

July 13th 1976

PRESENT: Jim Robertson, Nick, Mark, Peter Sainsbury, Peter Sylveire, Paul, Charles, Susan, Tony.

ABSENT: Linda, Nigel, James, David, Laura, James.

Mark was angry at BFI for its history of neglect of Brit. independent film-making. TOC can only fulfil the responsibilities for which the BFI ostensibly gave us money if we have regular support, comparable to the subsidy to British theatre.

Pete Sains. thanked Jim (Robertson) for his report, and said he agreed with most of the recommendations. To Mark's point, he said what we would need to ask for in BFI terms is a deficit guarantee.

Nick pointed out the deficit financing would become relevant next year. Brit. indep. films exhibited could well lose money. The plan had been to subsidise it with the rest of the programme. If that doesn't work, then that's our future basis for re-approaching the BFI, for deficit funding. But right now that's not a priority - it'll be next year, when it's a new financial year, and when TOC has some record of having shown indep. G.B. films. It's one area of programming we must incorporate from the start. With regard to our more urgent re-approach to the BFI, he gave an account of a preliminary lunchtime meeting that he and Paul had had with Alan Knowles of the BFI Regional Dept., the relevant funding department. Knowles' committee will meet next Wednesday (July 21st.), and we're applying for them to extend their matching capacity from £17,500 to at least £20,000 and maybe £21,500. He was by no means unsympathetic, but foresaw 2 problems: (i) shortage of money in this financial year; (ii) the acting chairman of this committee is known to be hostile to TOC.

It was reported that despite Peter Sains.'s sudden absence the preceding Thursday (July 8th.), a lunch-time fund-raising discussion meeting had taken place. It had been agreed that no other route but sympathetic wealthy individuals seemed possible in our present circumstances.

Jim (Robertson) suggested compiling a film-package to sell to TV, if TOC has enough films with TV rights as well. They'll buy some dross to get some goodies. Say, 14 films @ £24,000. Our kind of films would suit BBC's prestige buying rather than ratings buying.

Peter Sylv. asked what the extra £10,000 we'd decided we'd needed get us? Might the staff have to fear lay-offs around September? Perhaps we should also prepare for a possible liquidation in the Autumn. The longer we don't pay film-makers the worse TOC's reputation will become.

Nick gave an account of the present state of the figures, revising the previous week's estimates (see minutes of July 5 meeting.).

Auditorium estimate now £1000 cheaper than previous estimate.

FCH & foyer: figure remains the same.

GLC requirements: the landlords have accepted in principle to bear the cost of any items that are required under the Cinematograph or GLC regulations, which shld. amount to about 75% of it.

Toilets: reduction from 4 to 2 means saving of £1,000.

Screen: technical adviser from BFI Charlie Beddoes will shave something off this cost.

Ventilation & electrics: detailed estimates still to come; they'll probably be less than our present ceiling estimates.

Nick arrived at new total, therefore, of £32,919, sans clubroom.

Mark insisted that, given our previous experience of underestimating, we should round up this figure to working estimate of £36,000.

He made two further stipulations: (i) that we recognise that even to do it without a clubroom means we have to raise more money; (ii) the builder must not have the reality of our funding situation concealed from him - to which Nick assured the meeting that Derek Evans the builder does know the situation on this.

Charles said he wouldn't want to see the cinema open without the clubroom.

Nick replied that we just can't wait to raise the money, paying out £300 per wk. on rent and cinema wages, strongly as he agreed with Charles' sentiment.

Pete Sains, said, following Mark, let's accept £36,000 as the estimated figure.
* If we say go ahead to the builder now, we've got £2,500 BFI money to call on.
* We need £2,500 from elsewhere in order to get that BFI money, plus another
* £1,000 to make up £36,000. We then have to try and get another £5,000, of
* which we might be getting half from the BFI, if Alan Knowles' department's
* committee agrees. The priority for this money should NOT be for the clubroom
* and kitchen unfortunately, but for publicity and prints to launch with.
* Because we need the exhibition facility to resolve TOC distribution's
* historical problems - agreeing, that is, with Jim Robertson's report that
* the handling of commercial/uncommercial titles in the distribution library
* is both unplanned and too uncommercial - we should NOT call on distribution's
* potential borrowing of £10,000 for use by the exhibition company.

Nick was reluctant to have £36,000 accepted as the figure, considering it too high as
contingency was already built into the estimates anyway.
* He asked how could we be sure we'd get the extra £2,500 by the end of September
* from order to pay the builders.
* Alan said he was optimistic, if only because if it came down to him to raise it,
* he would do it.

Pete asked for discussion of the non-payment of royalties to film-makers this
* half-year (ended end of June). If we sink the funds into a venture that fails, we'll
* have gambled away the film-makers' money.
* Nick suggested we pay the English film-makers right away; the others won't starve
* without the money.
* I pointed out that to buy any prints in the coming months up to Xmas is to spend
* film-makers' money due January 1977.

Jim (Robertson) thought the number of films available without cash upfront or print
* purchase costs was being underestimated. Suggested E is for Fake and Le Vieux Fusil.
* Mark said if the BFI doesn't systematically subsidise this area of film, then TOC
* will just be another Gate. We should at least recognise that, so that we can
* reap our practice.

Pete said he couldn't give "two toffees" for most of the films we distribute,
* and that one doesn't matter, because the debate around these films and others is
* the stuff of life. The point of the cinema outlet is to provide a critical context.

Pete Sains. The co-op has remained ghettoised in a way we don't want to. To try and
* build a socialist cinema in capitalist society is our practice.
* He went on to say that we should TELL THE BUILDERS TO GO AHEAD, providing his earlier
* points (here delineated by s*t*a*r*s) are accepted. -THIS WAS CARRIED.

It was agreed that a decision be made on whether we are prepared to invest money, which
* would include film-makers' royalties, in print-purchase in the coming months, and
* if so, how much.

MARK'S FLARE-UP involving Mark, Nick and Pete Gylly.
* He suggested writing letters to film-makers and offering them the choice.
* They agreed to this. He'd normally be writing a cover-letter to all the film-makers
* to say at the close of the royalties half-year anyway, and he'll explain our
* financial position, describe the policies of the new exhibition outlet, and leave
* it open. If the film-makers insist, then we'll try and pay them. But he pointed
* out that we have already effectively spent the royalties owed this summer.

reported one or two other fund-raising details:
* Sean Connery had been telexed on location in the Netherlands, reply awaited.
* the pre-selling of preview time in the new cinema during the day to various
* companies, etc.
* Jim and Steve weren't too optimistic about this, but Steve felt many charities
* might want to hire it to show their fund-raising films and hold a reception.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Programming committee: 7.00, Tuesday July 13, TOC office.
* Management meeting: Monday, July 19, 7.00.
* BFI Education Department, 62 Dean Street.