

NORSTRILIAN NEWS

FREE ISSUE - THE WORLDCON RULES RELATING TO SITES AND HUGOES

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The June issue of LUNA MONTHLY has an editorial devoted to this subject (and we thank LUNA MONTHLY for a preprint). This is a most important subject, and here follows One Fan's Opinion.

The rules introduced at the 1969 World Science Fiction Convention specifically relating to the sites and the Hugoes are as follows:

- 3.01 1. The name of the science fiction convention now held in North America and styled the "World Science Fiction Convention" should be changed to the "North American Science Fiction Convention" (NASFic).
2. A true World (or International) Science Fiction (or Congress, etc.) being desirable, it is recommended that a committee be set up at St. Louis to confer with similar committees and individual fans in Europe, the Pacific, etc., to suggest suitable mechanisms for holding such conventions.
3. To maintain the continuity of the name "World Science Fiction Convention", the following interim plan is suggested. The World Science Fiction Convention title shall rotate through continental zones in a pre-arranged manner. One of these zones shall be North America. The fans of each zone shall determine as they see fit which convention in their zone shall assume the title "World Science Fiction Convention" when the title is resident in their zone. In North America the NASFic would automatically assume the title when the title is resident in North America.
4. The numbering of the NASFic shall continue the numbering from the former World Science Fiction Conventions in order to preserve continuity when dealing with hotels.

3.08 When the World Science Fiction Convention is held outside North America, the portion of the voting regulations which requires physical attendance at the voting session for the selection of the North American convention site to be chosen at that convention shall be suspended. Instead, the convention site for two years hence shall be chosen by an Australian mail ballot to be administered by that convention committee. Any person who owns any type membership in that convention and that two years hence shall be eligible to vote. The regular rules shall be immediately reinstated at the succeeding American convention.

2.14 The Science Fiction Achievement Award is an English-language award, with eligibility limited to material presented in English, including first translations from other languages. If and when a National or North American Science Fiction Convention is established, then during the World Science Fiction Convention resides in a non-English-speaking-country, the North American Science Fiction Convention shall administer the Hugo. At all other times, the world convention will retain this responsibility. This motion to take effect in 1971.

Comments:

I take these in reverse order. 2.14 plainly establishes that the Hugo shall be awarded by countries such as England and Australia, but not by countries such as Sweden and Japan. Whether Hugo Gernsback, who emigrated to the USA, would approve is something you must decide for yourself.

3.08 is the clause which probably gives rise to the belief that a two-year rotation plan is now in effect. Read in isolation, it may seem to imply that, but in fact 3.02 requires that convention sites be chosen two years in advance - 3.08 merely assures that when the convention is held outside the North Americas, whenever that might be, the decision for the convention two years hence shall be by mail ballot. This may be as often as nine years out of ten, to take an extreme case.

3.01 is the major item. Part 1 plainly states that the convention presently understood as the Worldcon SF Convention shall be renamed the NASFic. A new convention, in effect, will be set up, and given the name "Worldcon". The remainder of 3.01 spells out the arrangement of this new convention, except that part 4 re-emphasises that the NASFic is in fact the continuation of the present Worldcons (the bit about the hotels may be relevant, but isn't the whole story).

Part 2 of 3.01 indicates the manner in which this new convention shall be set up. To my knowledge, no committee, as required, was set up at St. Louis. If it was, neither similar committees nor individual fans in Australia were contacted about it (and we are pretty near "the Pacific").

Part 3 of 3.01 proposes a plan to fill in until the committee mentioned in part 2 has done its duty. This plan is rather broad, and its only specification is that North America shall be one of the zones, apart from the general reference to "continental zones".

In addition to these new sections of the rules, some of the old rules are relevant. LUNA MONTHLY, for example, states that there is no 2-year rotation plan in force and implies that conventions may return to the US relatively infrequently. The present 3.04 states that "the rule of rotation may be set aside by a vote of three-fourths voting, with the provision that in no case may two successive conventions be in the same division or outside North America." Thus the present upper bound for non-NA conventions is one-half - at least every other convention must be held in N.America(My underline, y'unnerstand!).

Indeed, it is worth asking whether the present Worldcon rules are adhered to carefully. 3.05 starts off: "By bidding, a convention committee promises to abide by this constitution." And 4.03 reads: "The rules of the World Science Fiction Society as decided in the business meetings shall be printed by the World Science Fiction Convention committee, and distributed with the Hugo nomination ballots," How often is this done?

The above remarks in fact constitute glosses upon the rules which I've quoted accurately (subject to human error) from Jerry Lapidus's THE LEGAL RULES 2. I have tried to keep my own opinions out of it (sorry about Hugo, there!). Here follow, from someone who might one day be on a Worldcon bidding committee, some

ARGUMENTS (Beware of assumptions, false logic, ad hominem attacks, et cetera)

1. The most important matter, it seems to me, is to sort out exactly the nature of the conventions which would be run by non-North American countries. We know, from experience, what the Worldcons in North America will be like, and the NASfics, one gathers, will not be too different. Let us try to see how the non-NA conventions will differ from such conventions as the Lonecons and the Heicon. Firstly, there would be competition from the NASfic, even if the non-NA Worldcon were held at another time. It is reasonable to suppose that the NASfic will be the big con. Secondly, conventions such as the Heicon, under 2.14 will not be awarding the Hugoes, but some hypothetical at present non-existent awards. I believe that it is not unreasonable to suppose that a consequence of these two facts is that the attendance at non-NA Worldcons by NA fans and pros will drop considerably, especially if such conventions take place more frequently than they have in the past.

I do not think we can say just what form this new convention will take, but I believe we should all be aware of the pitfalls, which apply largely to fans from non-NA countries.

2. What is the exact nature of the currently-in-force rotation plan? This is only an opinion, I'm afraid, but I see no others around. 3.04, referred to above, and still a part of the rules of the World Science Fiction Society, defines the Five-year Rotation Rule - it is the only rule in these rules specifying a Rotation rule (as opposed to speculation, such as occurs in 3.01). In my opinion, Worldcon sites are, as of June-July 1970, determined by the old Five-year Plan. I suspect that it is the intention of the committee involved in drafting 3.01 to remove 3.04, but if the bidding for the 1972 site is carried out before 3.04 is removed then the winning city is running a Worldcon.

3. If you're so smart, what do you think should be done? An obvious answer would be to drop 2.14, 3.01 and 3.04 and start again. But is that necessary? I suspect that the old 3.04 would actually cope with the present situation quite well. If the clamour comes from non-NA countries that they don't hold enough Worldcons - fine, let them utilise 3.04 and get that little extra response to their advertising/bidding. This allows up to half the Worldcons to be held outside North America. Is the three-fourths requirement discriminatory? Try cutting it to three-fifths: but considering the disruption to the system I think there should be some kind of brake on this sort of thing. An enthusiastic group might, for example, be able to persuade a fair proportion of attendees that their bid is worthwhile, but since non-NA fans would, on the whole, be less well known, it is not unreasonable to expect that they should be rather more convincing with regard to their ability and enthusiasm than the better-known North American fans before being allowed to run a Worldcon.

4. The major need is for an informed electorate - and a large one. I hope this goes some of the way towards helping.

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This has been a propaganda sheet from John Foyster, 12 Glengarriff Drive, Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia. Anyone may copy, comment, etc. But please credit and quote accurately. Would you believe I should have decided on two sheets?