

Perpetrated by Archie Mercer of 10 Lower Church Lane, St. Michael's, Bristol BS2 8BA in the United Kingdom, during the month of November 1969. Proofread by Beryl Mercer. E&OE

TERRY JEEVES. I have the sad feeling that all the important things were said in the first two and that we are now following the route of normal bull sessions and arguing round and round...and with more and more red herrings likely to come in. Perhaps at this stage the best thing to do would be to re-state the original problem, and follow with a precis of (a) the established facts such as attendee numbers, hotel costs etc., and (b) the best ideas and suggestions made so far. (Perhaps somebody - not you in particular, Terry - would like to try? I'm too busy trying to ride the front end of the bull - not to mention the herrings! AM) Once you have done this, I'm blown if I know what the next step would be...but whatever it is, the fact must be faced that as long as a Con depends on voluntary workers, there will always be uncertainty as to who does what, where, and how much.

Martin Pitt's price comments (£15 to £20 too high...£5 max the ideal) are valid, but a bit too extreme I fear. The same applies to good old Ted who goes to the opposite end. What an ideal price range would be is obviously very subjective, but I feel sure it would be wrong if not impractical to gear a con to the six-on-the-floor-of-one-room merchants..OR..to the wants of those who want a five star hotel.

When I first started attending cons (back in '47 I think, anyway, the first post-war con) I could barely afford the fare to London...so I came down for one day, and caught the 9 pm train home, arriving in Sheffield around 1-30 am. Later as funds improved, I could stay the night at an overflow hotel for about a quid B and B...provided I ate out at cheap houses. Still later I reached the point where I could afford to take all my meals in the Con hotel...by this time, a Con weekend had reached the £12 mark (exclusive of drinks, purchases etc.). This is not too astronomic for any but the poorest paid members as a once a year proposition...but with Val coming with me, these rates doubled, and I for one cannot at the moment spare £30 for a weekend as a regular thing, no matter how pleasant this may be.

What's the answer? Blown if I know...but the obvious one of a reasonably priced hotel plus cheaper over-flow satellite rooms has the obvious snag that hotel managers don't like to cater for people staying in other hotels...UNLESS and here is the big point we always gloss over. Official activities are finished at (say) 10 pm and the hired hall closed down to all non-residents.

It is about time this fact was faced up to in Con bookings. Those who want all night party facilities must be prepared to pay for them by booking in the main hotel. Those who want a cheap con, can book in at the local YMCA if they wish...and then they must leave the Con hotel by 10 pm. Do this, and you can concentrate your efforts on producing a programme which is much more suitable to Manager, rich fan and poor fan...except that you will always have the free loading fan who wants to pay cheap and have all the (all night) facilities of the big hotel for which others are paying through the nose.

Putting it simply...the Con proper should be a (cheap) day-time affair for those interested in S-F etc., but the after hours festivities should be for those prepared to pay the extra to enjoy them.

Enough about prices...I agree with Gray Boak that fandom has deserted the BSFA...or at least...is not so enchanted with it...and also that fandom needs a BSF-something. If Vector had got down to matters as basic as Pert does it might have helped. Bryn Fortey hits home when he cites Vector as the BSFA's offering...

'and what else'. Indeed, the mag chain must appeal to few, if you like a mag enough you sub to it generally, and as for the Library, excellent as this is, current Postal rates make its regular use prohibitive except for getting a chance at some really desired book. So what do you get for your money? Compare it with a few other societies.

B.I.S. When I was in this, the sub was £2.2.0, and you got their beautifully printed Journals...Journal of the BIS and Spaceflight four times a year (a vast improvement on Vector) and also they maintained a London HQ, regional branches, regular lectures...plus a slide and information service. Badges and ties were available at extra cost.

BAPA (The British Amateur Press Association, £1 per annum) which posts a monthly bundle of members' contributions to members (a la OMPA). Annual competitions, with awards. Annual Convention (with visits to places of interest + dinner + film show). Library for members. London branches and local meetings.

No doubt you know of others.

I for one would rather pay 15/- a year for a well produced newszine (I already pay more than that for Cosmos) (≠Alas! AM) than 30/- for a fanzine with dubious fringe benefits.

Well, my remarks seemed to ramble around a bit, but believe me, they are well meant...I DO want a successful BSFA, but I had my fill in the early days as Sec/Editor/Chairman etc. when getting things done was only possible by doing them yourself.

JILL ADAMS A few comments on the comments in Pertinence.

