

Post 6/18/73 32 Cents for Art

"Let me say—and this is a confession—," said Rep. Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.) on the House floor last Thursday, "when this [federal arts and humanities] program started, I think six years ago, I did not support it. However, we were fortunate in Grand Rapid, Mich., to get an award for a joint venture between the city of Grand Rapids, or its citizens, and the federal government. As we developed our urban renewal area downtown . . . we purchased what is called 'a Calder.'

"At the time I did not know what a Calder was," the House minority leader continued. "I doubt if many people here do today. It was somewhat shocking to a lot of our people out home. I must say that I did not really understand, and I do not today, what Mr. Calder was trying to tell us. But I can assure the Members that Calder in the center of the city, in an urban redevelopment area, has really helped to regenerate a city . . . The federal arts and humanities program was a participant and it was a good investment both locally and federally. I praise the people who had the foresight to undertake this program, just as I praise the people who convinced the arts and humanities people down here that they ought to get a federal grant for a children's theater . . . The response has been overwhelming."

Rep. Ford had similar praise for his hometown's

civic theater, museum and symphony orchestra. And so did a large number of his colleagues, particularly the representatives from what is often called "Middle America," both in the geographic and political and social sense. A great many representatives who, like Mr. Ford, had been skeptical of federal support for the arts and thought it an outlandishly liberal Eastern establishment notion, rejected two crippling amendments and voted to double its authorization. No doubt about it, the arts and humanities program has taken root.

The 309 to 63 vote for a \$145 million authorization for fiscal 1974 (a \$65 million increase over current spending) came the day after the President's call for a renewed battle against inflation. The House was fully aware that other vital federal programs are being cut back. The thought will undoubtedly once again agonize Congress when the arts authorization is up for appropriation. But, as Rep. Ogden Reid (D-N.Y.) pointed out, Canada spends \$1.40 per person to help the arts and Vienna contributes \$5.50 per person. Under the House bill just passed, we in this country will still spend only about 32 cents a person. "I think a haggle over 32 cents is very unwise," said Mr. Reid.

"In my judgment it is a worthwhile investment," said Mr. Ford. We believe most of the people out home will agree.