

OPEN LETTER TO THE EGM 12TH OCTOBER '91

12th October '91

Dear Malcolm,

The call for this EGM of 12th October was officially 'initiated' by members of the Building Committee and the Executive.

The BFI were informed on 14th August about the Building Committee's recommendations for the call.

On 22nd August these were brought to an Executive Meeting at which it was voted unanimously that an EGM would be called on the building issue. It was suggested the Exec. decision of June 13th (outstanding) to propose bringing back the elections of staff should also be presented.

On 27th August the BFI were informed of the Executive's decision to take the building issue to the membership.

In the meantime, I approached you and Peter (weekend 24th August) asking you to help the LFMC in gaining a proper audience with the BFI, whose position appeared intransigent. I sent you relevant reports and correspondence, including the recommendations for the EGM call. You then saw the buildings.

Instead of consulting with us all as a body, after having a private audience with the BFI, you spoke with individual members of staff. Thence it appears, the funding cut threat was spawned. [in spite of assurances from Ian Christie to the Executive on 18th July that LFMC's annual revenue grant would not be jeopardized by any decision the LFMC might take in relation to Dunn & Co. and that nothing contrary to this has been put to the Executive by the BFI since then]

on 7th September the Building Committee met to discuss the information the membership might need to know. The reports, proposals and diary were then drawn up. These were presented to the Executive Meeting of 12th September as arranged. 12 executive and 2 others were present, all of whom knew what was on the agenda. No-one had prepared any alternatives to the Building Committee draft, save your motion to dissolve the entire Executive. This was sprung on us in the middle of the meeting, thoroughly disrupting its progress. It cut through long hours of preparation that many of us had voluntarily put in. No factual grounds were given to support it. At this point I left the meeting.

I understand the consensus of the remaining Executive was that the EGM called to discuss the building, should be devoted to the building issue alone, since it was felt that a motion to dissolve everyone, would upset and prevent any sensible debate. Likewise our proposal for returning to the elections of staff was postponed.

[Calls for an EGM are brought either via the Executive (constitution) or by a minimum of 5% of the membership (Co. Law). The Co-op cannot afford to have an EGM whenever 6 or 7 people feel uppity. It costs £200 to £300 to print and mail, not to mention staff time.]

Most of the items included were read out loud at the meeting. There was collective input in finalising the draft. No material change was made. And no-one requested any further information to be included in the week that elapsed before the printing and mailing took place at the LFMC. And staff organised the cheque to pay for it.

The 5 executive members who put their name to a letter of 4th October, received barely 4 days before the EGM, were all present at the meeting of 12th September, but they were not in a majority. The letter gives a quite misleading impression of authority, with the names of Malcolm LeGrice, Peter Gidal and Mary Pat Leece. And yet they were not even at the meeting. The content of the letter is somewhat inaccurate. It is not clear which enclosures relate to which, who is attached to what, or why there are no signatures to the requisition.

On the motion dissolve the whole executive (which includes the staff), one person hasn't been around since March, three haven't attended an Executive Meeting in years and a couple of them are actually on the executive, The proposed life banishment for 'certain members' has an all too familiar ring. Siberia here we go !

Any loss of confidence or deterioration in the LFMC's reputation is being brought about by mailings of this type, which seem to have no other earthly purpose than to undermine the voluntary efforts and integrity of the majority.

No less than three full scale mailings of the membership have been 'initiated' this year by a small group. It is beginning not to be a co-incidence that the same ones are always somehow involved. None of these went via the elected Executive Committee. They are a law unto themselves.

There is a rift between the executive who are paid and the executive who are voluntary, that used not to be the case. This is a topic which could take a whole day to discuss, which is why it should have its own meeting.

It is not fair to members who are first prepared and interested to come to debate a major relocation project, to then usurp and muddy the issue with a second mailing of veiled aggression and personal invective. The Executive Committee is not an anonymous body. And it's this kind of action that's disrupting it. January 'core' membership mailing, June unofficial staff call with little slander paper, October a mess. Can this really be legal ?

The majority of the Building Committee and Executive took the trouble to provide the membership with coherent and researched information. Should the debate be adjourned ? Have members been dissuaded from coming, seeing the original agenda undemocratically scuppered ? Is this right ?

Internal factionism is only serving to weaken us in relation to the outside world. That used to include the BFI.

sincerely



ANNA THEW