

March 9, 2005

Dear Dr. Bowden:

I do appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today during the radio show on WFIU. I understand your position regarding public funding of the symphony. I also understand that we will continue to disagree on the appropriateness of this policy. It is not my intent to continue that discussion in this note; although I would be happy to should we have that occasion in the future.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to consider the danger to the existence of the symphony that is represented by government funding. It is a well recognized standard that a government that is big enough to give you everything you want is also big enough to take it away, and therein lies the danger. Whenever a business, a non-profit group, or an individual becomes used to or dependent on a subsidy from the government, they lose their edge, their vision, their vigor, their ability to make their own way, on their own merits.

If you need an example, look no further than the Hyte Center here in Terre Haute. For years, they enjoyed substantial support via tax dollars. This support represents a political decision, not a voluntary economic decision by individual members of the community. The political winds have changed and this organization and their board do not appear to have the fortitude and wherewithal to withstand the change of political fortune. The story is repeated with for profit companies that come to depend on subsidies, abatements, or a myriad of other government handouts. If they lose these and have to face a tough competitor, it is usually only a matter of time before they are just a memory in the business world. We all are aware of the legacy of government doles for individuals, generations of the same families seeing the dole as a way of life.

It does not matter if it is a business, a non-profit, or your average citizen, the government dole is ultimately a destroyer of independence, vitality, responsibility, and the competitive drive. It saps the energy needed for any organization or person to succeed in the long term.

You were correct when you stated that the Terre Haute Symphony is an important part of this community. What you offer as a part of the arts community in this city is very valuable. I would urge you to see the wonderful opportunities in offering your service to the public through voluntary exchange and to see the inherent dangers in offering your service through coerced exchange.

As with anything that I write, please feel free to share this letter with whomever you might wish. I would especially ask that you offer it to the board of the Terre Haute Symphony. I am also available, at your convenience, to discuss this or any other matter you might ask of me.

I thank you for your time in reading my comments.

Sincerely,

Ryan Cummins