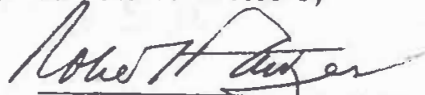


A PROPOSAL FOR THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF A  
MONTANA PUBLIC PROGRAM IN THE HUMANITIES

"POLITICAL POWER IN MONTANA"

Submitted to the  
National Endowment for the Humanities  
For the Committee by



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Montana Committee for the Humanities

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## OBJECTIVES

Can the humanist be brought together with the Montana public to create a dialogue on contemporary social issues? This is the challenge and the opportunity facing the Montana Committee for the Humanities.

A farmer senses a shift in power toward the urban areas of the state. An Indian wonders who really determines the kind of education his children receive. An environmentalist locks horns with an industrialist about the direction of growth in Montana. Who gives shape to the kind of future we can expect? These are questions of political power. They are also questions of public policy. They can be dealt with through blind assertions of will or they can be dealt with through a rational consideration of competing human values. The Montana Program in the Humanities aims in its first year of operation to stimulate a rational dialogue on these questions of public policy in Montana.

This major objective for the 1972-73 year is in keeping with the general aim of the National Endowment's state-based program to bring humanists and members of the public together to address themselves to significant public issues. The academic humanist and the man on the street can learn from one another in an exchange of ideas. Public policy-making can profit greatly from rational dialogue. It is the aim of the Montana program to serve as the catalyst for the creation of a statewide discussion, drawing on the insights of humanists and members of the public, of a critical area of public policy: the distribution of political power in the state.

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Montana is a state which can profit greatly from the process of public dialogue. It is a state which possesses a widely scattered population and important intellectual resources concentrated in several universities and colleges, but without a means to bring these two groups together. It is also a state with vital social problems which receive little examination in newspapers, radio, television, or magazines. Rural communities are disintegrating and amorphous urban communities are emerging. Nowhere is there a forum for the discussion of important public issues. To provide such a forum is the first major goal of the Montana Program in the Humanities.

Montana institutions of higher education are endowed with an extraordinary number of creative, highly regarded scholars in the various fields of the humanities. Their talents are in general, however, turned predominately inward, toward their schools and professional activities. Potentially, they could bring a wealth of historical, logical, ethical, aesthetic, and practical insights to bear on contemporary questions, were they to be engaged in a process of social examination. It is the second major goal of the Montana Program to stimulate this process, by encouraging the active involvement of academic humanists in public programs.

Through a series of conferences held across the state, the Montana Committee has discovered among an enormous variety of particular social issues a number of recurrent problems which appear to be the pressing concerns of the people of the state. Among these are a pervasive feeling of ineffectiveness in dealing with governmental institutions, a deep distress with the relationships between the Indian and non-Indian in the state, dismay with the dilemma of economics and the environment, and concern with the cleavage between rural and urban areas in the state.

Each of these problems could benefit from treatment through the critical perspective of the humanities program, since each reflects in part the absence of a dialogue which the program seeks to provide. However, there is one common dimension to all of these problems which provides a vital key to understanding and potential change and which can be seriously addressed by the professional humanist: the problem of power in society. The illumination of the problem of power through programs involving humanists and the public can provide the necessary historical, practical, and ethical insights needed to take steps toward solving critical problems which confront Montanans. And the very process of understanding the means and consequences of power can accomplish in part the aim of overcoming an underlying sense of powerlessness and alienation in our society.

Guided by these general goals, the Committee sets forth the following specific objectives for its first year of operation:

1. to stimulate a statewide dialogue on an important public policy issue in Montana.
2. to promote in particular the understanding of the nature of political power in Montana--its history, distribution, importance, and mechanisms--so that citizens may comprehend the relationships among various social groups and may know how to take effective steps in attaining their social goals. The program aims to make a significant contribution to the ability of people to affect their destinies in society, in contrast to the contemporary forces in the direction of passivity, alienation, and powerlessness.
3. to reach a broad spectrum of the public in dealing with the state theme as it affects particular groups and localities, specifically aiming to involve a large number of local groups in the regnant process, such as those in the fields of education, politics, agriculture, labor, business, community service, and social action, among others.
4. to involve current members of government--those who actively exercise political power--in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, and at the state, county, and local levels.
5. to make available the broad resources of academic humanists in the institutions of higher education in this state to the towns and rural communities.

6. to encourage the members of humanistic faculties in colleges and universities in the state to speak to a matter of contemporary practical concern which has an immediate bearing on the fate of man in society and to bring them into direct contact with people outside of the college corridors.

7. to increase communication among groups--academic, labor, community action, environmental, women, business, media, farmers, and others--which normally have little contact with each other and which can benefit from one another in a dialogue on an issue of common concern.

8. to provide a forum for the examination of particular problems which are directly involved with the question of political power, such as the position of the Indian in Montana society, the control of the Montana educational system, the implementation of the new state constitution, the powers of local government, the determination of Montana's policies on development and environmental protection, and the urban-rural balance in Montana politics.