

THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 1

July 1971

SUCCESSFUL FIRST MEETING

The first meeting of the revived Birmingham Science Fiction Group was held at the Imperial Hotel in the city centre on Friday June 25th. Attended by thirty people, the meeting was enjoyed by all present. Apologies for absence were received by another dozen or so who hope to attend future meetings and it is now clear that there will be enough support for a group in the city.

The first meeting began at 8.15pm in the George Room on the first floor of the hotel and as it was the first meeting, was mainly concerned with introducing the committee and members to each other and to discuss plans and ideas for the future of the group. The formal part of the meeting, which lasted about an hour, was followed by an informal session in the adjacent bar where lively conversation continued until about 11.00pm.

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS

The initial meeting was opened by the Chairman, Peter Weston, who welcomed those present and explained the reasons for the organisation of the group. He gave some details of previous activities in Birmingham among science fiction enthusiasts, and said that the previous group had failed because of the lack of a suitable meeting place. By now using the Imperial Hotel, we could hope to attract a much larger membership and to arrange an organised programme of speakers and other events concerned with science fiction.

"This is initially going to be a dictatorship," he said, "but we intend to hold an Annual General Meeting in the new year, when we can assess the success of the Group and elect officers democratically." For the initial term of office the committee would consist of Peter Weston as Chairman, Roger Peyton as Vice-Chairman and Publicity Officer and Vernon Brown as Treasurer. Each of the other two committee members were introduced and each explained their intentions. One of the first priorities was to publicise the now Group and to recruit members and Roger Peyton thus asked for volunteers to aid in expanding the Group. Over a dozen people subsequently offered to help. Vernon Brown explained financial arrangements which would be a subscription of 50p per year, with a subscription rate of 30p for the short period from July 1971 - February 1972. This was to cover general expenses of the Group - postage, newsletter, speaker¹'s fees, etc. There would also be an entrance charge of 10p per meeting to cover the cost of the room hire.

It was then explained that the programme events would be fixed jointly by the committee, who asked the assembly what they would

like to see and hear. Several suggestions were put forward, both for speakers and for other events such as films, etc. The Chairman said that films would be shown if possible, although these raised the problem of cost. However, a member of the audience offered to help provide projection equipment and the suggestion was made that the Group might even be able to make amateur films! For the present, the committee decided to fix immediate events and to consider films for the future.

The Vice-Chairman then read out some news items and the meeting dispersed to the bar. For the benefit of those not present, the news items are included below.

NEWS ITEMS.

The film of the Ray Bradbury story THE ILLUSTRATED MAN to be seen in Birmingham! First shown in 1969, Birmingham film-goers have had to wait 2 years to see this brilliant fantasy about a man so tattooed that there is only one clear spot on his body -and if you gaze at that too long you find yourself in the future! If you remember the book, each tattoo comes alive to form each story in the book. Starring Rod Steiger and Claire Bloom, it will be interesting to see how this is handled visually. Will be shown from July 19th to 24th at the Cannon Hill Arts Cinema. Membership is not necessary and the entrance fee is only 40p. Support this film!

The Sixth Annual Nebula Awards for 1970 have now been presented and the results are:

Best Novel: (1) RINGWORLD - Larry Niven; (2 tied) AND CHAOS DIED - Joanna Russ; TOWER OF GLASS - Robert Silverberg; (3) YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN - Wilson Tucker; (4) FOURTH MANSIONS - R A Lafferty; (5) THE STEEL CROCODILE - D G Compton,

Best Novella - ILL MET IN LANKHMAR - Fritz Leiber. Best

Novelette - SLOW SCULPTURE - Theodore Sturgeon. Best

Short Story - No Award.

The other big Award in science fiction is of course the 'Hugo' -this will be presented at the 29th World SF Convention at Boston in September. The Nominations for this Award have now appeared and are:-

Best Novel: RINGWORLD - Larry Niven; STAR LIGHT - Hal Clement; TAU ZERO - Poul Anderson; TOWER OF GLASS - Robert Silverberg; YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN - Wilson Tucker.

