain sound guides, although the Smithsonian too has changed enormously and will continue to do so as the Nation and the world change.

Among the changes at the Smithsonian is a shift in the emphasis given to these two aspects of Smithson's instruction. Fifty years ago, the emphasis was on scholarly research; the increase in knowledge. Today there is more of an equilibrium between research and the diffusion of knowledge; that is, education. The commission supports this shift.

Because enhancing the education of both children and adults is a high priority need in our country, the commission would even emphasize new educational initiatives, especially ones that reach out across the Nation. These can be through modern electronic means, partnerships, traveling and collaborative exhibitions, and public programs. We stress the opportunities provided by electronic information technology and urge that they be made a priority throughout the institution. We can see the beginnings of that effort, in fact, in Speaker Gingrich's participation last week in the inauguration of the Smithsonian home page on the Internet as well as some of the things that Secretary Heyman has already mentioned to you this morning.

Education is one of the four interrelated core activities of the Smithsonian. The other three are collections, research, and exhibitions. The commission believes that the collections that have been amassed over the last 150 years are central to all the activities and to the significance of the institution. But already

storage and care of the collections is a major headache because of limited space and funds.

Moreover, the collections will not stand still. They will grow as the great events and discoveries of the future expand our Nation's history and accomplishments. A master plan for future collections management is essential. Criteria and timetables that are flexible with respect to intellectual and financial considerations will be needed.

Without research, the objects in the collection are of little educational, cultural, or scientific value. This does not mean, however, that the way research is organized and carried out need be stagnant. America now has many excellent research organizations. The Smithsonian should emphasize its unique research opportunities, including the collections, areas of particular excellence, and long term global projects that are hard to do in other places.

Outstanding research requires an excellent research staff. The commission asks whether the current rigidities of Federal personnel practices can be replaced by a more flexible system that better balances the interests of the institution and the individual researchers; for example, by facilitating temporary appointments of scholars interested in particular collections. This could help the institution face the often painful issue of how programs and people that have already realized their potential or failed in their tasks can be redirected or released.

Priorities need to be established for restoration, renewal and expansion of existing permanent exhibitions. The need is acute. In addition, there are now so many specialized museums around the country that the Smithsonian can use its resources for unique exhibitions that are not possible in those other settings.

Museums in general, and the Smithsonian in particular are, as we certainly heard this morning, increasingly flashpoints in the debates that characterize our Nation's transition from a society that depends for coherence on a single accepted set of values and practices to one that derives its strength and unity from a deep tolerance of diversity. This happens because museums, to fulfill their missions, must prepare exhibitions that record and illuminate this transition. Sometimes this engenders acrimonious and contentious debate.

The Smithsonian's position, as we have seen this morning and in the past months, is especially challenging because it is a national institution. The commission suggests several ideas that might help forge a more tranquil path while still allowing a full and fair debate. For example, we hope that the institution will increasingly be recognized as an intellectual forum rather than a cultural or scientific authority, or even a home for congratulations.

Also, a mechanism for broader and independent review of proposed exhibitions could be established, striving for balance between constructive judgments and criticism of an exhibition's

content and the desirable independence of the curators and scholars who are responsible for the exhibition. Such a process should distinguish between the need to protect the intellectual freedom of those individuals in their own scholarly work and publication and the public responsibilities of the Smithsonian in its exhibitions. Such mechanisms and others that we mention in the report could help release the tension within the institution regarding how it responds to the public, the Congress, and the media on controversial issues.

Mindful of the programmatic issues, the commission addressed questions of governance, management, and financial need and resources. We recognize the ongoing need for the regents' guidance to the fullest possible extent. For this reason, we urge creation of standing committees of regents and that individual regents interface with one or more of the advisory boards to the museums and centers on a regular basis.

We also suggest in our report, which echoes some of the things that were said this morning, that advisory boards be appointed for all the museums and centers, and that the regents define the role of those boards, thereby strengthening them and their ability to provide both the Secretary and the directors of the individual museums and centers with the advice and support they need as well as enhancing fund-raising capabilities. It is only by giving the advisory boards a clear and useful role that it will be possible to attract highly talented leaders from around the country to serve on them.

The commission examined internal organizational structures and considered whether they were optimal for the coming decades. In particular, we were concerned with the appropriate balance of responsibility between the Secretary and the central administrative staff and the directors of the individual components. Each of the Smithsonian's major museums is the size and complexity of many independent institutions. Each has a different mission and a different culture. The Secretary must preside over all. Moreover, the Secretary also deals with an institution that depends both on public appropriations and private funds, including fund-raising.

