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June 9, 1978

Dr. James W. Flannery
Chairman
URI/Theatre
Fine Arts Center
Kingston, Rhode Island 02881

Dear Dr. Flannery:

Thank you for your letter in which you expressed support for Professor Wallace Dace's proposal for a National Theater.

It is indeed an intriguing idea but one with many problems yet to be worked out. As you know, I have been a long-time supporter of the National Endowment for the Arts, which itself supports an active theater program around the country. Their approach is to seek out theater programs that offer quality and promise to receive Federal funding assistance. The idea is to give private initiative a good boost of support from the Federal Government without the government taking over the entire project.

I have serious reservations about spending such large sums as Professor Dace proposes on theaters in areas where other companies have struggled and failed for lack of an audience. Unfortunately, we do not have the solid history of cultural life that European countries enjoy. Centuries of artistic accomplishment more than justify the large state subsidies that European cultural institutions receive.

I will continue to follow the National Theater proposal as Professor Dace develops it and hope to see an eventual link-up with the Arts Endowment.

Your thoughts on the issue are very much appreciated, and I want you to feel free to call on me whenever you think I can be of help to you.

Warm regards.

Ever sincerely,

Claiborne Pell

AC:CF