Best Novella ; BEASTCHILD - Dean Koontz ; ILL MET IN LANKHMAR -Fritz Leiber; THE REGION BETWEEN - Harlan Ellison; THE THING IN THE STONE - Clifford Simak; THE WORLD OUTSIDE - Robert Silverberg.

Best Short Story: BRILLO - Ben Bova & Harlan Ellison; CONTINUED ON NEXT ROCK - R A Lafferty; IN THE QUEUE - Keith Laumer; JEAN DUPRES - Gordon Dickson; SLOW SCULPTURE - Theodore Sturgeon.

Other nominations of interest are the now defunct British professional magazine VISION OF TOMORROW in the magazine section

and Eddie Jones, well known fan artist, professional artist and convention-goer gaining the recognition he so well deserves by the nomination in the 'Best Professional Artist' category. Last but by no means least is the nomination for SPECULATION in the 'Best Fan Magazine' section. This is, of course, the magazine edited and produced by our very own Chairman, Pete Weston. This is the fifth time it has gained nomination honours but as yet has never actually won the coveted award. Maybe this year it will win - and be the very first time that a British produced 'fanzine' has won in this section.

PROGRAMME

At the first meeting, we, the committee, left with the promise of arranging a programme and informing you of a detailed run-down of forthcoming events. Alas, we were optimistic. At least in the idea that we could get everything tied up within a week. We were not overly optimistic in saying that we could get some big names and interesting items for future programme items. At the time of writing we have obtained promises from a number of people to come and speak in the months to come, but trying to arrange when they can come has proved more difficult than we anticipated. More definite arrangements are being made as you read this newsletter and we hope that we will be able to give you the programme for the next few months at the July meeting.

To date, we have got promises from Michael Moorcock, Kenneth Bulmer and Brian Aldiss to come and speak to the group. Dr Jack Cohen, from the Zoology Department of Birmingham University will be talking about "Life On Other Worlds" and we have also obtained slides taken at the Easter Convention at Worcester. The order in which these events will take place is yet to be decided but we are sure that each and every one of them will be enjoyable. If you don't think that you will enjoy any of the above mentioned items, you shouldn't be reading this Newsletter - you simply can't be a science fiction fan!

OTHER EVENTS

The suggestion was made that parties could be arranged to visit the London 'Globe' - a public house where SF authors, publishers and readers meet on the first Thursday of each month in an informal atmosphere to talk to other enthusiasts. Geoff Winterman offered the use of his 12-seater mini-bus so there is a strong possibility that we will be able to arrange visits in the future.

September 3rd - 6th, 29th World SF Convention to be held in Boston, USA.

November 13th - 14th, - 'NovaCon', a small SF convention to be held here, in Birmingham, at the Imperial Hotel. Full details from our Treasurer, Vernon Brown, who is organising this event.

There is a chance that our Chairman will be attending the World Convention in Boston and if so, a report can be given to the

Group. He will also send the 'Hugo' results by air mail so that we will be among the first to know the winners.

SCIENCE FICTION ANYBODY?

Our Vice-Chairman also conducts a small business dealing in science fiction books. As an added interest at each meeting, there will be a small selection of books for sale to members. Anyone wanting current catalogues can obtain them by writing to our Vice-Chairman at the address below. Other members are encouraged to bring along any books they wish to sell or exchange.

REMINDER

THE NEXT MEETING IS AT 8.00pm ON FRIDAY 16th JULY AT THE GEORGE ROOM, THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, TEMPLE STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

THE COMMITTEE

Chairman; Peter R Weston, 31 Pinewall Avenue, Kings Norton, Birmingham 30. Tel: 459 1573. Vice-Chairman; Roger G Peyton, 131 Gillhurst Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 8PG. Tel: 429 5863. Treasurer ; Vernon C Brown, 65 Forest Road, Oldbury, Warley, Worcs. Tel: 422 6957

We would like to see any science fiction enthusiasts from other towns around Birmingham, If you live in Wolverhampton, Walsall, Coventry, etc. you are welcome to the meetings. Think about it - it's not really that far, is it?
