chance to acquire competences and skills, and develop aptitudes and qualities appropriate for an enterprise economy.

"The objectives of the proposal are straightforward but critically important and very challenging. They are:

a) That every person seeking a higher qualification (at first or subsequent degree level) be able to acquire management/business competences develop associated aptitudes; and

b) That these competences and aptitudes should be acquired at least in part through project-based work in the real economy and that they should be jointly assessed by employers and higher education"

Lastly, he adds, "With a sense of realism, must come a sense of urgency and of purpose. I believe we should set ourselves a clear (though broad) target and aim to achieve it within seven years from the start of the programme. Hitting the targets I have proposed should have major direct benefits, and highly desirable spin-offs".

Both Norman Fowler and Kenneth Baker at the employment and education ministries respectively, have given the MSC scheme their "full support". In a letter to the MSC in October, Fowler underlined the importance of securing "the maximum publicity for this programme, for the benefit both of higher education institutions and of industry and commerce"

So it is up to Cue readers to put the word about

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

Dear Sir

It was most illuminating to learn about your New York reader, Mr Louis Fleming, and his involvement in arts sponsorship in North America. His own experience, related through your letters columns, of launching publiclyfunded projects, for example in Ontario, and the conclusions he draws from them, make interesting reading.

But I wonder if he missed the point I was making when I berated the present British government's arts policy. My criticism was simple: that it is badly thought-out, badly explained and worst of all, not practical or perhaps even counter-productive. Mr Fleming seems to think I prefer state subsidies to selfhelp. Not so. But I feel that central and local government funding have a vital role to play, which self-help is unlikely to take on. Both government funding and self-help deserve to grow. If they did, everyone would benefit: the arts community, business, society (or if you like, the consumer), and in the end even the government, thanks to this industry's ability to generate employment, to stimulate other industries which live off it, and its importance as an export earner (as we shall later).

Let's look at Mr Fleming's premise that the days of depending on state funding are, or should be, drawing to a close. Let's think of being responsible for our own future for a change instead of constantly bemoaning our fate and complaining to the funding bodies.

Long live self-help, he says.

Superficially, the idea is beguiling. But for the foreseeable future, most arts activities such as large-scale or innovatory companies and orchestras will continue to need substantial

subsidy. Why? Because they innovate to a greater or lesser degree: a 'difficult' area for sponsorship in its present state of evolution. So whatever the true costs of staging a live performance, charging £50 or £100 per ticket for a concert, will soon empty seats. Change cannot be expected at once; it will need phasing in.

But if the subsidy system were to change, one could foresee the need for quite a good deal of explaining and educating to show everyone what self-help will mean in everyday terms. By everyone, I mean performers and support staff and even the general public, because self-help should no doubt involve those who want to enjoy the arts as well as those who create it and put it on.

So how has Margaret Thatcher's government chosen to launch this major new initiative towards self-help and self-determination? The answer is, not very professionally. Without spelling out how and why the New Deal will tangibly benefit the arts and how it will work (that is to say, ensuring that the complex mechanisms of checks and balances will be deployed to maintain the well-being of the arts), our Arts Minister Richard Luce lays himself wide open to criticism and misunderstanding. He can scarcely be surprised that he is attacked on all sides, given his dismal performance so far.

For example, how can he expect the entire British arts industry to stride out along his lovely yellow brick road, merrily ignoring the (manifestly huge) potholes and without knowing exactly where it leads - or whether they will ever get to their destination (financial health) at all? There is no detail, no explanation.

What makes my criticism (and that of virtually every major figure in the UK arts establishment and the press) of Mr Luce's ideas so painful, is that there is so much that could be done to improve the funding, efficiency, and sense of drive of the arts in Britain.

The need for such a drive is there. Mr Fleming and I are in complete agreement about this, let's be quite clear. But you cannot innovate successfully if you do not grasp the details, or even the essentials of your subject. And this seems to be Mr Luce's problem.

In North America the scene is substantially different. The laws governing business and businessmen's corresponding attitudes, the outlook of society, the education system, the role of the arts and even people's motivations are different from many European countries, not least Britain. For largely historical reasons, North American society has a deeplyrooted tradition of self-help. Mr Fleming tells us he was born in Britain, but moved to North America in 1946. The fact is, he seems out of touch with the British scene - despite his subscription to Cue magazine!

I can sympathise with his dislike for the endless complaining about underfunding that seems to emanate from the arts world. It could put one in mind of spoilt children, complaining until they get more. But there is more to it than

