

# Bid Annenberg change his mind

POST MAR 16 1977  
By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

Efforts were under way today to persuade publishing tycoon Walter H. Annenberg to reinstate a \$40 million gift that would finance the proposed Fine Arts Center at the Metropolitan Museum.

Annenberg withdrew the offer after several political leaders said they wanted to take a closer look at the project.

Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton said he spoke to Annenberg's general counsel, Harry Coles, who told him the publisher would rethink his withdrawal of the offer.

Sutton, one of the politicians whose questions had angered Annenberg, had said he would take the matter before the Board of Estimate.

But Sutton said now he would try to "see if we cannot work out a satisfactory relationship between the Met, Mr. Annenberg and the city."

"If," Sutton added, "for any remote reason this can't be done, I want to induce the Fine Arts Center to be located elsewhere in New York City."

In the event Annenberg decided to reinstate the Met gift, it would be contingent on the museum board's approval.

The gift would finance construction and operation of a new wing for the museum, which would house exhibition space as well as the center.

The wing, which had been originally intended for exhibition space, is to be built on city-owned land in Central Park.

Some officials maintain that, since the Fine Arts Cen-

ter was not part of the original city-approved plan for the wing, it should be subject to reexamination.

Museum director Thomas Hoving — who had been scheduled to head the center after his retirement at the end of the year — said he would postpone a trip to Europe tonight "for a day or two out of respect for" Sutton.

But, Hoving said, he was "quite sure there is no hope" for a revival of the plans.

Met president Douglas Dillon, after receiving Annenberg's one-sentence letter, released a statement saying it is now a "near certainty that the museum will be unable in the foreseeable future to complete its much needed southwest wing."

He also expressed regret the museum would be "deprived of a truly great opportunity to play its proper role in the dissemination of knowledge of the arts to

the people of New York City and the nation."

Hoving, in a statement, said it was a "sign of spiritual deterioration" in this city that "a highly creative endeavor of this magnitude cannot be carried out."

He specifically blamed City Council President Paul O'Dwyer and council members Carter Burden and Carol Greitzer for killing the plan.

They, along with other city officials, have not opposed the establishment of the center in the city. But they have questioned whether it should be located in the museum and whether the museum could set up an autonomous or semi-autonomous institution without the approval of the Planning Commission or the Board of Estimate.

Burden said he had written Annenberg "explaining that our opposition was not to the center per se or to its having some relationship to the Met. Our concern was with its location in the museum both

in terms of using up its last space for expansion for non-exhibition purposes and in terms of an independent institute being located in city facilities."

Hoving said last night his retirement is still set, but he has "no future plans with anybody."

Although the city contributes public funds to the museum, Hoving's salary — which is paid out of the museum's own funds — has never been publicly disclosed. No disclosure had been made of what his financial arrangement would be if the Annenberg center were established.