

London Film and Development Agency  
By e-mail and post

12th October 2001

Dear Gill Henderson

I am sorry to inform you that Cinenova will be ceasing operations and I ask for your help in the orderly winding up of the charity.

The board had been working towards a merger with financially secure charity, however our financial resources are at an end and the merger delay has meant that we can no longer continue our operations.

One year ago we faced the situation of our key staff member resigning at a time when the Film Council published documents were not supporting distribution which was a major Cinenova activity. In this insecure funding environment the board called an EGM of our members to discuss the possible future of Cinenova. With membership approval we sought a merger to continue the work of Cinenova and set about exploring possible partners, some of who had made an approach to us with this end in mind.

We also had a board meeting with you as our core funder and laid out our action plan as follows.

Research merger options with Glasgow Womens Film/Women make Movies/Womans Library

Follow up funding opportunities to support the research and merger options through an Arts Council RALP application.

In summary this is what we found

#### Glasgow Womens Library

Over several months staff/board members visited Glasgow to look at location for the archive and equipment and discussed the legal and cultural framework for the merger, and agreed time scales for the physical move of the organisations files films and equipment. Glasgow felt that funding opportunities were stronger in Scotland and that their proposed move to larger premises would ensure give them the space that Cinenovas operations needed. Important for us was that Glasgow's intention was to continue distribution. This merger was to be finalised by 30 June 2001.

Outcome – the key worker at Glasgow went on long term sick and the merger could not proceed at this time, and an additional concern, identified by the LFDVA was that Cinenovas equipment may not be allowed to be moved to Scotland as it had been funded by ACE lottery funding.

#### Women Make |Movies

Board members had a meeting with Debra Zimmermann at the BFI in and exchanged financial and operational information over several months. WMM were interested in acquiring a European office in London and the Cinenova website as it was far better than their own. They also had similar aims and some of our filmmakers were also contracted to WMM. WMM invited us to their AGM to speak directly with the board.

Outcome – this option was not pursued. While distribution would continue with WMM they would cherry pick from the catalogue and archive all other titles which would mean that no education would continue about works which were not high earners. In addition LFDVA pointed out that this would be a US take over rather than a merger.

#### Women's Library (The Fawcett Library)

We perused this proposal as the Fawcett had received a large Lottery award and the collection would have a London base accessible to visitors.

Outcome – The Women's Library (Fawcett) are unable to commit at this time to a merger as they are in the process of the logistics of their physical move to a bigger building.

#### Make (Women's Art Slide Library)

The board felt that this option would be good for Cinenova. Make were about to move into Central St Martins so the collection would be based in an educational environment with a bias to film and in the hands of a womens organisation.

Outcome – initial negotiations were good and we timescaled to the end of September. Unfortunately Make have delayed their move to St Martins and it may be another year before the collection could physically move.

A further opportunity was indicated to us by Four Corners Film Workshop, our current landlords who themselves were merging with Camerawork. They were willing to consider helping in any way to continue the work of Cinenova. We are currently in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of an ERDF New Technology project with Four Corners and they would consider further joint applications with us while extending their location for our use.

Outcome – Four Corners own merger fell through in June and they are not in a position to assist us further at this time.

Cinenova are no longer in a financial position to continue caused by delays to merging and are now a seeking storage facility and an orderly wind up.

#### Ongoing Education Work

Through out the period Cinenova has maintained an office and part time administrator to provide an information service to members and funders and to continue with our legal and financial responsibilities.

We have maintained our educational work programme though the web site which has been a great success considering that we have not actively marketed this site. The web site is visited by between 10,000 and 20,000 visitors per month for research and information service and promotes 150 Cinenova filmmakers and their work. The site is maintained though our server at the Cinenova office.

We have also fulfilled our commitment to several festivals and continued to be a visited resource centre for students, researchers and filmmakers. A recent example was to make available our archive of press cuttings letters and films of the late Sandra Lahire to form part of a memorial service held this month and to contribute to a future biographical work.

#### Financial Outlook

Last years budget was drawn up to be a break even budget as to leave the organisation in a good position for hand over during a merger and we succeeded in that objective. LfVDA continued its financial commitment to Cinenova by funding at the agreed rate to the end of March and expressed approval of our merger plans and seemed open to financial support to conclude the merger. We continued with the Cinenova office and minimal expense of a one day a week admin post while we continued to give further information to support the RALP fundraising application requested by London Arts in June 2001. We also engaged Sandy Weiland again to prepare the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage application of the New Opportunities Fund consortium for the Digitisation of Learning Materials which has been approved and we have been given a grant offer of £76,750 on the 6 June 2001 for our part of the project. We had also drawn up a budget for the 6 months to the end of September 2001 that we sent to you. The cost of running the organisation for this period to merge was estimated to be £14,275 of which we requested financial assistance from LfVDA. We are now at the end of that period. The application to RALP was turned down and our only source of funds for this period is from the LfVDA for royalties moving and legal costs.

We are now left in the position of having no funds left and need a meeting with LfVDA to plan the best way to conserve what is best about Cinenova and observe our legal obligations during the wind up.

I will be available to meet any afternoon at sort notice or most evenings. Please let me know what dates and times you would be available. I know that Elaine will be away next week but I would like us to meet up anyway to have an initial discussion.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Trotter  
Director  
c.c. Cinenova Board of Directors