

Edited and produced for the British Science Fiction Association by Archie Mercer.
 Proofread by Beryl Mercer. Publications Officer: W. Darroll Pardoe, 11 Cheniston
 Gardens, London W.8.

COMPANY BUSINESS: a Dialogue Cast, both of whom are strictly fictitious: Company Man, who advocates the transmogrification of the B.S.F.A. into some form of limited company; and Sceptic, who doesn't quite see the point of it all.

Scept: Why, Company Man, do you wish to turn the B.S.F.A. into a limited company ?

CoMan: There are three obvious advantages to the process. One of them is for pure and simple protection. According to my legal advisers, as things are at present if the Association was to be sued - whether for debt, or libel, or anything else - it would have to be sued in the names of its committee who would be liable to pay any consequent damages, costs etc., out of their own pockets if the Association's funds didn't run to it. The committee in turn could, in theory, then sue the ordinary members for their share of the burden, but it would be a lengthy and probably futile business which would on the whole solve nothing. If, on the other hand, the Association were to become incorporated under the Companies Acts, then it would be suable as a collective entity, and any damages, costs or other payments would be restricted to what was in the Association's treasury plus any small amounts that the members may be required to guarantee for the purpose.

Scept: But surely it's part of the committee's job to ensure that the Association is never put in a position in which it can be sued.

CoMan: In theory, you're certainly right. However, the fact that the Association has not been sued on one or two occasions in the past is due more to the grace and favour of the injured parties than to prophylactic activities on the part of the committee.

Scept: Possibly so. On the other hand, could it not be possible that the very fact that the subsequent burden will fall heavily on individuals may have itself acted as a discouragement to potential suitors - either from their good nature, or because they too would become involved in considerable trouble ? And in the latter case, could not the existence of a limited company constitute virtually an invitation to sue ?

CoMan: A somewhat nebulous possibility, I think. All in all, the limited-company setup does provide a greater measure of security than exists at present.

Scept: I think that's a matter of opinion. And your second advantage ?

CoMan: Incorporation would give an incentive towards greater efficiency. At present, a member of the committee can (for whatever reason) go suddenly incommunicado and effectively remove an important part of the Association's records from the field of play, and nothing effective can be done to get them back again. If the Association was a limited company, the secretary would have power to demand their return, and could sue for them if necessary.

Scept: Oh, we're back to litigation already, are we ? And who'd pay the bill this time ?

CoMan: There wouldn't be one to speak of. The secretary would simply get a solicitor to write a threatening letter, and the threat should be enough.

Scept: If the defaulting committeeman won't answer correspondence from people who are supposed to be his friends, why should he bother about one from a solicitor ?

CoMan: Because of the threat behind it.

Scept: The defaulter is, one assumes, not unintelligent. He knows that a solicitor will write a threatening letter for maybe a quid, perhaps less. But that's a far cry from starting a full-scale legal action with all the trimmings,

and if it was me I think a solicitor's letter would only make me want to dig my heels in even further. Not that I'd (I hope) abscond with a wad of official papers in the first place of course.

CoMan: We'll still have a bigger lever to use than we have at present.

Scept: I suppose so - not to mention a more expensive one. But supposing the secretary is the one who goes incommunicado?

CoMan: Well, no system can be a hundred per cent watertight, obviously.

Scept: What about your third advantage then?

CoMan: This depends on the precise formula under which the company is incorporated - there are quite a number of possible formulae - but if the company had a certain number of nominal shareholders, selected from the Association membership, at say a pound per head, that would give the Association an additional source of much-needed capital.

Scept: I can think of several objections here. If such money was to be used as immediate capital, and I agree that some would come in mighty handy, it would not be available for emergencies such as your much-feared lawsuit. In any case, it could only be used once, after which the Association would be back at Square One. And how many members would want to give this extra quid, over and above their annual subscriptions, for no benefit to themselves?

CoMan: A surprisingly large number, I think you'll find. And after all, if they wholeheartedly support the Association's basic aims, the money is of indirect benefit to themselves.