First to Ethel Lindsay: by a 'pukka B.S.F.A. con' I mean one held under its aegis. I know there are not enough members to run a con, in any given locality.

Ken Cheslin: The B.S.F.A. is serious, fandom for fun. One does not need to be a schizophrenic to take part in both.

I must admit there are times when I feel like Ted and wonder why we bother, why we don't fold our tents and steal quietly away. Who would miss us? I just had a quick count, there are ten original founder members left. I can't remember how many were at Kettering, but they certainly haven't all died, or gafiated from fandom, just from the B.S.F.A. If only one knew why people didn't renew, it would help. John Marshall said apathetic members form the bulk of amateur organisations, true, but too often in the Ass. they are too apathetic even to renew! Does anyone know how long the average member stays? (≠Another opportunity for some helpful party with time on his hands to do a bit of research. Any takers? I foresee no particular difficulty about consulting official Secretarial records if necessary. AM)

Must have a passion for arithmetic tonight. We have some 210 members (1969 list), but have issued 990 (approx.) membership numbers. So, for some reason we have lost 780 odd members. That's a hell of a lot of people to mislay. Wish I hadn't done that, now I shall be awake nights wondering!

How were cons organised before the B.S.F.A. was around to ask for bids? (≠Each one took bids on the next, more or less. AM) An' just think how they've changed in 11 years! My fav ourite is still 1958, mainly I think because there was no programme to get in the way of the talk.

What does Hartley Patterson mean by "our officials having enough to do on the fan side of things"? Our officials are concerned with all sides of the Association. It's not ideas we lack but time, money and a responding membership. Many of the suggestions put forward in Pertinence cost money, real money, which the Association just doesn't have. 30/- sounds a lot to fork out each year, but unless you have a large membership, it doesn't go far. Nor can we obtain a bank loan to use as capital for expansion; we have no securities, not even a truly

bright future.

Dear Ghed, I do sound like Cassandra tonight. In spite of which I am willing to do what I can; I helped give birth to this millstone and I'm damned if I'll sit back and watch it die. (EXIT TO A MARTIAL FANFARE.)

JOHN MARSHALL I'm afraid I must agree in general with Gray Boak. The B.S.F.A. does not appear to be anything. The New Worlds Editorial June 1958 gave a report on the formation of the Assc. Dave Newman said at the time: "It is our plan to build up the new organisation into one of considerable prestige." (After 11 years apart from the members, and not all of them, who cares?) "It is our intention to make the B.S.F.A. the springboard for many interesting activities within the science fiction field as a whole." Again, something seems to have gone wrong. (≠The first thing that went wrong, of course, was Dave Newman himself! From the B.S.F.A.'s viewpoint, anyway. As it was, he never even got round to paying his first year's subscription... AM⇒)

I do not like, though, the idea that fandom must change its outlook in fandom itself in order to fall in with the "respectableisation" of the B.S.F.A. Why should what I assume are the majority of S.F. fans have to change their outlook to suit the minority?

I suppose the Association could become a "voice of authority", have considerable prestige and be a springboard into fandom, but at the moment I don't see how.

The point I was trying to make with the suggestion of Honorary Members was that having "big name" science fiction writers in the Assn. can only bring prestige. More prestige more members.

I should think that Arthur C. Clarke has caused more people to join the B.I.S. than any other single person just by being associated with the Society. So, if the "big names" won't join the B.S.F.A. try making them Hon. Members.

As a matter of sheer curiosity how did I get on the mailing list for Pertinence; looking at the circulation list I'm the only person I've never heard of. (≠Mainly because I send Pertinence to people that I've heard of. AM⇒)

ETHEL LINDSAY I see that some good ideas are coming out of this discussion: all it needs is folk to follow through and I hope you don't find that it's only yourself "doing it" !! Some comments:-

Martin Pitt: Ought to be put on a Con committee - let him try the "hotel heartbreak" chore and I'm sure he'll have even fresher ideas.

Gray Boak: Reprinting the N3F booklets and distributing them through the BSFA - is a very good idea. They are excellent publications.

Archie: I don't approve of free-loaders at cons or thieving at cons. (≠Nobody, surely approves of thieving except the thieves themselves - and possibly those who are paid to catch them! Freeloaders are somewhat different in that many who don't themselves freeload nevertheless sympathise with them. Past issues of PERTINENCE will tell you that you're certainly not alone in your disapproval though, Ethel. AM⇒). You answered my last question but not the preceding 4 vital ones!

