

Abina Manning and Jenny Wallace
Cinema of Women
Unit 313
31 Clerkenwell Close
LONDON
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30 APRIL 91

Dear Abina and Jenny,

I'm responding on behalf of the Management committee of CiRCLeS to Your letter which we discussed at our meeting last week. You are certainly owed an explanation for what must have seemed bizarre behaviour in not communicating with you. Basically what happened was that the workers at CiRCLeS were contacted by the BFI and asked to produce yet another budget with more realistic income figures and without including the wind up and redundancy costs for Cinema of Women. CiRCLeS was told that the BFI would contact you directly to discuss wind up and redundancy payments (and that it would be confusing and counter productive for CiRCLeS to be involved in those discussions. We were also informed in no uncertain terms that communication with Cinema of Women about this draft budget could jeopardise not only the whole hard fought for package but also create difficulties for all those involved. We weren't very happy about this, as you can imagine. and had drafted a letter to you when further phone calls from women involved with the negotiations at the BFI stressed their anxiety about the delicacy of the situation and we were again asked not to contact you. We reluctantly agreed to this on the understanding that you were in negotiation with the BFI direct and would be kept informed by them. This patently did not happen putting Sarah and Liane in an untenable situation. The reason we are telling you this is not to shift responsibility from ourselves but to ask you to acknowledge that we were pressurised by people not directly involved with either organisation who appeared to have everyone's best interests at heart.

The redundancy payments have always been the BFI's sticking point, and we have consistently stated that we did not want money put into the new organisation if this entailed selling you short on payments to which you were entitled under Cinema of Women's constitution. We have stressed this on more than one occasion to Irene and to Ian. On the other hand, the negotiations over the redundancies we felt were the BFI's responsibility and were something that had to be worked out between you and the BFI, given our support on the basic principle. What we couldn't do, without jeopardising the new organisation was to deny that to have any realistic chance of survival more money would be needed in the first year of operation.

What is now apparent in retrospect, is that a basic deal had been drawn up at the BFI, and this would not have been altered one iota whether we contacted you or not. What has happened is that our enforced silence whatever the motives, has damaged the partnership between CiRCLeS and Cinema of Women, at the very time when we can actually start doing something

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about our primary objective of keeping womens' work in distribution and laying the foundations for an organisation which can succeed. We need your help, support and expertise to achieve this, and I sincerely hope that the Machiavellian dealings of the last few weeks will not adversely affect the launch of the new company.

If you want to discuss this further with CiRCLeS present management, then please let us know.

Best Wishes



Gill Henderson
on behalf of CiRCLeS Management committee.