

and small-sized companies in the regions. Many of these scarcely run to employing a trained arts administrator, or publicist, or stage manager. Sometimes one person will do all three jobs. How do you 'shape up' that one person's performance? Even if you could, what sponsor, commercial investor (for plays, say) or local authority would chip in any extra cash? Answer: none. Sponsors are rarely attracted, or suitable for such small-fry; commercial investors have the same problem; and local authorities are being obliged to cut back on all non-essential funding by Whitehall, through a simple system called rate-capping.

Secondly, unless the arts can attract good staff to run the various organisations efficiently they don't stand much chance of self-improvement. There is no shortage of dedication or vocation at present; but for some jobs there's no escaping the need for *more money*. By and large, this is the one commodity there is little prospect of obtaining. Especially with Mr Luce's Catch-22 view of the problem. If you don't sort out your funding shortage (which already hampers your activity), you'll have more money taken away. This is the message, in effect, although he doesn't realize the central contradiction in what he preaches.

These two yawning cracks in the central plank of Mr Luce's arts policy make it a poor springboard for greater things. They're pretty obvious reservations, it seems to me. But to name another, what happens if new artistic endeavour is obliged to become 'a little more popular' in its attempt to win greater commercial success? Yes, it may attract bigger audiences, as Mr Luce foresees. But then the companies face two gauntlets: fierce criticism of 'lack of originality' from the critics (whom Mr Luce will never control) and the arts world itself, which builds professional reputation, and similar comment from the different funding bodies, who are obliged to make these distinctions in defining excellence or type of work produced.

Sir Peter Hall outlined another vital point in a hard-hitting article in *The Observer* recently. 'The only way profits can be earned in the theatre is by flogging a single success every night until the audience fades.' (This is what the commercial theatre sets out to do, in the dozens of West End theatres that feed that particular audience, and taste.) He went on, 'the subsidized theatre exists precisely in order to do the opposite: to offer a varied programme; to make room for new work; to give artists

new opportunities; to stage big cast plays (like Shakespeare's) which the commercial theatre cannot afford; to take risks; to make available our rich heritage to the widest possible public.'

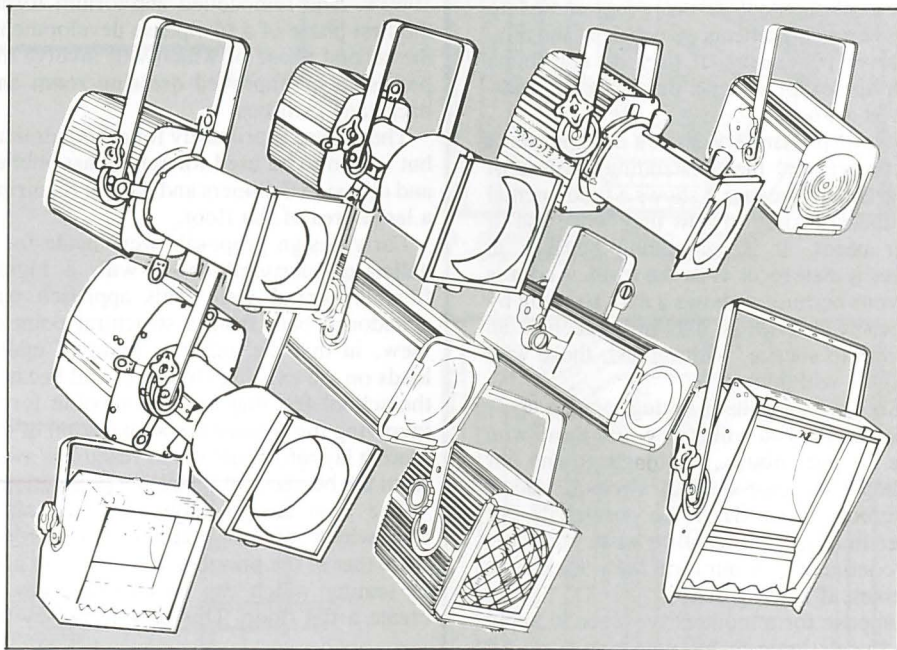
Sir Peter continued, 'The Minister does not seem to understand all that. He reminds us that government subsidy of the arts on the present scale dates only since the war — as if to say that we got on very well without such support. He omits to mention that it is since the war that the performing arts have been one of Britain's great success stories, earning us prestige abroad and many millions of pounds'.

There are more cracks, too numerous to list here, in Mr Luce's plank. Suffice to say that the Arts Minister is no philistine, as he is often accused of being. I do not doubt he loves his Mozart, Alan Ayckbourn and even David Hockney (I have no idea, I am guessing). The fact is however, he is ill-informed. And it is high time that that changed. 'Challenge funding' could accelerate change of the kind he wants in some of the big companies and organizations, with, I suspect, an accompanying drift towards popularisation and commercialization. But it spells doom for the majority of luckless organizations who have

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