

<p style="text-align: center;">S4C Authority Bulletin arising from the meeting held on 2 March 2001</p>

Minutes of the meeting of the Complaints Committee held on 1 March 2001

The minutes of the Complaints Committee held on 1 March were received and, in particular, the matter below was referred for the attention of the Authority:

A complaint by Carmarthenshire County Council

Consideration was given to a complaint to the S4C Authority, received from Carmarthenshire County Council concerning the episode of the current affairs series *Y Byd ar Bedwar* broadcast on 5 June 2000. The main thrust of the Council's complaint was that the programme in question was neither balanced nor unbiased. It was asserted that the story about the death of a member of staff was based on no more than the opinion of his family, and that at a time when the inquest into his death had not been completed. It was also felt that the written response of the Council had been edited in an inappropriate manner, and that the Council's points of view had not been fairly represented during the programme. The Council also felt that it was completely unacceptable that *Y Byd ar Bedwar* had rushed at the leader of the Council and that the behaviour of the programme makers was completely unacceptable.

Members of the Authority received a full copy of the Council's complaint in addition to a statement from S4C/HTV responding to the points raised. The Chairman of the Complaints Committee reported to the Authority on the Committee's considerations which led to its recommendation for an appropriate adjudication. After discussing the matter S4C Authority agreed that the decision on the matter should be as follows:

The S4C Authority is satisfied that this [the contents of the programme Y Byd ar Bedwar broadcast on 5 June 2000] was a topic of public interest that deserved to be discussed at the time. In the discussion, the nature of the interviewing was sensitive to the attitudes of the family and fair to Carmarthenshire County Council. Although it might have been possible to quote more fully from the County Council's statement, the Authority does not accept that the emphasis of the statement had been changed in the editing.

Since HTV had attempted to secure interviews with Council representatives by contacting the Council beforehand by telephone and fax and because the matter was, in the Authority's opinion, of public interest the attempt to seek an interview with the Leader of the Council met the requirements of the Code.

The Authority, therefore, does not intend to take further steps in this matter.

Report of the Compliance Group

The report of the Compliance Group following its meeting held on 16 February 2001 was received. Three matters of compliance were referred to the Authority where, in the opinion of the Group, the guidelines had been broken:

(a) *Du a Gwyn* -

- (i) The Authority considered a clip of an item discussing the partnership between the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly for Wales. The Compliance Group was concerned that there was a lack of impartiality in the item. On considering the matter the Members noted the contents of a letter from HTV, the producers of the programme, responding to the points raised by the Compliance Group.
- (ii) It was agreed that no further steps should be taken in this case; nevertheless, a letter should be written to the producers saying that the Authority was glad to see that HTV had considered seriously the comments made by the Compliance Group. It should also be mentioned to the producers that, although the Authority did not intend to take further steps on this occasion, it considered the interview had been on the verge of being biased and, whilst the Authority agreed that there was a place for hard questioning, it needed to be balanced.

(b) *Gôl* -

- (i) The Authority considered a clip where sports merchandise was under observation during the whole item. Consideration was also given to the contents of a letter received from the BBC responding to the Compliance Group's comments.
- (ii) It was agreed that the BBC had considered the matter seriously, had dealt with it thoroughly within the corporation and had taken steps to remind its production teams of their responsibilities.

(c) *Sesiwn Hwyr* -

- (i) The Authority considered a clip where swearing was heard in a song in a programme which started at 8.30 p.m. Consideration was also given to the contents of a letter received from Avanti, the producers of the programme, in response to the Compliance Group's comments.
- (ii) It was agreed that no further steps should be taken in this matter. This was based on the fact that the producer had accepted he was in the wrong and had apologised for including the song in the programme. The Authority had also taken into consideration, and accepted, the comment made concerning the fact that the credibility of the programme would have suffered if the song of Y Tystion had been omitted. Another factor which led to the decision was that the song had been broadcast at 9.15 pm although the programme itself had started at 8.30 pm.

In addition, the Authority considered a report prepared by the Monitoring Unit in Aberystwyth on the locations of drama programmes. It was noted how obvious it was that there was a lack of dramas located in North East Wales. There was a discussion on the factors which led to this situation and what could be done to attempt to improve the situation. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to note that there were dramas in preparation that were located in this area.

Compliance Guidelines – Party Political Broadcasts and Parliamentary Broadcasts

A discussion was held on the Secretary's report which invited the Authority to approve the revised version of Section 6 of S4C's Compliance Guidelines. It was recommended that the revised guidelines on political matters should be adopted separately from the remainder of the Compliance Guidelines. This would mean they would be available before any possible early calling of an election. The Authority agreed that the guidelines should be approved and published as soon as possible.

Report of the Chair

Members of the Authority – The Chair reported that Peter Davies and Janice Rowlands had accepted a formal invitation from the Secretary of State for Culture, Sports and the Media to remain with the Authority until the end of May. The Chair thanked them and said she appreciated having their advice for another three months while the process of appointing two new Members was proceeding.

Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos – The Members noted with sadness the death of Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos. The Chief Executive had been present at the funeral and the Chair said that she would be writing to Lord Cledwyn's widow on behalf of the Authority. It was also noted that S4C had released a press notice which expressed an appreciation of Lord Cledwyn as one of Wales' foremost politicians during the twentieth century and of his important contribution to securing the establishment of the S4C.

Cymru'n Creu – It was reported that an invitation had come from the Assembly to join this Group and that S4C had accepted it. The first meeting had already been held and the Chair had been present. It was noted that all the main bodies in Wales were present. No specific decisions had been reached in this initial meeting but it was intended to hold a full day's meeting in Aberystwyth during the next couple of months so that all the bodies could bring their ideas together and discuss what it would be possible to co-operate on.

