

MEETING OF  
CIRCLES AND CINEMA OF WOMEN  
HELD ON 27th JUNE 1990 AT 6.30 PM  
CIRCLES OFFICES

Present: Jane, Elaine, Sarah, Lee Ann, Sandra, Trisha (Circles), Jerry, Kim, Namita,  
Abina (Cinema of Women)

Apologies: Carmelita Kadeena (Cinema of Women)

Minutes: Jerry

Chair : Namita

ACTION

1. UPDATE:

Abina reported on recent developments in the press campaign. Letters of support from users etc have been sent to the BFI and copies to both COW and Circles. In general the public support has been encouraging. Abina had spoken with Cahill who had attended a ROC meeting. At that meeting the BFI had prepared a one page statement on their funding to COW and Circles (see attached). Irene Whitehead had stressed at the meeting that the imposed cuts were the right course of action. Ian Christie was asked by the Committee to make a commitment to discuss all avenues fully with both groups.

Abina had written to Ian Christie asking for a written confirmation that the BFI would guarantee three years funding on receipt of an acceptable business plan. In his reply he confirmed that such funding was on offer subject to further discussion between the BFI, COW and Circles. However, no levels of fundings was mentioned.

Cinema of Women stressed that it was important for both organisations to liaise closely together, in particular copies of any correspondence received or initiated should be sent to both groups. Abina outlined that the lack of dialogue had resulted in duplication of work. Concern was expressed that Circles had met with Wilf Stevenson without a representative from Cinema of Women. The meeting agreed that it was essential that both groups were represented at any future meetings with the BFI or other funders.

Sarah explained that it had not always been possible to contact COW or a member of Circles' Management Committee. In addition she was aware that Abina was in the office on her own. All letters etc had been issued on joint letter heading which ensured a joint campaigning image. Sarah agreed to send copies of all correspondence to COW. In addition it was agreed that both groups would give a verbal update at the end of each working day.

Sarah outlined Circles' meeting with Wilf Stevenson and gave a summary of correspondence between Circles and the BFI following Wilf's meeting. Circles had contacted WS following a telephone from Judith Higginbottom. The first meeting was cancelled by WS but he agreed to reschedule the visit on condition that a) the press were not informed b) the meeting was unofficial. During the meeting WS stated that the BFI were not in a position to offer any more money above the £10,000 already offered, no sums were available for a merger and he stressed that the BFI was not a funding agency. Following their meeting with him, Circles contacted Ian Christie asking for further clarification. In response IC confirmed that no further revenue funding was available and apologised for WS 'well-intentioned intervention'.

Sarah reported on other campaign activities which had included: distributing information about the cuts and press coverage to people leaving and entering the BFI. A meeting of the BFI governors was being held at the time of the leafletting and it was hoped that the present crisis would be drawn to the Governors' attention. Letters and petitions had been received and forwarded to the BFI. A new press release had been issued, urging people to contact the Minister of the Arts. Tony Bank Labour MP (Newham North West) has agreed to table a number of Parliamentary questions to the Arts Minister raising the issue of the cuts. It was agreed that a copy of the proceedings should be obtained and sent to the BFI.

ACTION

In addition it was agreed that WALDO (Time Out) should be kept informed, in particular about details of Wilf's meeting with Circles.

CIRCLES/COW

Sarah

Trish reported that the general rumour in the BFI was that Cinema of Women and Circles were not meeting or working together. She reiterated that it was imperative that a united front was shown at all times.

LEC had contacted Circles to invite them on Arts Beat with Wilf Stevenson and the director of Pleasure Principal, to discuss production and funding. The transmission is scheduled for Wednesday 4th July at 7.30 pm. It was agreed that Circles should contact the Producer and request that COW be invited on the programme. If this was not possible COW would issue a statement which would be included in the programme. In addition copies of all press cuttings etc should be sent to the producer in advance of the programme.

CIRCLES

2. LETTER TO THE BFI:

Abina and Sarah had drafted a letter to Ian Christie which detailed a plan of action and specific guarantees from the BFI. The draft requested a reinstatement of both groups grants upto 31st March 1991. Money to look into a detailed feasibility study into a merger and a commitment toward 2 years future funding.

The meeting agreed that the letter should be typed, subject to a few amendments, and sent to IC before the meeting with him on Monday 2nd July.

Abina

Sarah pointed out that Circles would be able to survive up to 15th August. However the Liquidators would have to be called in and assets would need to be sold to pay any outstanding creditors. COW felt that they could possibly survive until October and at the very latest December. These dates were subject to a more detailed look into COW's finances. After discussion it was decided to discuss closure after the outcome of the meeting with Ian Christie.

3. MEETING WITH IAN CHRISTIE:

Jerry, Abina and possibly Carmelita (COW) and Sarah and one other person from Circles would be meeting with IC on 2nd July. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the BFI's cut in funding and to discuss the items in our letter to him (see above). We will ask for a concrete reply/response to our letter/meeting by Friday 6th July.

4. FEMINALE

Abina and Lee Ann to discuss a joint strategy for the 5-day conference which they will both be attending in Cologne. Delegates from Cinemaim and other European distributors, filmmakers etc will also be attending.

Abina/LeeAnn

5. A.OB:

Kim reported that she had been contacted by Joy Wong, Irene Whitehead's assistant, to join a working group looking at women's issues. Elaine said she had also been contacted, along with Sheila Whitticker and Wendy Bradshaw. She understood that other women outside of the BFI were being contacted to attend a first meeting on the 13th July. It was suggested that Judith Higginbottom had initiated the working group despite the fact that the original memo to Elaine had come from Wilf Stevenson.

6. Date for next meeting:

Monday 9th July, 6.30 pm at Circles.