

Perpetrated by Archie Mercer of 10 Lower Church Lane, St. Michael's, Bristol BS2 8EA in the United Kingdom, during the month of March 1970. Proofread by Beryl Mercer. E&OE

EDITORIAL This is scheduled to be the last issue of PERTINENCE.

Several correspondents have suggested that PERTINENCE has now outlived whatever usefulness it had. This is not altogether so - see Gordon Johnson's letter and editorial remarks thereupon in this issue, for instance - and is not my basic reason for dropping it. (Admittedly, it helped me to make my mind up.) The basic reason is that for best effect the compilation of such a publication requires considerably more time and effort than I have to spare from other things. I tried at first, categorising the various comments subject by subject, juxtaposing relevant comments where juxtaposition illuminated each, and so on. But I just couldn't keep it up. For instance, this issue is being scabbled out in one week flat, today being March 19th, and I want to get it in the post so that recipients will be able to see it before Easter. I couldn't start it before, and I certainly couldn't after Easter for some while. So I've charged through the pending-file marking-up letters with a red ball-pen, and now I'm charging through it again with typewriter in hand. Beginning with:

DAVE PIPER (24 Dawlish Drive, Ruislip Manor, Middlesex, HA4 9SD) writes:

"Um....ah.....yes.....well, when I got PERT-4 I meant to write you but things got in the way. Only trouble is....I've just re-read it and I can't for the life of me remember what I was gonna say....I have a nagging feeling that it was a revolutionary and brilliant and superb resume of the situation with an incredible and brilliant solution which would have shocked and surprised and amazed all Fandom and I would have become overnight a BNF and..and.. ....(gurgle!)...(hic!)....." (And he'd prefer me to do an OMPazine. But then he writes in comment on FIFTH PERTINENCE:)=

"I think the best idea is the one mentioned by several people; ask the members WHY they're members and ask the non-but-used-to-be members why they chucked it. (We did, but they wouldn't say. AM)=

"Right ! But - well, only trouble is I can't honestly say why I'm still a member. I get next to nothing out of it - mind you, the badge is very nice. I wouldn't wear it but it looks pretty impressive stuck on the lawn-mower handle. No - that's not quite true - it's actually locked away in a drawer in case someone sees it.

"Seriously tho' - I think Terry's point re: 'if Vector got down to basics as Pert does' is a very good one. There has, for me, been more interesting chat in the 5 Perts than in umpteen Vectors. Perhaps the BSFA just ain't my bag - and I'm (EVEN NOW) considering my membership."

MARY REED (5 Park Close, Longmeadow, Stevenage, Herts) writes:

"One thing about Pert, it's saying such interesting and penetrating things that it really ought to reach many an eye .... maybe kindle some more enthusiasms, even.

"John Marshall: for this writer at least, the BSFA was a springboard into fandom, a fact for which I will never cease to be grateful.

"'Voice of authority' ... yes, this would be difficult to get rolling, but once we begin ... you know, the recent interview with the local rag I mentioned ? Well, we plugged the BSFA and fandom merrily, and neither was mentioned. Suppose local rags are interested in local things but why not write to things like the TIMES Lit. Sup? After all, they're forever having similar things .... and what's wrong with applying around to local Radio stations, or even the NATIONWIDE

programme after the news at 6-ish? They had an item recently on a museum based on the NE as it used to be .... why not the BSFA? Lots of letters to lots of people - somewhere we can get a foot in the door ... look at Ro Nicholls (=now Ro Pardoe: AM) - after we got our little article in the local rag I suggested she try hers (after all, Aldiss works for it ....); not only did she get a biggish spread, but the GPO mag rang her up and interviewed her on the 'phone - and that goes (the mag) all over the country. Just a question of getting our foot in the door. And the funny thing is, the Canadians had a similar idea, because if you recall, a bloke from CBC flew over to interview John Brunner - this was before they landed on the Moon the first time (=who - CBC or the Brunners? AM) - and when chatting to the interviewer it turned out he'd been flying around interviewing all sorts of similar people, including the president of the Flat Earth people! If CBC do it, why won't our lot???? (Also, the Swedes at the con told me - forever in there asking questions is that Reed! - that they were doing a series of 12 programmes on sf. I wrote to the BBC and said why didn't they buy them too, or at least make their own? The BBC wrote back and said they were very interested indeed to see about the programmes, and would consider it when the Swedes offered the programmes for sale ... so .... Actually, the BBC must be sick of me, because I've been writing screeds to them about various things. One thing was the old sfional serials .... unfortunately they have no plans to re-show JOURNEY ... thought it very short-sighted of them, considering the interest being generated by the Moonshots. And wait until the Mars one goes .....