Political Conferences – The Chair reported that S4C would be holding a reception at the Labour Party conference later that evening. Similar receptions would be held at the conferences of the Conservative Party, Plaid Cymru, and the Liberal Democrats.

Report of the Chief Executive

The report of the Chief Executive was received. Particular attention was given to the following.

BBC - In order to prepare for the meeting between the Authority and the Broadcasting Council for Wales, several matters were considered concerning the ten hours of programmes which S4C received from the BBC. The meeting was now arranged for 5 April.

Film Fund - The Chief Executive reported on plans to establish a Film Fund under the Objective 1 umbrella. S4C was being invited to be one of the partners and shareholders of the Fund. There was a proposal before the Authority that S4C should join the initiative under specific conditions. There was a full discussion on the nature of S4C's responsibility if it should join as a partner and shareholder in the Fund. At the end of the discussion, the Authority agreed that discussions on being part of the venture should continue on the basis of the number of conditions which had been agreed upon.

The Digital College – It was reported that representatives of the Digital College had visited Brussels the previous day and had had a very positive meeting with officers of the European Union. As there were, by now, international elements to the Digital College as a result of the relationship with Ireland and Italy, there was a suggestion that this was an initiative which could be funded outside Objective 1 money.

RNID – Research into the Demand for Welsh Subtitles - The Authority considered a paper which reported on the results of joint research between S4C and RNID Wales to find if there was a demand for a comprehensive subtitling service in the Welsh language. It was noted that it was possible to interpret the figures which resulted from the research in different ways. The Members wished to give this matter more consideration and a further report would be given to the Authority during the next month or two.

Report on the Programme Service

The report of the Director of Programmes on the programme service was noted. In particular, nevertheless, reference was made to the foot and mouth disease situation which was affecting S4C's broadcasting and also on the programmes which were being prepared for later in the year. Reference was made, for example, to the decision to broadcast *Cân i Gymru* the previous evening without an audience. On the other hand, the value of a series like *Ffermio* had become obvious, with people turning to it to find information and advice on the situation. *Heno* had also given attention to the matter every evening and was issuing information. This showed how a broadcaster could offer itself for use as a medium to disseminate important public information.

Corporate Plan Year End Review 2000

The Authority considered the final situation on performance against the targets set in the Corporate Programme 2000. It was noted that the vast majority of the targets had been achieved and the Members congratulated all the staff of S4C on succeeding to achieve so many of the aims which had been set. Nevertheless, the targets concerning viewing figures were a matter of concern, especially those in the North. In order to consider this matter further, a presentation was given to the Members on viewing patterns, by region, age, social class, and which people were heavy or light viewers. Following the presentation, there was a thorough discussion on what the research was showing and what S4C should try and do to increase its audience, particularly so in the north.

Bright Future for Welsh Language Broadcasting: S4C's Response to the White Paper on Communications

The Authority noted the final version of S4C's response to the Communications White Paper which had been sent to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. It was reported that the response had had fair coverage in the press. Also, S4C had sent the response to a large number of politicians and other bodies.

Presentation by the Drama Commissioner

Angharad Jones, the Drama Commissioner, gave a presentation to the Authority on the work of her department. She explained the basic things she was looking for in a successful drama. She mentioned that she was responsible for seven drama series each year which were broadcast on Sunday evenings (after 9.00 pm) and three which were broadcast during the week before 9.00 pm. She was also responsible for two films and was also a member of a theatre panel trying to develop films, such as happened with *Solomon a Gaenor*. There was also responsibility for single low budget dramas for broadcasting on S4C Digital. The situation of these was being reviewed at present because there was a feeling that, after three or four years, the situation needed to move on. With regard to scripts, the Commissioner was also looking for variety and originality. The Commissioner continued by listing series which had been inherited from the previous Drama Commissioner and which she had commissioned further series of them, and also the new drama series and films which she had commissioned. It was hoped that the variety of the programmes referred to would offer something to everyone's taste. There was an attempt to keep the old favourites going while presenting new series. She mentioned that, in spite of that, it was often difficult to know when a series should be ended. Sometimes the decision was taken to end a series while it still had large viewing figures because it was believed that the series had come to the end of its life

Another consideration was the time of broadcast, that is, before or after 9.00 pm. Also, should a series be given more than one run or should it be a 'one off'. Despite that, only exceptionally would there be more than one series because most often these dramas were adaptations of books. The Commissioner was also always on the look out for films which would be suitable for broadcast over Christmas – *Tân ar y Comin* by T Llew Jones was broadcast this year.

At the end of her presentation, the Commissioner listed the plays which would be appearing on the Channel in the near future. She drew particular attention to *Fondue*, *Rhyw a Dinosaurs*, a unique drama which pushed the boundaries – and it would be interesting to see what would be the reaction to this play. In conclusion, the Commissioner said that she was receiving new scripts weekly which convinced her that drama was alive and well in Wales.

The Drama Commissioner was thanked for a very interesting presentation and it was mentioned that drama was a very positive issue amongst Members of the Authority. This was supported and it was said that drama is something which was seen as a success, not only by Members of the Authority, but also by viewers in general. This was an example of a genre which continued to attract audiences across a range of ages, gender and geographical areas.

Other Matters

In addition, the following matters were discussed or noted:

- Report of the Chief Executive – Matters for information
- Complaints Report
- Minutes of the meeting of the Compliance Group held on 16 February 2001.
- Report on the Viewers' Hotline
- Report on research
- Financial Report
- Report of the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol