

meets the eye, much more.

The British attitude to everything is governed by reason and compromise. We couldn't lavish huge sums of money on extravagant arts projects if we tried; it isn't in our make-up. The French, Germans or Americans can: they will get caught up in national pride, the need to support their cultural heritage or the expression of community spirit. Those straightforward feelings do not exist here, not when you're discussing the arts. Instead, we have 'sensible' things like the world-renowned National Health Service. The National Theatre only became a reality in the 1970s, and this from the country with the world's foremost theatre tradition!

Unlike North America, we also carry with us the legacy of a still deeply-divisive class system (no-one is too sure why), which some arts projects seem to exacerbate rather than heal, with accusations of 'elitism' spilling over from an already-poisoned sense of jealousy. All this is scarcely believable by the standards of the New World, I know. I lived there for eight years myself, and more recently I lived for five years in continental Europe. So I'm not speaking as an insular 'Little Englander', unaware of how others live outside this small island (the way some of my countrymen do).

To return to funding, though, one must seek to strike a balance between treating the arts industry like the coal mining industry, or the computer industry on the one hand, and like a bunch of mad professors from academia on the other. It is none of these. It is neither an unskilled labour force we are dealing with; nor an industry that has access to rapid economic growth and commensurate financial rewards

through acquisitions, mergers, stock market flotations or even worldwide sales figures; nor are we talking about geniuses who can't get organised enough to comb their hair or do up a shoelace.

Yet the subsidised arts have grown into a flourishing industry that also promotes various immensely profitable spin-off industries — such as movies, TV, video and recording to name only a few ('Amadeus' became a huge commercial success as a play then as a film, and 'Les Miserables' is setting new records for the number of commercial productions being staged — from Tel Aviv to Sydney). Likewise, innumerable stars are 'born' in our drama and music schools or in subsequent early careers in different corners of live entertainment. Without the world of the subsidised arts, in all its complex inter-connected forms, the Andrew Lloyd-Webbers, Kiri te Kanawas and a host of comedians and actors would never have been trained or provided with the publicity platform to launch themselves into such lucrative industries.

That talent comes overwhelmingly from the subsidised areas of the arts because these are the areas which can best innovate. And to come full circle, the leisure industry in Britain, of which the arts is a vital, high-profile part, is the third largest sector of the economy — and it is booming. Yet our government cannot see the importance of supporting it, of keeping its lifeblood flowing of encouraging this world-class source of export, if only for hard-headed commercial reasons, it is an exceptional 'investment', a source of employment, a world-class export.

But let's look at another, less commercial,

side of the question. What wider purpose do the arts serve, if any?

Depending on your personal view as to the importance of the arts in society (for example, are they a luxury, or do they define a society's ability to be civilized?) and what role they should play (populist or *avant-garde*), there is a tendency among creative people of all kinds to be out-of-touch with where their monies come from and the whys and wherefores of the funding process. The other side of the same coin is that the administrators and financial people can seem equally out-of-touch with the stress and sheer hard work of getting an original piece of artistic work ready for the public. Will the twain ever meet? And is there any good reason why they should? That's another debate.

Where Mr Fleming has misunderstood my point about arts sponsorship in today's Britain, I suspect, is in this fundamental area: there can be no question about the usefulness of 'challenge funding', but simply how and when it should be applied. It has been used with admirable success to encourage ABSA (Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts) schemes, like their scheme that matches grants to encourage industry's investment.

But we must know before we set off in a new direction exactly how and why we are going there. This must be translated into everyday facts and figures. We are still waiting for the Arts Ministry to find someone capable of explaining its New Deal.

Arts administrators in Britain obviously welcome the chance to develop more fundraising programmes. Indeed progress is being made every year, of which we can be proud. But quantum leaps won't happen overnight *on their own* and therefore they seem highly unlikely to supplant government subsidies for a long while, unless attitudes change first in business and society at large — as I mentioned above.

Yes, we must continue to press for change, for many good reasons. But let's move forward together with clear objectives and, why not, with the Confederation of British Industry or the Institute of Directors on our side. Such arguments must carry conviction and weight. At present we have neither.

Yours faithfully,

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