

Letter from Caroline Keck addressed to Arthur Beale, Chair of the NCAC (June 4, 1981)

The following statements are my personal opinion:

NCAC has served its function and should be allowed to phase out. A National Institute for Conservation never appealed to me as valid. I believe that today Senator Pell would raise no violent objection to having the concept discarded. I also think discarding the notion would not prevent the Smithsonian from use of any particular funding tentatively related to the notion of the Institute. Even before the economy became the popular Washington watchword, establishment of such an agency appeared unwarranted duplication of what could be responsible performance of a strong AIC. At long last, the AIC is coming of age. It is still in a pollywog state but indications of its future form are clear. It has vitality. It is headed in the right directions. Its multiple specialty groups have their feet on the ground. Distinction between topics of general and specific interest has become apparent. The AIC is well on its way to becoming a true professional organization. The paper presented at Philadelphia were excellent on average: even the poorer ones were way above what we were once forced to endure from one another.

Perusal of the "recommendations on pages 14- 15 of the NCAC memo distributed to the AIC membership at Philadelphia leaves the reader with a sense of duplication, overlap and uncertainty. The control is not too clear, the funding is thoroughly questionable, and the services might be offered more efficiently from other hands. Is there any justification in seeking an additional government agency? Do we really want this hydra-head chimera? Can we even anticipate its performance to be worth our time and effort?

Under AIC procedures, specialty groups and working committees are with selected by constituents or appointed by elected authorities. Status achieved in such fashion has an entirely different implication from the selection of the membership of the NCAC. Isolate persons within the NCAC have done fine work. The majority of the membership does nothing flat other than make a free trip to the nation's capital on occasion of NCAC meetings. If I ever knew the budge figure I have forgotten them, but the total cost of that unit is not peanuts. We have the group of publications. Let us stop with that. No more marble pillars and no more salaried bureaucracies.

NCAC Office has served as a disseminator of information and done a good job. Would it be feasible to ask that some of the previous funding could extend to pay Mr. David A. Shute, transferred to an enlarged AIC site, to continue his services in the realm of information? It would be a sorry waste of his expertise to lose him. Why not try to relocate him within the AIC organization?

I urge my colleagues to make an all-out effort, time and funding for the benefit of our professional organization, the AIC and do it NOW.

[Note: In 1981, Caroline Keck was the Executive Director of the FAIC.]