"I'm all for cheap and nasty hotels for cons, since you could well get more people to come and less of them freeloadng, when they do come.

"Gerbish: Am still in the BSFA, I think, for two reasons mainly: one is loyalty. (See comment to John Marshall.) Second is I don't see why the struggling should be left to two or three lots of people if I can help ... and if my help pulls in more people into the BSFA and fandom, then that is adequate reason, surely, to stay on?

"Good idea from Gerb about a 'Name' being used .... local Smiths had a display (complete with model rocket of some sort lent by Hawker Siddeley) at the time of the first moon-shot. From the library p.o.v., I checked with our local one, and they are accepting posters and would take mine (cue for an 'official' BSFA poster?); am working out details with Mike Kennard .... so far as publicity in general goes, Hertsfen have got one small article in the local rag, and aim for more.

"So who's for kidnapping the Director General of the BBC and getting on with it ??????????"

R.C. TUBE (67 Houston Rd., London SE.23) writes:

"Terry Jeeves has said it and left really nothing to add about hotels, cons, and what-we-get-for-what-we-pay but I'd like to make a comment as regards Vector. I think it a mistake to even think of the Official Organ in terms of a fanzine - so much so that the very word 'fan' should never be used. After all, when you ask a publisher to donate a book for review and send him a copy of the publication in which the review will appear, what's he going to think when confronted by a Gosh-wow-boyoboy esoteric magazine which shrieks 'amateur'? That's right - no free book donations for review, the library or anything else.

"In the light of the above it should be remembered that the BSFA was not founded to cater to fans. It was envisioned as a means by which those on the outside who would like to meet fandom would be able to do so. A bridge, part of which, as its prime job, would try to enhance the image of science fiction and fantasy. The same for conventions - not to actually run them but to supply

official 'weight' and official backing so as to soothe the fears of various hotel managers who might hesitate as to trusting an unknown bunch of strangers. This official backing worked very well at Oxford and, as far as I know, in other places too.

"As a thought, aren't we all trying to bite off more than we can chew? True, way back when enthusiasm was high, the sky was the limit but many years have passed and much disenchantment created - as proof I quote Jill Adams and her comments on the membership as compared with the membership numbers - to have lost some 780 members is surely a sign that by trying to do too much we are in fact doing practically nothing. So how about altering the aims of the Association? Would it be impossible for us to become Custodians of the stuff which gave us birth? The old magazines and books which started it all. A repository of matter which is becoming more and more scarce. Can we show new members the First issues of Wonder? Amazing? Astounding? Do we have a really extensive collection? Should we concentrate on building one for both romantic and historical reasons?

"At least, that way, our subs won't be wholly wasted - or so it must seem to many at the moment."

HARTLEY PATTERSON (Finches, 7 Cambridge Rd., Beaconsfield, Bucks) writes:

"Non-renewing members - in an association of this kind there's bound to be a certain turnover of those who joined and didn't get what they expected. The genuine fans and 'big names' who don't belong are perhaps more serious a problem. Some form of Associate Membership, for those who support the aims of the BSFA but don't want the perks, is a possible solution - 5/- a year for just the Bulletin maybe?

"Gerald Bishop in Pert. 5 raises some good points. To reply to his question, I'm in the BSFA because I know very few fen and would be very much out of touch if I didn't belong.