Scept: Again, it seems to be a matter of opinion. However, even granted that the advantages are precisely as you suggest, it's all still going to cost money. Setting up a limited company in the first place costs money, keeping it going according to company law means a further outlay each year over and above what is at present necessary, and it even costs money to wind it up again.

CoMan: It will cost money of course, but not as much as you seem to fear. Setting up the company in the first place shouldn't come to more than maybe fifty quid, and the annual cost of complying with the law should be negligible. And winding the company up again, should it ever come to that, cannot cost more than the company has available - that's one of the benefits of being a limited company.

Scept: A back-handed benefit if ever there was one! I'm not so sure of your figures either - I've seen various sums considerably in excess of your estimates bandied about. Have you checked with anybody who's already been through a similar process and knows what he's talking about?

CoMan: As a matter of fact, I haven't yet. Have you?

Scept: Touché - I haven't. Perhaps we'd better leave this angle until we have more hard facts to go on. Well, you've explained how, in your opinion, incorporation as a limited company would help to recover official papers from incommunicado committeemen. This is only half of that particular problem, though - the other, and even more important, half is that committeemen go incommunicado in the first place. This, as I see it, is the Association's biggest problem of all, and a perennial one. Frankly, I don't see how incorporation would make the slightest difference there.

CoMan: We won't be able to see how all the details will work out until we've tried it. But least we're attempting to do something.

Scept: True, you're trying to do something. The fact that the "something" in question seems to me to be mainly irrelevant to the Association's problems notwithstanding. Another point - many of the Association's members...

CoMan: How many?

Scept: I wouldn't know, but certainly some, and some recently-lapsed ex-members - they like the B.S.F.A. because of its essential informality. To them it's basically a "fun thing" which incorporation would finally spoil altogether.

CoMan: But that's half the point of the B.S.F.A., that it caters for so wide a range of taste and interest. Members who want fun pure and simple, as they see it, would still have their place in an incorporated setup - but greater emphasis would be able to be given to the more serious side of things too.

Both(In chorus): I consider that the B.S.F.A. has essentially worthwhile objectives, and am sincerely trying to help it to my best ability.

(NOTE: The above dialogue represents an attempt at a fair summary of the various arguments on the question, both pro and con, that I have heard at the A.G.M. and elsewhere. The wording is entirely my own work. If members have anything pertinent to add to the arguments on either side, and care to communicate same to me at 9 Cotswold Road, Bedminster, Bristol 3, they will probably find them aired in a future Bulletin. AM.)

NOTES ON THE 1967 CONVENTION Although both your Bulletin-editor and his tame proofreader attended the recent Easter Convention, they were so tied-up on the administrative side of things that they have very little idea of what actually went on - except that most attendees seem to have enjoyed themselves. Don't, therefore, look for a coherent convention report here. Just to give one instance - between such routine jobs as manning the registration desk and chasing-up the next speaker, your Bulletin-editor had to keep rushing off to a remote suburb in order to inspect the coal-bin in a certain back-garden. (The parcel in question was not, alas, delivered until too late. Another parcel, from Australia, has now turned up just about one month later...)

Here are a few hard facts, though. The British Fantasy Award somehow contrived this year to fission. Part of it went to Philip K. Dick for "The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch" (Jonathan Cape), the Award being accepted on Mr. Dick's behalf by Thomas Disch. The remainder of the Award went to Michael Moorcock for services to magazine sf in this country. The "Doc" Weir Award, which is senior by several years to the British Fantasy Award albeit not perhaps conferring quite so much prestige in literary circles, was won by our own Doreen Parker, by popular vote. Another B.S.F.A. stalwart, ex-Treasurer and long-time behind-the-scenes-worker Jill Adams, was inducted into the Most Noble and Illustrious Order of St. Fantasy. (Your Bulletin-editor has no need to be jealous, already possessing both these ^{latter} distinctions - just in case you were wondering.)

In addition to further revelations in connection with the 1968 Convention (see below), Cambridge was selected as the potential site for 1969. And those present were clearly of a mind to support the bid by German sf fans for the 1970 World S.F. Convention to be held in Heidelberg. The B.S.F.A.'s A.G.M. was concerned mainly with the proposal to form a limited company, but it was noteworthy that apart from those actually on the platform and a few "old hands" who had segregated themselves on a balcony, nearly all the members present seemed to be from the newer and/or younger element, and taking furthermore a keen interest in all that transpired. This obviously bodes well for the Association's future, in whatever form.

