

B F I C O N F E R E N C E 1 9 8 5

Information Sheet

BFI SUMMER SCHOOL 1985

Arising 'naturally' from previous Summer School concerns with cinematic and televisual representations of (white) national and cultural identity, and 'politically' from a desire on the part of BFI Education to refocus the profound ethno and anglo-centric concerns of the Institute, this year's School looked both at 'Echoes of Empire' in dominant cinema and also at counter and oppositional practices in relation to this problematic. The three central questions to which the School addressed itself were:

- how do certain cultural forms 'work'?
- how have they been organised?
- how could they work and be organised differently?

In looking at these questions we felt it important politically that issues should not only be addressed through seminar discussions based on a consideration of written texts and films, but also that there should be a space for students to meet in interest or caucus groups. Consequently, most of the last day of the School was taken up with students electing to go into groups discussing topics such as how film study courses might be constructed in relation to the work of the School; what precisely is the role of intellectual work in cultural struggle, etc.

The particular interest of this innovatory strategy was that, no matter what each caucus group discussed, substantively they were all in different ways discussing BFI cultural policy and not merely 'academic' issues, and it is in this context that the following set of statements and resolutions to Summer School should be understood. On behalf of this particular group and, indeed, on the whole School's behalf, we hope Conference delegates will find them a useful and productive contribution to Conference deliberations.

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on behalf of BFI Education

RESOLUTIONS TO BFI SUMMER SCHOOL 1985

1. We believe that the BFI must have a commitment to the work and resourcing of black groups as part of a broad process of cultural development and change. The adoption of such a policy, which is based on a recognition of the diversity and variety of national culture(s), is as important for the cultural development of white people as it is for black peoples. We think that future cultural developments for both black and white cannot be based on the suppression of the memories and histories of a colonial past; this past has important implications for equality in the present.

2. In acting on the policy the BFI must recognise that state cultural provision is offered as a matter of right of access to the means of cultural expression, and not as a paternalistic form of charity. The importance of systematic and open-minded consultation in this process cannot be overstressed.

3. A recognition of the interest of black peoples should inform the full range of BFI work including such areas as archiving, NFT and regional programming, education, as well as the more obvious areas of production and distribution. In order to do this, the BFI needs a general ethnic policy so that black interests are neither marginalised nor treated as a 'minority' issue (as we suggest in point 1.).

4. In the situation following the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan Counties, the following points should be noted:

(a) the important initiative of the GLC & Metropolitan Counties in funding the work of black groups must not be allowed to lose momentum, and a proportional share of the monies allocated to black groups by these authorities must, as a minimum, be continued in the post-abolition phase;

(b) the shift of funds for cultural activity from directly elected bodies to the BFI raises fundamental issues of accountability. The BFI, therefore, needs to investigate the mechanisms whereby it could increase its accountability. The system of representation that characterises the constitution of the Regional Production Fund Committee might serve as a model here;

(c) GLC policy has been progressive in recognising and funding a wide variety of practices; this policy has both allowed for the development of formal experimentation and has recognised the significance of other kinds of innovation. We believe that this policy should be continued;

(d) we believe that the tendency towards centralisation of funding which the abolition proposals represent should be reversed at the earliest possible opportunity.