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NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO LIBERALIZE THE TARIFF LAWS FOR ART

21 West 53 Street
New York 19, N.Y.

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A National Committee to Liberalize the Tariff Laws for Art has been formed under the Chairmanship of R. Sturgis Ingersoll, President of the Philadelphia Museum of Art to support a bill recently introduced by Senator Jacob Javits (R. N.Y.) and Senator Paul Douglas (D. Ill.) in the Senate and by Representative Frank Thompson (D. N.J.) in the House.

Directors and Presidents of leading museums, representatives of national art organizations, art patrons and civic leaders from various parts of the country are being asked to join the Committee which has its headquarters at 21 West 53 Street, New York City.

In its first statement, called "A plea for Your Support," the Committee points out that although the original intent of Congress was to permit free entry of all works of art, the law is now so out-dated that many accepted art forms are excluded. The resulting confusion and inconsistencies, which affect both modern and traditional works, interfere with the importation and circulation of art in this country.

Among the inconsistencies in practice arising from the present law cited by the Committee statement were the fact that while abstract painting comes into the country free of duty, abstract sculpture does not. Drawings and paintings using traditional materials are admitted duty free while collages and other works of art using material not specifically listed in the law do not. Recent etchings, woodcuts and engravings come in duty free while lithographs and new print-making processes do not.

Other amendments contained in the bills supported by the Committee affect architectural models, antiques and works of art by primitive peoples. The movement of works of art entered under bond by museums for exhibition purposes is also simplified.

The proposals incorporated in these amendments were prepared by the Committee on Customs of the American Association of Museums, headed by Dorothy C. Dudley, Registrar of the Museum of Modern Art.

In an article entitled "Art Needs a New Passport," published today (March 15) in Museum News, official publication of the American Association of Museums, Senator Javits says that our present laws controlling the importation of works of art discourage international cultural exchange and impair our country's prestige abroad.

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He asks support from museums, galleries, teachers, collectors and art patrons for his proposed amendments.

"To highlight the absurdity of this situation," the Senator writes, "an original Picasso or Matisse painting could be imported duty free but a collage by the same world famous artist on precisely the same subject valued by art experts as high as \$20,000, as some are, is subject to a customs levy of \$4000."

In a statement released when he introduced the bill last month the Senator said: "The amendments Senator Douglas and I are proposing would greatly increase the number and kind of original art objects imported into this country by U.S. art museums and dealers as well as art patrons who donate sizeable collections to art institutions; in addition, they would encourage a much freer interchange of works of art between the U.S. and other countries. The loss of tariff revenues to the U.S. due to a more liberal interpretation of the tariff laws, deemed insignificant by authorities, would be more than compensated for by the increased cultural opportunities accruing to the U.S."

Mrs. E. Powis Jones and Mrs. Louise Smith are Co-chairmen of the executive committee of the National Committee to Liberalize the Tariff Laws for Art.

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