

NEC report to BECTU Annual Conference 2005

APPENDIX D: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

BECTU and its members

BECTU as an employer, and BECTU employees, are cognisant of the rules of the union concerning equal opportunities, and specifically of the policy first adopted by the union's conference in May 2000 and now revised for submission to the union's conference in June 2005, as follows:

Employment of ethnic and other minorities in broadcasting, film, theatre and related industries

BECTU accepts the definition of institutional racism expressed by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1999 as "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages ethnic people."

The union notes the Inquiry's further observation that institutional racism "persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership. Without recognition and action to eliminate such racism it can prevail as part of the ethos or culture of the organisation. It is a corrosive disease."

Accordingly, BECTU believes that institutional racism exists in the industries in which it organises as evidenced by the generally low level of ethnic minority permanent and freelance employment and insufficient action on the part of the regulatory and funding bodies to address this.

BECTU believes that as every society is different and the different groups and communities that exist within the society have diverse and shared cultural experiences, it is important that our industries reflect such diversity in terms of both content and the workforce. As a consequence, the under-representation of ethnic minorities in our industries is not only economically unfair to those communities, but dangerous to the development of society and the nation's democracy. The union believes these principles can be extended beyond ethnic to other minorities including disabled people and the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

BECTU further believes that our industries' current record proves that the adoption of targets is a key method of achieving equality of opportunity and that these targets should at least equal the proportion of the ethnic minority population of the area in which the workplace is based, as well as the national proportion of disabled people.

BECTU therefore resolves that a programme of action is required both within the union and within our industries and at government level to bring about the necessary changes to attain equality of opportunity in front of and behind the camera, on-stage, backstage or front-of-house, and in every place of work.

For BECTU:

1. Identify BECTU's ethnic minority and disabled membership, adopting appropriate security procedures for their protection and privacy.
2. Set up equality monitoring procedures within the recruitment process to ensure that this data remains up to date on the membership database.
3. Investigate, possibly in partnership with the employers, the establishment of ethnic minority and disabled freelance workers' databases.
4. Urge, in all sectors where BECTU is recognised, that equality monitoring is carried out if not already done, and that BECTU be supplied with the data on an annual basis. At minimum, monitoring should cover workers by grade and pay level and total numbers, but ideally should also cover job applications, interviews, job offers and promotion.
5. Urge employers to adopt appropriate targets to the maximum extent permitted by law.
6. Publish the data supplied on an annual basis.

For the government and our industries:

1. The DCMS should adopt the policy of targets following the example of other government departments, and the regulators, the UK Film Council, Skillset, the Arts Councils and other disseminators of public money to our industries should follow.
2. Every company in receipt of public funding must comply with equality monitoring and employment targets, or have plans in place to achieve them, as a condition of receiving public money.
3. The government should direct the regulators to take stronger action on equality issues, including publishing equality monitoring statistics for each of the sectors they regulate.
4. Every company – whether in receipt of public money or not – should adopt targets and have plans in place to reach them. Assistance could be actively sought from the unions and their appropriate committees, for example BECTU's Black Members' Committee and Disabled Members Network Committee.
5. Independent production companies must provide equality monitoring statistics for the broadcasters who must publish them alongside their own figures in their annual reports (or in the case of public-financed production, the public body such as the Film Council or Arts Council).
6. Given the one-off nature of independent commissions, ways must be found to ensure that those with low ethnic minority and disabled worker levels do attempt to increase them from one production to the next. If they do not reach their targets and on their next production make no further progress, then some way should be found for this to count against them when they next seek a commission. In particular, productions which specifically concern ethnic minority or disability issues should have crews that reflect this.

7. If companies did adopt the position that there were insufficient numbers of qualified ethnic minority or disabled workers it would be a strong argument for re-establishing the post of assistant in many technical areas.
8. What appears on the screen or on the stage has a huge impact on the perceptions of society as a whole, and so it should be (and is) a matter of policy for BECTU to pursue this. For instance, while programmes and productions aimed at minority communities, and those in certain genres, do have a multiracial cast, there is still anecdotal evidence to conclude that in many mainstream programmes and productions black actors are hired only when the script indicates this rather than being considered for non-race-specific roles.
9. The 'ghettoisation' of ethnic minority or disabled programme makers must be ended. Minority independent producers say they tend to be confined to ethnic minority or disability programme areas, and are not considered for other areas such as mainstream drama. Funders should recognise the talent of ethnic minority and disabled film-makers and technicians and make a conscious effort to fund projects employing them other than those specifically concerned with minority issues.