Built into any system this complex is the tension between central control and unit autonomy. There was broad agreement in the commission that in this situation much is to be gained by decentralizing decision-making authority. The more autonomous the decision-makers in the various museums and centers, the easier it will be to recruit outstanding individuals to lead those entities, and the better the resulting decisions. In addition, the decisions and the people making them will be more accountable.

Of course, this oversimplifies a very complex matter. The commission recognized how difficult it is to weigh the cost and benefit of standardization against the potential payoffs from local initiatives, but we think this needs to be done. Obviously,

there are things the central administration must do. Foremost, the Secretary must articulate a broad vision and convey that vision effectively to the Smithsonian's various constituencies.

The Secretary must guide the development of strategies and priorities with the advice of regents. Equally important are the responsibilities to attract and select the very best people to direct the museums and research centers and to allocate human and financial resources among the several units. The commission also points out ways to improve the assessment procedures in the institution in order to assure better quality.

Virtually all of the commission's comments were made with an eye to assuring the future of this marvelous national resource in an era of stringent financial considerations. This is why, for example, we put so much emphasis on outreach by electronic means and partnerships with other institutions, museums, research centers, and K through 12 education programs rather than building new Smithsonian outposts around the country. Similarly, the commission calls for a moratorium on the construction of new museums in Washington except where firm legislative and financial commitments exist as in the case of the National Museum of the American Indian.

Rather, we stress the need to devote resources to the rehabilitation and maintenance of the aging existing facilities. The magnificent vista along the Mall hides major needs for renovation, restoration, and modernization. Without prompt attention to this, the Smithsonian risks becoming a dilapidated monument to the past. We also believe that new exhibition space can be generated if facilities for the storage of collections were constructed outside of central Washington. This approach could also provide modern storage for precious items.

Nevertheless, the growth of the Smithsonian in size and complexity over the past several decades has outpaced the resources available to sustain the high quality of the very programs that we all enjoy. This problem is exacerbated by inflation, by federally mandated expenditures such as pay increases, and a decrease in revenues from activities that depend on a healthy economy. Very significant decreases in staff and postponements of maintenance have already been made. This gap really needs to be made up if there is to be incentive for making the necessary difficult choices.

Changes in federally mandated rules can, as I pointed out, help increase efficiency. At the same time, the commission stresses that additional expansion of the facilities and programs, even if the funds were available, is not necessarily the best way to assure the institution's critical role in our national life.

Even with all these internal measures, the commission found that additional funds for operations and capital needs are required over and above the current budgets. We analyzed all possible sources of funds. We urge, for example, increased and optimized efforts to attract private funds. There was on the

commission substantial collective experience in fund-raising. We concluded that in the present economic climate of the Nation, even with the very best of efforts and maximum possibility of success, it is unrealistic to think that private fund-raising can meet the institution's needs.

We also studied the financial implications of charging entrance fees. Our information suggests that it is highly problematic whether fees would generate really substantial net gains, especially in view of the virtual certainty that such fees would effectively discourage many Americans from visiting an institution that in fact belongs to them. We also offered suggestions for enhancing the yields of commercial enterprises, particularly by restructuring them to capture the advantages of entrepreneurial endeavors.

But all of these efforts together will not do even the restricted job that we outline. The Smithsonian cannot achieve the Nation's expectations on its own. It requires the full understanding and support of the American people and the Congress. The actual incremental amount of funds needed is a very small proportion of the Federal budget; about \$125 million annually. Currently, Federal Government appropriations amount to less than \$1.50 for each of the 262 million people in the country. If we could raise that to \$1.96—a bargain price to most Americans—the extra \$125 million would be available.

The Smithsonian is the result of a lucky and glorious accident; James Smithson's gift. Parts of it are the result of subsequent generous gifts; the Freer and Sackler Galleries, the Hirshhorn Museum. We expect that other magnificent gifts will be forthcoming in the future. But the core of support must be from the Nation's people by appropriations and contributions.

Like the expansion of our Nation, future expansion of the Smithsonian's programs must come from our human and natural resources, not from real estate. Our modern world offers ways to do this that past generations could not even imagine. By using them, the Smithsonian will assure its vital role as a teacher, a recorder, and a shaper of our vibrant national outlook.

Thank you, Senator.

[See Appendix VI for information on how to obtain a copy of the report of the Commission on the Future of the Smithsonian Institution.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. That is a positive note to end our hearings. We are very familiar with the commission that you chaired and want to congratulate you and the members of that commission for spending the time you did on the future of the Smithsonian. I have seen a copy of your report before, and I have another in front of me now.

You did ask for establishing operating principles. You asked to establish a framework for setting institutional priorities, including regular meetings with assembled leaders of the museum and other Smithsonian components; to reinvigorate the