

Correspondence

THE ISAAC NEWTON TELESCOPE AND ITS COUDE SPECTROGRAPH

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In his paper on the Isaac Newton Telescope, Pagel (1986) refers to the coudé spectrograph which was installed in 1971 and never worked owing to thermal instability. I had occasion some years ago (Griffin 1978) to comment on the reasons for that disaster, for which I had no responsibility.

However, since 1977 I have had the position – or at least the title – of Project Scientist for the new coudé spectrograph for the Isaac Newton Telescope on La Palma. I must therefore ask to be allowed to correct Dr Pagel's statement that the telescope already has a 'full complement' of instruments: that statement cannot be true until the coudé instrument (at least) is finished and working.

After unfortunate experiences in the corresponding rôle with the AAT, I only accepted appointment as Project Scientist for the INT coudé spectrograph on the basis of strong (but verbal) assurances that the instrument really *would* be made. But the relevant SERC committee, having given me the responsibilities, has seemingly lost no opportunity to prevent me from discharging them. It may easily be imagined how difficult is the position of an honorary consultant, with no executive powers, when he does not enjoy the support of those in executive authority even in relation to their own instructions to their own staff. Please be advised, however, that he is still doing his level best to get the new spectrograph completed!

REFERENCES

- Pagel, B.E.J., 1986. *Q. Jl R. astr. Soc.*, **27**, 432.
 Griffin, R.F., 1978. *The Observatory*, **98**, 246.