

GM/del/SG

Bethan Jenkins AM
Chair of the Culture
Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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20 April 2017

Dear Bethan

CONSULTATION: THE FUTURE OF S4C

I am the Head of the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union ("BECTU") sector of Prospect. I am writing to you regarding the evidence received by you in the course of the Consultation by the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee ("the Committee") on the Future of S4C.

As you know, BECTU submitted written evidence to the Committee, and David Donovan and Sian Gale of BECTU attended a meeting of the Committee to give oral evidence on 30 March 2017.

My decision to write to you has been prompted by the evidence given to the Committee by Ron Jones, Executive Chairman of production company Tinopolis, at the meeting on 30 March 2017. During the course of his evidence, Mr Jones was asked a question by Lee Waters AM. Mr Waters referred to BECTU's evidence and asked why, among private suppliers for S4C, trades unions were not recognised. Mr Jones responded:

"our relationship with BECTU is long and acrid, on the basis that when I first set up the company, BECTU blacked us for five years on the basis that we would not employ people made redundant by HTV, and I was committed then and now to an arrangement whereby I recruited my own staff, trained them to a high standard and made them part of the industry. So, whilst a lot of our members, a lot of our colleagues are union members, NUJ and BECTU particularly, my record of dealing with them shows them not to be partners I can trust in commercial negotiations."

At the conclusion of Mr Jones' evidence, and the Committee's proceedings that day, you suggested to him, and to Nia Thomas, MD for Boom Cymru who provided evidence at the same time, that you would be prepared to accept a note from them on the question of their relationship with the unions. I hope that on the basis of that offer you are generally willing to consider further evidence on this important issue. More significantly, Mr Jones' statement set out above contains two serious inaccuracies and I wish to put on the record BECTU's position in relation to them. This is all the more necessary where Mr Jones is a very prominent individual within the media sector in Wales, who chairs the Welsh Government's advisory panel for the creative industries.



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Gerry Morrissey

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a sector of Prospect



Firstly, Mr Jones alleges that BECTU blacklisted his company for five years because it would not employ staff made redundant by HTV. This is demonstrably false.

Mr Jones' company Tinopolis was previously named Agenda. During 1991 and 1992, BECTU and Mr Donovan (then a field officer involved in the negotiating process) liaised with Agenda over the completion of a "House Agreement" which would cover workers who would be recognised as staff for the purposes of collective bargaining. At a late stage in the process of settling the final terms of the House Agreement, Mr Jones became involved in the negotiations. No further progress was achieved following his involvement and, ultimately, BECTU wrote to him regarding the involvement of Teledwyr Annibynnol Cymru ("TAC"), and placing Agenda in TAC's disputes procedure. Mr Jones refused any involvement by TAC in achieving the conclusion of a House Agreement, and his refusal to negotiate over BECTU's role at his company has continued to this day. In short, his company has obstinately and wrongly refused to countenance an entirely legitimate agreement with BECTU regarding its activities.

In contrast to Mr Jones' position of unfounded antipathy towards BECTU, this Union has never threatened or in fact acted to blacklist Mr Jones or Tinopolis for the time period or reasons that he alleges, or at all. There is no reference to any purported or actual blacklisting in the contemporaneous correspondence between BECTU and Agenda, and neither Mr Donovan nor anyone else at BECTU ever issued an instruction or threat to blacklist the company. In the years that BECTU has been representing members in Wales, in individual cases or collectively, it has never issued such a threat to any employer, large or small.

In any event, to blacklist a company such as Agenda/Tinopolis would be unreasonable and wrong. It would be entirely contrary to BECTU's policy of pursuing constructive engagement with businesses where its members work, and would be a flagrant betrayal of the interests both of its members and those who work in the entertainment sector nationally. In addition to its inaccuracy, this is a further reason why his allegation is particularly objectionable, and requires correction.

Second, Mr Jones alleges that BECTU has acted in a way that means it is an untrustworthy partner in commercial negotiations. This is a serious allegation of dishonesty. It is also one for which Mr Jones indicates no factual basis whatsoever. As set out above, BECTU negotiated with Mr Jones in good faith to set up a House Agreement at his company. BECTU and its representatives never behaved in a way that could fairly be described as untrustworthy, and the break-down in these discussions simply cannot be laid at BECTU's door. Like Mr Jones' allegation of black-listing, this is an accusation which goes to the heart of BECTU's work, and, again, requires correction.

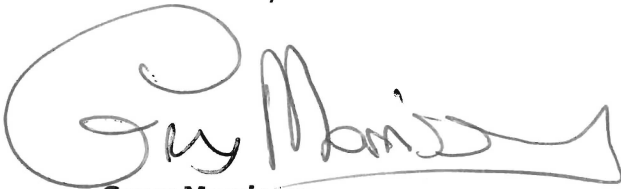
The media sector in Wales involves only a relatively small number of individuals and organisations, and a number of those have given evidence to your committee. In these circumstances, there is an obvious risk, as he must have known when he made them, that Mr Jones' allegations reflect directly on the integrity of identifiable individual officers of BECTU. I must emphasise in this regard that BECTU's officers have conducted themselves with integrity and always acted in good faith in their relationships with others in the sector.

I would be grateful if this correspondence could be included in BECTU's evidence to your Committee, and if a copy could be provided to each member in order that they are aware of BECTU's position in respect of Mr Jones' allegations.

I am not clear whether or not Tinopolis does at this stage intend to provide further evidence of its own on the question of the company's relationship with the Unions.

The company's approach to that relationship is obviously an important issue. Moreover, the specific allegations made by Mr Jones and BECTU's detailed objections to them set out above are, as I have explained, a matter of serious concern for BECTU and the sector more widely. In the circumstances, I respectfully suggest that it would be appropriate for Tinopolis to provide for the Committee an explanation for them. Alternatively, if Mr Jones decides on reflection not to persist in them, it would be appropriate for him to indicate that the allegations are formally withdrawn.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerry Morrissey'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G' and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Gerry Morrissey
Head of BECTU

