

Cultural Commission

Re film industry:

1. Institutional infrastructure:- it appears at the very best unfortunate to separate film from the rest of the arts community, so that to an outside observer the film industry appears to be operating in a vacuum when looked at in relation to other art forms. If there was to be a National Cultural Partnership, the film and television arts should be part of this although most certainly with its own department and with personnel with appropriate expertise. It is worth noting that the omission of film from publications relating to art forms generally has been the subject of criticism.

2. Delivery of services and access to them and encouraging creativity – taking these together because of the influence each has on the other:-

Whether the current method of subsidising specific film productions optimises the foregoing is questionable since in many respects it could be said to contribute to creating barriers to access to the industry for film and television producers in a number of ways. These include:-

- i) the very nature of making choices about which film(s) to support with subsidy excludes those that are not chosen – such choices are for commercial investors to make rather than a national body;
- ii) a major difficulty is the perception of outsiders – i.e. those from countries outwith the UK - that for a film originating from the UK to be valid it must be supported - i.e. subsidised – by the national body which is perceived to be a national funding body. This perception should be challenged. A good film, whether arthouse or mainstream, will be able to stand on its own without subsidy. The tax benefits available in the UK and facilities – including crew, locations, etc - should either be sufficient to attract investors and filmmakers both local and from other territories or should be improved to compete adequately with other territories.

Funds currently spent on subsidies could be put to better use by the national film body, in whatever form it eventually takes, especially to increase access and encourage creativity. Scottish Screen already plays a significant role in training and facilitating training. A National Film Company could provide an environment that would allow filmmakers to take risks and explore and expand creativity in a manner that is not possible where individual films are funded by several different funding sources including national subsidy. There are national companies for other artforms and whilst it is appreciated that these are not without their difficulties and that new methods are being sought for core funding such organisations these could be used as examples at least to consider when building a model for such a National Film Company.

Carrying out film production projects via a National Film Company will still require judgements to be made as to which projects to carry out but such decisions would be made in a completely different environment and based on a different set of criteria from those currently used, and may well move many filmmakers to be more creative with their own business models.

Also, rather than replicating costs each time an individual project is subsidised, many costs could be capitalised. Investment could be made in studio infrastructure and such facilities could be hired out to private film productions to generate income and used on many levels to attract foreign filmmakers. In effect this would subsidise projects via a different route where national film company facilities were hired out for such projects. Such investment would also free funds for investment in businesses rather than individual projects, furthering the current trend towards supporting the creation of sustainable businesses.

Investment could also be made in a TV channel that would provide an alternative to mainstream broadcasters and would assist not only the film and television industry but also other creative industries.

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**From:** Catherine Woodford [Landword@compuserve.com]  
**Sent:** 23 September 2004 19:19  
**To:** info  
**Subject:** Response[Scanned]



Cultural Commission  
response ...

Many thanks for your letter giving me the opportunity to respond to you.

I'll feed into some of your questions (including for example regarding the concept of cultural rights) via Scottish Arts Council. However, I attach a very brief paper with some initial thoughts about the film industry in particular.

Of course I'll be happy to discuss these if that would be of assistance.

Kindest regards

Catherine.

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