"About libraries. BSFA help in these displays would of course be most welcome. One suggestion - if a display should prove impossible, most libraries have notice boards for Local Societies. If everyone in the Association at least put up a notice it would help....it should be explained to the membership at large that services provided will only improve if we have more members."

GORDON JOHNSON (60 Overdale, Eastfield, Scarborough, Yorks - who is a librarian) writes: "5th Pertinence received and digested. The general impression that I get from all the arguments being thrust around by the participants is that publicity is the key to it all. If we could publicise the BSFA, we would get more members, then we could provide better services and produce a more expensive periodical - perhaps even printed, and of course with the extra members we could organise the cons more easily, and as the number of active members would be higher the whole association would be more lively. IF WE CAN GET MORE AND BETTER PUBLICITY !

"This train of thought spurred me to find out whether or not it was easy to find out about the BSFA." (And as a direct result of this, Gordon has been deputed to contact various periodical works of reference with a view to getting the BSFA appropriately mentioned within. So far, he's been pretty successful. He was too late to catch the Writers' and Artists' Yearbook - which had lost us due to one of our many changes of Secretarial address - but they promise to include us next year. But we're going straight into several assorted directories. AM)

GEORGE HAY (411 West Green Rd., Tottenham, London N.15) writes: "I'd suggest to Terry that one solution to Con problems might be to turn the whole

thing over to professional firms acting for BSFA, as such firms work for charities in such activities as fund-raising. And ask Jill Adams did she know there was an organisation in London that for a fairly small sum will look after the problems of mailing, collecting subs etc for small non-professional organisations? I haven't their address here, but if she's interested I'd be glad to locate it for her. Finally, an idea source of members for BSFA is schools and colleges. I'll be circulating a lot of these re SCI-CON 70 as soon as we get out next lot of bulletins."

ANDREW PORTER (55 Pineapple St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, USA) writes:

"Thanks for 5TH PERTINENCE. There are a number of points I want to go over that I found in this issue. And I really would appreciate your running my letter or parts of it, to place British SF Cons in perspective.

"Costs for attendees to conventions here are generally much higher than in the UK. By going to the Phillycon 4 weeks ago, I found that I spent about \$80.00 for two days in Philadelphia, including meals, hotel and carfare. US Hotels that have sf conventions now are running slightly more in cost, around the \$12 - \$16 range for singles. That is expected, and people are paying. Now, I don't make that much money -- about \$7,000 a year now, what with all my various money making schemes --- and yet I can afford to go to about 10 conventions a year and buy this Selectric for \$500 (on a two year installment plan). I think the basic trouble with fandom in the UK is that it's just plain poor. A heck of a lot of the fans here make good, decent salaries -- anywhere from a minimum of \$6,000 to as high as \$15 -25,000 a year. Some make more - (Larry Niven and Henry Kaiser are millionaires).

"As I said in my previous letter, I got next to nothing by being in the BSFA -- I expected to be kept informed of doings in the UK SF world -- and found the high cost of joining (only topped by the LASFS --- and look what you get out of membership in it on an active basis --) (=that's the Los Angeles group: AM)= not Worth It. So I dropped out. I got more news and stuff by getting SCOTTISHE and SPECULATION.

"If you are really hard up for help in locating a hotel for your needs, may I suggest agencies that specialize in that sort of thing, and do it for free." (=Follows a list beginning with the British Travel Association and continuing with various local government &/or tourist industry offices.)=

"Might I suggest that UK SF writers form a close union, like the SFWA, and merge their talents with those of the BSFA, making available major writers like Brunner, Aldiss, etc., who are already known by the general public, to act as official interviewees during space shoots and general scientific happenings. Admittedly we have Ike Asinov and Harlan Ellison; but you have a few VIPs of the SF world as well.