(≠Let's see, then. (Hastily turns up FOURTH PERTINENCE, P.4.) "Does the BSFA want to have full control of conventions?" Like saying "Do the British want to join the Common Market?" Some do and some don't. Generally speaking, it is probably fair to say that B.S.F.A. officialdom would rather that such things came within its scope than not. "If it does, how would the officials propose to go about it?" Widdershins, possibly! Or, more practically perhaps, by augmenting the numbers of B.S.F.A.-slanted administrative types in fandom sufficiently for it to be done without relying too much on outside help. "If the BSFA does not want to have full control of conventions - then what are we discussing?" Whether

it does, and/or should, presumably, among other things. And Ethel's fourth "vital" question: "If it (ie, what we are discussing) is the role of the BSFA in cons not run by it - then I don't see how it can ask more of the committee than time set aside for its AGM and facilities for recruiting." That isn't a question, Ethel, but a statement of opinion with which you suppose that others will be bound to agree. Given your premises, it's probably a reasonable conclusion. OK? And sorry to take so long in answering! (AM)

JOE BOWMAN Thanks very much for your No. 4 'Pertinence'. I have learned from this issue more about the aims and ideas behind the B.S.F.A. than I ever realised before. The aims and intentions of those actively taking part in the progress of the B.S.F.A. are much to be admired. Even if many of the ideals are delayed there are those who are still striving towards them and still endeavouring to stir a few others into giving a helping hand.

TONY UNDERWOOD I don't think there is a solution to the hotel problem. There might be a hotel somewhere that suits everybody but it will only be stumbled on by accident. We'll have to grumble and keep looking. I'm not particular - I'd prefer a cheaper con but if there's no choice I just grumble and pay up.

I feel as Gray Boak about the BSFA. I don't get all that much out of it (I might if I used the library) but fuzzily pay me 30/-. I'd definitely say the BSFA is a springboard into fandom as that's how I got to know all those funny people I keep having nightmares about.

I don't think Ted Tubb's idea for non-booze-up meetings will ever catch on and even if they started the temptations would soon overcome the ideals.

I'd like a correspondence column in the bulletin. (≠The Bulletin asked for correspondence. Nobody corresponded... (AM))

The welcoming committee may have been a good idea but unnecessary. There are some in existence now called local fan groups which although not everywhere do form a large catchment area. These are plugged quite a lot as well.

I know how Bryn Fortey feels. I know a lot of SF readers in the RnF but when I've told them about the wonders of fandom they're not interested. The only three I ever did get to go to a fan meeting never kept it up after they left my view. Must take a special kind of nut. (≠Correction. One of your original "Locking" mob, Dave Chopping, has just turned up again - married, yet - and rejoined the B.S.F.A. (AM))

I'm left with the impression that there are too many problems and differences of view for the B.S.F.A. ever to function ideally.

Ah well - to the boozier.

MARY REED Felt Ted was hard on the impoverished fan - fair enough, most of us can afford cons, but many fen are coming in at an age when they are still at school, let alone college, and con fees, plus travelling expenses and meals, add up. When I first began going to cons I saved by literally cutting down on my midday meals - not that I begrudge it by any means - but if con hotels continue to be the cost of the Oxo one, the young fen just aren't going to get a chance. And they are the regular "transfusions" we need.

I do share his disgust at thieving - and I regret fen could be so low as to steal (one or two are pretty lightfingered over books, as well, I've noticed) or anyone in fact, never mind about fen. But I can't get over a fan stealing from another one - that's what I call really despicable.

Well, I was glad to do Welcommittee work, and I still am interested. Does anyone else want to have a go?

Must beg to differ with Terry. I'll wager the majority of fen were BSFA-members before they knew about cons. (I was, yes.)

(Dunno about the majority exactly, but the B.S.F.A. still does find people for fandom-at-large who would have been unlikely to find it by any other known route. Some of the very nicest people, too. AM)

GERALD BISHOP Your comment after Audrey Walton's letter made me think a bit. Members and non Members. Well, I gave my reasons for staying in the assn in my letter in the same ish; I also gave my reasons why I would otherwise have dropped out. Could the readers of this noble zine give their reasons why they are still in the Association, and if they have left, why did they ??? This might help to bring to light specific things about the Assn that get missed in generalizations.

