

Council of Management of

THE OTHER CINEMA

Held on Sunday, 15 February 1970 at 18 Carlisle St., London, W.1.

Present: Leslie Elliot, Michael Henshaw, David Mercer, Tom Maschler, Otto Plaschkes, Michael White, Peter Sainsbury and Nick Hart-Williams.

Apologies: Albert Finney and Harold Pinter.

- 1) FORMATION OF COMPANY: Michael Henshaw (accountant to T.C.C.) said the Charity Commission had told the Board of Trade that they wanted a further three weeks to deliberate whether or not to grant T.C.C. charitable exemption; thus for three weeks the formation of the company is frozen. M.H. saw nothing sinister in this. He said there was no danger in opening and booking films in the interregnum period.
- 2) RESPONSIBILITY: MH explained that each trustee's responsibility is limited (not by shares - no share capital) to a guarantee of £1 each, in the event of the company going bust.
- 3) FURTHER TRUSTEES: NH-W suggested that Lindsay Anderson (who had offered to help) might be approached to become a trustee. There followed a long discussion about trustees (who, how many and what for). MW felt that more, of any kind, would be better as long as we avoided names that aroused antagonism. Also, he felt, there should be a few younger people to balance the present old lags. (Ideas on youngsters were few). Then if the list is really strong, the industry is unlikely to dismiss it, particularly if the trustees are people actively making films. It would be useful to have a trustee in key university places, even if you only saw them once a year. TM felt it would be a nice change if T.C.C. had a group of sponsors who were going to be active, and not one that looked like any other piece of letter heading.
Agreed there should be a two-tier hierarchy: small executive within an enlarged Council of Management.
LE felt we should take in people from outside the "creative fields: most important, education. Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams were mentioned. Decided to take up John Trevelyan's offer to approach Hoggart, who was said to be enormously influential, and a dissenter on the Monopolies Commission on the film industry.
All agreed on asking Tony Garnett - also Ken Loach. Others suggested were Pete Townsend, Richard Branson (editor of Student) and - later - Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz. Those more or less rejected included John Lennon, Max Rayne and Michael Foot, as well as (for the moment) any people outside Britain.
- 4) REPORT ON T.C.C. DEVELOPMENTS TO DATE: NH-W: After the initial ICA meeting of film-makers, a weekend conference was held in May. Achieved little, but elected a committee and called it Parallel Cinema. Cttee held weekly meetings and was quite active through September. Felt only way to have circuit (and power) would be to rent cinemas - thus able to programme as circuit chooses. Initial idea was to have ICA as the London cinema and rent in 40-50 towns. Then Leslie Elliot joined cttee, & convinced us to start in 4-5 towns. Peter Sainsbury engaged as acting director & name changed to The Other Cinema. Meanwhile, ICA policy and management was changing & TCC in doldrums for 2-3 months, waiting.
- 4a) Finally, with ICA and TCC less and less interested in each other, TCC locked at The Place in Duke's Rd., W.C. 1. Established as London's centre for contemporary dance, plus some theatre. Has good, informal image; young audience, good facilities. Recently installed good 35mm & 16mm projectors. TCC has contracted to rent main, 280-seat theatre one week in four plus late-nights Fri-Sun. During intervening weeks use small, 90-seat theatre for 16mm in early evening. Thus showing films every Weds-Sun at 7 & 9, plus 11 pm Fri-Sun. Contract goes to 3 May, after which terms will be re-negotiated.

TM asked if The Place were specifically interested in T.O.C. - if not, could they be involved in some way so that we would have the edge against anyone else who might want to use it.

NH-W: From the beginning we told Robin Howard (director of The Place) that we wanted to become an integral part of The Place, and he was enthusiastic - as long as we prove viable for them they are on our side. Ultimately, though, it is not ideal for us. We will eventually need a truly full-time cinema.

4b) OPENING: It was pointed out by NH-W that the February 18th starting date had been offered and accepted in December. When, by late January, it became obvious that there was not enough money/organisation to open properly in a big way - with 2-3 of our own films, big publicity etc. it was too late to postpone the opening. We would have lost the confidence of The Place. Instead, we decided to open with TERRY WHITMORE, FCA EXAMPLE and call it Stage One - and do our best to get an impressive programme ready for next full week in main theatre (Mar.25). In the meantime, film programming would consist of films available from distributors.

5) BUYING NEW FILMS: Problem exists that foreign producers/distributors distrust British market, therefore go all out for the guarantee as they expect little beyond that. Need to build up trust so that T.O.C. can negotiate lower guarantees against a straight 50%. TM made the point that we needed a film, soon, which would make a big noise, and we'd have to figure a way of making it viable (subleasing if we didn't have a circuit etc). There was some discussion of TERRE EN TRANSE, a major film by Glauber Rocha, for which the French producer was asking \$5,000.

inted out by LE and generally agreed that we couldn't afford this amount for one film at this stage. Also, launching a film, according to LE costs a further £1,000. TM suggested we decide we need £x to buy y films and we get people to guarantee the money.

6) FUND RAISING: Decided best way to raise a film-buying fund was the way its done in the theatre. (on a non-profit basis)
i.e. offer a chance to get money back, not just ask for donations.
If T.O.C. survives, bound to get some money back, and unless we get a film which is commercially strong, T.O.C. will sink.
PS pointed out that we can't wait for these films to make their money back before paying rent, salaries, publicity bills etc. MW said it would be best to charge a management fee to cover overheads before anyone is paid back. He suggested we raise small amounts from a great many people. £50 would be a reasonable sum. Would need a good, one-page prospectus/letter, about four paragraphs long; should not go into details of finance. Suggested by TM, and agreed, that we shouldn't specify titles - we just say its for buying films and the more we can buy the better.

CP asked how much we were in for at this moment, and it was worked out at about £2 - 2,500 up to early May, not including take on films. Agreed at, even when prints are available, shouldn't for the moment try to raise money on specific films. That could come later.

LE asked the position if companies give money on covenant. MH said this could be deducted from their company tax. LE reckoned he could get several major companies to put up large amounts, particularly if it didn't cost the companies any money, then they couldn't avoid doing it, and if one did it the rest would follow.

CP asked what kind of money we were talking about raising. It was generally agreed we were talking about £10,000, which would enable us to buy several films and have money in the kitty. LE said he would aim at the same figure from the large film companies not for film buying, but generally towards the setting up of another circuit.

MW agreed to write the letter to be sent to individuals, as many as we could all think of. Decided that same letter should go out to all. Anyone could add a note to those he knew.

It was agreed that our letter should NOT specify total - rather ask for units. £50 fixed as unit. CP, LE, MW and TM agreed to each buy two units. PS and NH-W asked if some priority could be put on their long overdue

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PS and NH-W asked if some priority could be put on their long overdue salaries plus cover for bills NH-W had paid, also rent.
Agreed that first money goes on salaries etc. LE suggested trustees raise a bridging loan to cover these prior commitments.
Agreed that MW's draft letter should be sent to each trustee for comment, then printed. Then each trustee would prepare list and send to people in their area: i.e.
MW will do theatrical agents (about 300)
TM will do publishers.

Minutes - 3

CP will do actors/actresses

DM will do scriptwriters

LE will do film companies and advertising agencies.

TM said he would post his letters. Others agreed.

TM suggested two forms of same letter, one signed by NH-W or PS, the other blank for trustees to sign where appropriate. No decision was taken on this.

Leslie Elliot offered us the services of his secretary during periods he is away in U.S.A. MH said he could give us a typist from March 3rd for three weeks.

Meeting ended two hours after start, at 7pm, as several had to leave.