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BETTY BEALE'S WASHINGTON—CAPITAL ON CULTURE KICK

WASHINGTON, May 6.—The Capital's off on a cultural kick that at least diverts caustic comments from the Cuban catastrophe.

For Carroll Kearns, Republican, of Pennsylvania, the only Member of Congress to hold a doctor of music degree, the Women's National Democratic Club Salute to the Arts luncheon was the last straw.

In a seven-page, single-spaced letter to Mrs. Richard Bolling, wife of the Missouri Representative and one of the luncheon committee, he fired a broadside at the Democrats for all this cultural talk.

"Many people are beginning to think that the art interest of the Federal Government * * * began with the invitation to Robert Frost, the great poet, and 150 other cultural leaders to attend the inaugural ceremonies of 1961."

But it was under President Eisenhower, he recalled, that the National Cultural Center Act came into being and "the International Cultural Exchange and Trade Fair Act under which our great orchestras, artists, drama and dance groups are sent overseas to demonstrate U.S. accomplishments in the fine arts."

Then he let go his second volley: President Eisenhower, he said, called for the establishment of a Federal Advisory Council on the Arts and although the Democrats have been in control of the Congress since 1955, nothing has happened.

"Six years is an awfully long time to wait for the establishment of such a new Federal advisory agency. The contemplated budget is only \$50,000. When our gross national product is over \$500 billion, it can be seen that such a step would scarcely unbalance the national budget. So one may well ask, What is the reason for the present timidity on the Democratic side in holding up the early creation of such an Arts Council?"

A BARB AT KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION

His third shot was aimed at the Kennedy administration. John F. Kennedy himself, when he was Senator, introduced legislation to save the Dolly Madison House and two other buildings on historic Lafayette Square adjacent to the White House. But, blasts Mr. Kearns:

"Two men, William Walton, a painter, and John Moore, Administrator of General Services, like pharaohs or reigning monarchs of an earlier and unenlightened period, have decided to proceed with the destruction of the Lafayette Square buildings. At this very moment, however, the President has called for spending some \$10 million in saving the ancient treasures of the Nile. Recently the President rescued Harvard Yard at Harvard University from an office building."

"If the Nile treasures and Harvard Yard can be saved, why can't the Lafayette Square buildings be saved?"

Pharaoh Walton was ready with a reply. Mr. Kearns must be aware that Congress itself passed a law to demolish those buildings and appropriated the money to build two courts of justice there. Besides, the Dolly Madison House was completely gutted by the Cosmos Club in 1895 so that it no longer has any historical meaning. Under its stucco covering are some original brick walls, that's all. The other buildings have far less reason for preservation, he pointed out.

"He's right about the first point," continued Mr. Walton. "Federal interest in art did not begin January 20, 1961. The difference now is that the President and his wife are using the prestige of his high office to create a cultural climate favorable to the arts. There hasn't been time for anything else."

While all this was going on, Jacqueline Kennedy was attending a performance of the Washington Ballet Co. * * * And the Kennedy Cabinet was giving "An Evening With Robert Frost," the plushiest poetry reading ever presented in this political Capital and drawing a VIP roster that was enchanted by his telling humor.

MISS SKINNER OPPOSES NATIONAL THEATER

The salute-to-the-arts luncheon that began all the controversial cultural conversation contained explosions from the artists themselves. Asked what each would do "If I were President for a day":

Actress Cornelia Otis Skinner observed dryly, "I would not encourage a national repertory theater. I don't believe it would work here. I have a vision