In Pert 2, Ted Tubb said; the BSFA...isn't presenting an official front to the publishers. As members know, I am now compiling a monthly list of new sf books. To try to make sure that I include all the books, I try to get advance lists from the publishers. This has proved very difficult indeed. I wrote to the main publishing houses, asking for information. I used official BSFA headed paper for this, and the general result has been a nice letter back, with a list of books due in the next couple of months, and perhaps I get a couple of order forms listing new books for a couple of months, but after that...Absolutely Nothing. In my introduction to the first list, I did a gentle moan. This I think is why, a couple of weeks ago, a copy of a pb popped through the door, as the publishers might have had a twinge of conscience for not replying to a couple of letters sent last year, after which I gave them up as a hopeless job. Otherwise, no response to this. Last week I sent letters chasing up a couple of publishers for failing to keep their promises of regular information that they only made 6 months ago. Still haven't heard from one of them, but received another promise from t'other. Will wait and see how long this lasts, and then most probably blow up. Still to get back to the point. This shows the attitude of the publishers to the bsfa. And 'tis in their interest to let me know, as it means that the members know that their books are available, and if the book is a first British Edition, they might get the BSFAward for't; but only if I know that it's been published, and if it's in its 1st BrE. It isn't much trouble for the publishers to send me their printed lists, and it might lead to an (admittedly slight) increase in sales, and possibly an award to boost their ego.

In 3, Gordon Johnson's comment on displays in Libraries and ads in books etc. I think that this is excellent. Re the exhibitions, I am trying to find time to form a local group in Exeter (am busy studying and doing me bibliographical wurk at the moment). But when I do, I would like to try to arrange for a display at our City Library. Perhaps the BSFA might be able to collect together material for such a display, which could also be lent or hired to bookshops. Not only should it contain things like books, and current fanzines, prozines etc., but model space-ships, maps of the moon, and big posters. Publishers are prepared to part with book dust jackets for display. The people putting on the exhibition should pay at least some of the costs (for bookshops, All ??) whereas for institutions (libraries etc.) the bsfa might be prepared to split costs of transportation, and the whole thing should be administered by the bsfa. Perhaps someone in the booktrade or in PRO work might be prepared to look after this project and to take over this work from our most noble, but overworked, secretary. Again, perhaps a pro author in the Association might be able to become a Publishers' contact for us and use his 'NAME' as a booster for our image with the publishers.

On to the fourth ish.

Gray Boak; not only do I want the bsfa to be a springboard into fandom, but

I also want it to be the official voice of the sf readership of this country. ✓
No doubt many of the readers would like some kind of contact with fandom, but the majority just buy one or two a year for light enjoyment, and unless we can help them, even if they don't know it, or don't want our help, we might just as well strangle ourselves, and we would strangle our sf-fan alter-egos. It's like a dog biting its own tale off (think about that one...) Not only must we cater for these two extremes, but we MUST not forget the middle group of established fen who like their sf and their fanac, and even though this may be just subbing to a couple of zines, we want one of those zines to be Vector. Their subs have to support the work we want to do for the others.

How is the BSFA anthology coming on? This will, if we, ie every member, and if we can force them, every fan, introduce a vast number of readers to the knowledge that there is such a thing as organised appreciation.

Hell, everything I have been saying about Publishers on this page goes for radio and television also. A fan or pro author on Late Night Line Up discussing the sf view of a moonshot or something similar, and dropping the fact that there is a fandom, and a bsfa, might do us a lot of good.

(Regarding publishers, quite a number send books and/or lists regularly to the Secretarial address. The books are sent out for review on behalf of VECTOR, the lists are passed direct to Michael Kenward for his VECTORial information. Very possibly, they don't fully appreciate the difficulties inherent in running an organisation from a score of different addresses in different parts of the country.

Regarding the Anthology, after it had been sat on for far too long by the individual who was supposedly arranging for its assembly and publication, it was removed from his care. Right now, we have a publisher who is very interested indeed and is talking terms. So keep your eyes crossed and your breath bated - things seem to be getting somewhere at last on this front. AM⇒

AND THAT, SAYS "AM", wraps up another issue of PERTINENCE, the non-subsidised yapper-at-the-heels of the B.S.F.A. The next one - the sixth of its series - just might possibly happen in January 1970. Certainly not before, possibly not until February or later.

The circulation is basically as for FOURTH PERTINENCE still, ie, the 40 alphabetically classified names plus Messrs. Burn, Hay and Stokes. PERTINENCE naturally wishes all its circulation the compliments of the forthcoming season and all that sword'n'sorcery. AM