

Arts Council of Great Britain 105 Piccadilly London W1V 0AU Telephone 01-629 9495 Telegrams Amec London W1

Chairman The Rt Hon Kenneth Robinson
Secretary-General Roy Shaw

TO: All Members of the Artists' Films Committee
FROM: Rodney Wilson, Film Officer

7.7.77

RE: The attached memo from Mike Leggett

I think this memo was intended to be circulated at the last Committee meeting but in the event arrived the following day. I thought it best to circulate it now and have sent a holding note to Mike Leggett.

I think we should have a formal discussion of the points raised at the next meeting but I shall be sending a reply which will cover some of the points raised plus a suggestion that if Mr Leggett expects any serious response from the Committee then a rather more clearly-formulated request, with more supporting evidence and less rhetoric, will be necessary.

If you have any comments or suggestions in the meantime, please let me know.

MEMO TO: The Arts Council Artists' Film Committee
FROM: Mike Leggett
RE: Arts Council Distribution

1. The Arts Council is using too much of its weight to push a particular group of film-makers, namely those who have succeeded in qualifying for and pleasing the Artists' Film Committee.

2. The fact that certain film-makers choose not to seek Arts Council funding or otherwise simply do not fall within the Committee's brief means that they by these factors alone are put at considerable disadvantage not only in production stages but in the distributive and exhibition phases as well. This does not mean that the films the Arts Council possess should not be distributed, simply that

- a) their selling is kept on a par with other independent (Arts Council eligible) film-makers distributive processes or
- b) that the Committee makes some clear declaration on the principle of equal distribution for all film-makers.

3. The Committee should, with the BFI and the Regional Arts Associations, arrive at some co-ordinated policy vis a vis the subsidy of distribution and exhibition, something which remains haphazard institutionally, uncoordinated and underfinanced in the hands of the film-makers. With the introduction of the Film-makers of Tour scheme the Committee has, in my opinion, managed to preserve the important link between film-maker and film-viewer. The subsidy has been essentially one of 'guarantee against loss' against both parties - theoretically. However, with yet another Film Committee publication about to appear the fact remains that potential bookers will have a greater chance of hearing about and seeing the work of this minority of film-makers.

4. The integration of distribution and exhibition with production seems to have been accepted by most film-makers as being necessary for film practice and theory to have continued meaning. In preserving the 'independence' of film-makers and film-viewers in the pursuit of this process, certain material aspects are being confused if not overlooked. The venue most often supplies the projection equipment - this, if not owned and maintained by an institution is usually eligible for grant support from the Regional Arts Association. The venue, in a sense, is more often than not provided with material backup. The film-maker in maintaining the quality of prints is, more often, not so supported. The fee obtained from the Arts Council goes toward subsistence expenses, often heavier than normal when 'on the road', leaving not much else to either maintain the prints or go forward into current production. This ignores the fact that for prints individually hired the rental would probably be twice the present fee - and that does not include the 'free' talk at the end. A policy of print purchase by the Committee would have the following effects:

- a) enable film-makers to have a 'reserve stock' of projection prints for the occasions when their own wear out or are damaged
- b) enable prints to be sent on tour or some distance away, or extended loan without jeopardy to local screening events
- c) make the study of the work easier and available in the way an Archive is supposed to function. Since much of the current independent work takes interrogation of the medium as given, development of this research dialogue would be expedited by such a facility. The film-writer and the film-student require assistance in the same way as film-makers and film-viewers.

The cry of "selection criteria" goes up.....the Committee has for a long time been passing judgement on film production applications, it is not without some criteria already, even though some would wish these to be discussed and clarified in public. The fact remains that applicatnts are in competition with one another so why should not completed films be in the same state, vying for the privilege of purchase money rather than money bounded by production rules?

5. The Committee should beware of attempting to molify such proposals by half measures or manifestations of a tokenist nature. If it is the support of a clique (small exclusive party) of Artists at the expense of other film-makers with similar problems that the Committee wishes, then I think it should make this clearer than it does at the moment. I would hope that the Committee takes a broader view of the problem than that.