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PLANNING COMMITTEE

FUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT: DIVISIONAL REPORT JULY-OCTOBER

THE CONTEXT

A season of fests and conferences forms the background to the ongoing developmental work of the Division between July and October. The period begins with the Council of Regional Arts Associations' event in Dieppe and an optimistic title, Regional Identities, Cultural Differences and Creative Liaisons. It continues with the Edinburgh Film Festival being launched under the new directorship of David Robinson in August. It includes Funding and Development's own three day regional conference on Europe in early September. It concludes with the 5th Birmingham Festival, later in that month, extending its well established tradition of cultural debate with a number of well-attended events including Third Cinema Focus and Imagining The City.

Given the exclusively regional nature of Funding and Development's activities, there can be no question that the focus of attention during this period has been the Wilding Report on the structure of arts funding which was finally published towards the end of October. Whilst the Report's recommendations have been met with a degree of anxiety and concern from the Regional Arts Associations who can expect radical changes in staffing, function, geographical scope and structure, our response has been generally welcoming as the Institute is considered for additional responsibilities and emerges from the review in a very positive light.

During this period certain key staffing changes occurred. At the end of October, Chris Ellicott left the Division after thirteen years at the BFI, leaving his post vacant. Also in October, Barrie Ellis-Jones announced that he would be leaving Funding and Development for an eighteen month secondment to become Director of the European Film Awards scheduled to take place in Glasgow at the end of 1990.

The post of Training Co-ordinator was finally filled in early October by Wendy Bradshaw. Funding and Development was pleased to welcome Wendy who has been previously employed as a Research Officer at the Inner London Education Authority in the Research and Statistics Branch. She had been responsible for researching employment and social trends, training and skills needs in various industries, including that of television.

Wendy is currently assessing training needs in the independent/freelance sector in order to draw up a plan of training courses. She is maintaining and extending links with relevant organisations, groups and individuals in order to develop the Division's overview of training needs and employment trends. The Independent Media Training Federation (IMTF) is one

such organisation. Wendy is a member of the Executive Committee, the Training sub-committee and the NVQ sub-committee which is looking at skills and validation/certification. She is also on the Steering Committee of the Institute of Manpower Studies Skill Search Survey. In July the IMS published the first section of the survey Television, Film and Video Industry Employment Patterns and Training Needs. This seminal document looks at the trends affecting employment in the industry in economic, technological and organisational terms. Wendy is also looking at European trends in film and broadcasting, training and skill needs in order to develop and plan a training programme which takes into account the agenda of change signalled by 1992.

The close of the period covered by this report coincides with the Director's announcement of his re-structuring proposals. Funding and Development, in common with a number of Institute Divisions/Departments, is consequently entering negotiations over the precise terms of the proposed structural changes, the results of which will no doubt be forthcoming during the next quarter.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

There follows not so much a list of activity but rather an outline of key developments, projects, events.

Exhibition

On the exhibition front the main developments have included the highly successful launch of Sheffield Media Centre in September which was presided over by the Institute's chairman, Sir Richard Attenborough. In September, Funding and Development's advisory relationship with Greenwich bore fruit in the opening of an impressive new three screen cinema in the South London borough.

The nature of developmental work, however, means a great deal of negotiation and talk over long periods of time with relatively few launches, and so discussions with Bradford and with Leeds have been continuing. In the case of Leeds, a new urgency emerges with the imminent closure of the Playhouse as a venue for film. The tasks which are currently taking priority are two-fold: firstly, the negotiation of some interim programming arrangement; secondly, the negotiation of a concrete as opposed to an in-principle commitment to a future film theatre development from the Labour administration in Leeds city. The locally perceived success of the Leeds film festival ought to render this task a little less difficult.

In the East Midlands, the Leicester survey by Dewi Lewis went ahead with an interim set of recommendations (likely to be focussing on development of the existing Phoenix site) due to be delivered early in November. In Nottingham, Adrian Wootton took over from the project consultant, Malcolm Allen, as media centre director and brought a new energy to the project, immediately

setting about the task of developing a dynamic and appropriately skilled board of management as well as the urgent business of commissioning architects and raising funds for the development.

In the south and south west encouraging moves have occurred with the opening up of serious discussions towards developments in the Portsmouth, Southampton and Exeter areas. Also in a departure from our more traditionally RAA focussed activities, City Screens acquired the Phoenix in Oxford with BFI support in the form of a commercial loan. In the north east it was found necessary, after a period of painful negotiation, to disengage with the Dovecot, a small single screen operation based in an arts centre of the same name in Stockton. Programming services were also withdrawn by Distribution Division.

The above period also saw the second round of Regional Exhibition Projects Fund awards being made for the 1989/90 financial year with awards going to Dundee, Filmhouse, Humberside, Ipswich, Leicester, Nottingham, Southampton and Tyneside. Against the requests for these awards for 'programme enhancement' allocations were made for the purchase of computing equipment at Tyneside, educational work in Ipswich and improved displays at Humberside and Southampton.

THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The regional conference which paradoxically took place in London, was very well attended by Funding and Development's diverse 'constituencies' and ran between the 12th and 14th September. Following on from the successful York conference of 1988 which had focussed on the new conditions facing arts funding and activity in Britain, the major theme of this year's event was Europe, audio-visual culture and the impending single market.

After Wilf Stevenson's opening address in which he comprehensively mapped out the context for discussing 1992, the conference moved ahead through two radically divergent plenary sessions. The first of these offered a mix of information and speculation on the kinds of legal, financial and structural changes that, it was thought, could be expected within the film and broadcasting areas. The distinguished panel included figures such as Liz Forgan, Director of Programmes at Channel Four and Dieter Kosslick, Director of the European Film Distribution Office. The second plenary, entitled European Cultural Identity, brought together a panel of black and migrant cultural practitioners from several European countries all of whom had critical perspectives on the optimistic vision of Europe often presented in official accounts.

A series of seminars ran through the second day including information exchange and discussion on themes as diverse as High Definition Television, women in the European TV industries, media education, the changing structures of training for production and

the future of cinema exhibition and distribution.

The third day closed with a plenary discussion on the future of independent production which brought together onto one platform the Channel Four independents office, BFIs Funding and Development and Production, an RAA film officer and the Arts Council's Director of Film, Video and Broadcasting.

BIRMINGHAM FILM FESTIVAL

It is impossible and perhaps pointless to attempt to summarise a festival in a paragraph. What should be mentioned however, is the cultural impact of at least one of the two events mentioned earlier: Imagining the City. The theme of the relationship between the cultural industries and city cultures is now well established in Birmingham through the work of the festival which has played a leading role in this country in setting an agenda for discussion. This year of particular interest were the sessions which came under the heading of 'The Location Business', looking at strategies for encouraging the development of an infrastructure in places as different as Ontario and Liverpool.

Significantly, the festival was able to host both the launch of the Birmingham Media Development Agency and the City's announcement of two new funds for film and video production. This combination of separate 'commercial' and 'cultural' funds bears a strong resemblance to the Hamburg model of local state support for production which featured as a case-study discussion at the 1988 festival. At the moment the connection between cultural debate and practice seems to be strong and growing stronger in this city.