

Puttnam backs fund to help new entrants

BY LIZ THOMAS

LORD PUTTNAM has slammed UK broadcasting for being a "closed shop" for the middle classes and is backing a new Cinema and Television Benevolent Fund awards scheme to encourage diversity in the industry.

Puttnam has lent his support to the John Brabourne Award and initiative, set up by the family of the film-maker and the CTBF, which will provide grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 to help young people get their "foot in the door" of the industry.

Puttnam told *Broadcast*: "The difficulties people face trying to get into the industry was a huge

concern of John's. We have to break down barriers and move away from an industry that is too middle class and London-centric.

"When I first came to the industry it was highly meritocratic rather than the closed shop it is today. It's getting worse and there is less social mobility than when I started as a messenger in the 1960s."

He said that by "squeezing salaries" and forcing new entrants to work for free, broadcasters and producers were reducing the pool of talent to those who could rely on their parents' financial help.

The CTBF will launch the scheme, which has received backing from companies such as



Lord Puttnam: 'There is less social mobility than when I started'

Kodak and ITV, next week.

Glynn Ryland, head of development, said: "In recent years we have seen a significant increase in applications from the under 30s. The John Brabourne Award fund in this inaugural year will probably give out £25,000 to £30,000 in assistance.

"Rapid changes in technology mean that often there is a gap between university courses and the reality of the industry. The industry needs to work together to come up with ways to help and engage the next generation."

Ryland is looking for other company sponsors and can be contacted on g.ryland@ctbf.co.uk and 020 7437 6567.