CONVENTION 1968 The annual British S.F. Convention for 1968 (the precise connection of these events with the B.S.F.A. is at present not entirely clear, except that the Association participates in the programme) is to be at the Queen's Hotel, Alderley Edge, Cheshire - a rural retreat just outside the Manchester conurbation. The Convention Committee's bulletin, METEOR, is lithographed - a far cry from CON TRACT (not to mention this Bulletin) - and registrations are being accepted at 7/6d by convention treasurer Bill Burns, of 13 Swanage Road, Winton, Eccles, Lancs. The code name for the convention is "The Thirddancon" - after Harry Lime no doubt, the first two being respectively the Mancon of 1952 (I think) and the Supermancon of 1954, both held in Manchester itself

SMALL-ADS FREE TO MEMBERS

FOR SALE Galaxy Science Fiction April 1951 - May 1952 (14 issues), fairly good condition. Contains complete three-part serials by Bester, Heinlein, and Kornbluth/Merril plus stories by Asimov, Heinlein, Knight, Vance, Bradbury, Wyndham etc. Offers to L. Kettle, 5 Alder Dale, off Richmond Rd., Wolverhampton, Staffs.

WANTED - Spare Magazines (Part No. 2401) for a "Realist" 400 Automatic Slide Projector (Model 3121 made by the David White Instrument Co. of Milwaukee)
- J.P. Rogers, 5 First Avenue, Ashfield, Scunthorpe, Lincs. (Ref. EL.43.DL.)

PENFRIENDS GALORE! 10/- (and your announcement) brings 12 Minimags this year.
- J.S. CAIRNS, 15 BRINKBURN ST., SUNDERLAND, CO. DURHAM.

IMPORTANT Someone was given a pair of pyjamas and a belt on the Monday morning of the Convention and asked to hand them in at Reception. This they failed to do. I would appreciate their return to me as soon as possible. Also my college scarf, black with two white stripes, "disappeared" during the week-end. This latter garment is a very expensive item of clothing and I would like it back please. Roje Gilbert, 92 St. Fabians Drive, Chelmsford, Essex.

COMPLAINTS DEPT. It has been pointed out by an Overseas Member in the U.S.A. that nowhere in any B.S.F.A. literature was the name of the 1967 Convention hotel given. This is a classic case of the dangers of having news-media concentrated in too few hands! Specifically, the B.S.F.A. Bulletin and the Convention newsletter CON TRACT were both edited by the same individual (AM), who fondly thought that telling B.S.F.A. members where to get information from concerning the Convention (on payment of the registration fee) was in their case all that was necessary. As a result, Dave Kyle was unable to telephone the Convention from New York State. Very sorry, Dave - please note the location of the 1968 Con on the previous page of this Bulletin. And possibly even see you there.

THE B.S.F.A. COMMITTEE The holes in our Committee's ranks having been made good by a variety of means including (in the case of the Publications Officer) outright conscription, the line-up is now as follows:

Chairman	Mr. Roje Gilbert
Vice Chairman	Mr. K.F. Slater
Secretary	Mrs. D.E. Parker
Treasurer	Mr. D.S. Barber
Publications Officer	Mr. W.D. Pardoe

The various departments such as the Library branches, the International Contacts Dept., the Bulletin-editorship etc., remain in their previous hands for the present.

FINANCIAL NOTE It should not go entirely unrecorded that by way of partial counterbalance to the recent increase in all classes of subscription, memberships for 1967 are to remain valid until Easter 1968 instead of to December 31st only, as has previously been the practice.

NEW MEMBERS AND CHANGES OF ADDRESS Owing to the inactivity of the Association's previous Treasurer, the recording of new members has recently been somewhat chaotic. Rather than go back re-covering old ground, no list of new members and changed addresses is being published in this issue of the Bulletin. A comprehensive list of members is now in course of preparation - it may possibly be distributed with this, though probably not until the next issue, and any further listings of new members etc. will be re-started from that point.