ILLIBERAL HOLLYWOOD: IT'S 1984 — OR IS IT 1964? CAN'T TELL FROM EEOC'S INACTION

If you haven't watched this Bloomberg-produced video yet, you should. The women directors interviewed are highly skilled and have been fighting Hollywood's not-at-all-liberal misogyny for decades.

And yes, decades — nothing substantive has happened since 1983 when Reagan-appointee Judge Pamela Rymer ruled for two major studio defendants in the Directors Guild of America's lawsuits against them for their discriminatory hiring practices. There was an uptick for about one decade after the suit; by 1995, roughly 16% of movies were directed by women.

But since then the numbers have fallen, and neither the DGA nor the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) have done anything about it.

We could cut some slack on the first decade, between 1995 and 2005, right? Congress was full of right-wing zealots chasing the president over a blowjob, and the president who followed him was hyper-focused on going to war, pushed by Dick Cheney's hand up his backside. Their administrations drifted along with them, shaped by their leaders' attentions.

But a second decade now — over thirty years in all since 1983 — and the EEOC gave the matter no attention at all? It's not as if the film and television industries aren't right under the noses of people charged with paying attention. Who can work in government and say they haven't watched any television or film in thirty years? Hello, West Wing?

Or is that an answer in itself, that the film

and television industries are merely acting with government sanction, that it is U.S. government policy to discriminate in entertainment media because it serves national interests?

We know that the Pentagon actively works with the film industry to ensure that the military is portrayed in a positive light. Just how far does this reach go, though?

How can we not ask this, given President Obama's own response to the Sony Pictures' hack, when he implied by seeking additional cybersecurity measures that Sony – a Japanese-owned corporation – is part of critical U.S. infrastructure?

The DGA's negligence for thirty years on gender equity only assures the dust surrounding the government's relationship with Hollywood effectively obscures whatever the truth may be.

It's hard to tell, too, whether the DGA saw Judge Rymer's rulings as marching orders. Why didn't DGA ever appeal? Or address Rymer's problems with the suit and re-tackle the problem? Or did the DGA simply not want to buck the implied policy established at a remove by the only president with Hollywood background?, even though Judger Rymer felt DGA was "partially responsible for the small amount of women and minority film and television directors hired"? (pdf)

It's 2015 – the entertainment industry is nothing at all like it was in 1983. Yet the EEOC and DGA are frozen in time. The EEOC has continued to ignore a fundamental problem with leaving enforcement of federal employment law in the hands of a labor organization led by men, and the DGA's leadership refuses to represent ALL of its members effectively, as other unions do.*

If the government and the DGA were ever worried another Leni Riefenstahl might rise from the ranks of women directors, they need not have worried. They've done a fine job manipulating public opinion to promote the government, while

suppressing women’s rights all on their own. Message read, loud and clear.

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* Examples (source: EEOC.gov):

— UAW International v. Johnson Controls (1991) — *“…The Court rules that the employer’s restriction against fertile women performing “dangerous jobs” constitutes sex discrimination under Title VII. …”* DGA could still represent women in class action suits, as it did in 1983, and as other unions like the UAW have.

— United Steel Workers of America v. Weber (1979) — *“…the Supreme Court holds that private sector employers and unions may lawfully implement voluntary affirmative action plans to remedy past discrimination. The Court holds that an employer and union do not violate a collectively bargained plan by reserving 50 percent of the slots in a training program in a traditionally segregated industry for black employees. The program is lawful because it does not “unnecessarily trammel the interests of white employees,” does not “create an absolute bar to the advancement of white employees,” and is “a temporary measure . . . not intended to maintain racial balance, but simply to eliminate a manifest racial imbalance.””* Further, the DGA could sue for remedies as well as compliance with employment law on behalf of women.