"The British sf field is notoriously weak --- what with original novels being bought by publishers for \$200 compared with \$2,000 here for the same work -- and to be effective the BSFA will simply have to merge with the writers to form one official voice, rather than a dozen weak voices all talking at once. (=It seems to me that this angle is rather more relevant to the absurdity in this day and age of the English-language literary field being split commercially into two independent sectors for publishing and copyright purposes. AM)=

"One last thought -- I know that casual readers here are put off by a convention held at a fleabag hotel. Well, that seems to be a problem there as well. People are more impressed by the penniless man who lives beyond his means than with the man of moderate means who puts on a show of poverty. Once you get a large quantity of people showing up at an SF con, you can afford a good hotel and some of the trappings of wealth." (=But are they our sort of people? AM)=

GERALD ("GERBISH") BISHOP (10 Marlborough Rd., Exeter, Devon, EX2 4TJ) writes:

"The sections of Pert 1-3 that appeared in a Vector that appeared after No. 5 came out. Well, indeed, I could make a large number of impertinent remarks about that, but feeling reasonably polite, will attempt to restrain meself.

"Still, those excerpts mainly concerned themselves with Cons. Which is a pity.. Cause there were some comments in later ish that might have proved to the membership that fingers were in the process of being extracted in the BSFA. I wonder what the drop-out figure for this year will be. (≈About 30% by the look of things just pre-Easter. AM)=)

"Terry. The BIS tie. This is a nice idea, and I would wear a BSFA tie if there was one available, and I very rarely wear one nowadays.

"Back to publications etc. The N3F have had exactly the same difficulties as us. Their new editor for TNFF produced two issues (of a monthly/bimonthly) in about 6 months. Both were late according to the dates printed on them, but then, their system of organisation stepped in, and the 'Stand-by Editor' took over. This would be a good idea for us to have at least an assistant ed, providing, of course, that we can find someone to do this. The assistant ed could, for example, deal with reviews, or, as in the N3F, edit a letterzine. Then, you have 2 people who edit major publications (+ our noble Arch and his Bulletin) and if one fails to produce the goods on time, or within a certain limit, the other can take over, when asked to by the Committee.

"Jill Adams. If we have had 980 members in 11 years, and have 210 now, we have lost 70 a year, or a third of the membership a year just can't be bothered with us. And, if I hadn't already paid my sub when Vect 54 flipped thro' the letterbox, I would have been one of the 1/3 this year.

"In that paragraph. 'Our officials having enough to do...' Well, when I stayed with the Mercers in August, they were too busy on BSFA business to let me persuade them to take them out for a bheer. THAT is devotion. I myself work at the moment, or at least try to, 36 hours a week on fannish things." (≈But that's the trouble with deadlines. Ours was then the beginning of our holiday, by which time we had to get a BSFA mailing in the post or else. We won, with Gerbish's invaluable help. He came up again only last month - just as we were struggling to get the AGM agenda out by its legal deadline. Again, with Gerbish's help we won through. We don't have deadlines every day - just about five or so per week perhaps... AM)=)

KEN BULMER writes: "Pertinence must now begin to look carefully and critically in the direction of just who is running the 1971 con in England. It may be that, despite my feelings of the inequality and possible loss of on-the-spot efficiency of the scheme, the BSFA cttee must run it with the help of locals. Is there anyone around willing to do it? I'm pretty sure the London group are shagged out still, particularly with the loss of Daphne and Jean. Still, that will be discussed with some Archtype organisation at the con."

STEVEN CARRIGAN (158 Sutton Common Rd., Sutton, Surrey) has the last word. He asked for PERTINENCES after having read "Boiled PERTINENCE" in VECTOR, and this is his overall reaction:

"A lot of people seem to be talking about advertising, as a means of attaining new members - all well and good but pretty useless if you can't keep 'em once you've got them. And, if you want to do that you're going to have to improve and expand the BSFA and to do that you need --- One: Money and, Two: Willing hands. Have you got either? So, then what are you going to do?

"With that you might think that I am now about to make some sort of constructive suggestion - but you would be wrong, for two reasons - many suggestions

have already been made on this particular subject and there would be no point.

"I mean, there are many good ideas springing forth from Pertinence but very little evidence that any action is being taken on these. So, one might ask, what is the point of having a Pertinence ?

"Wait, forgive me, I'm all for lively discussion (in fact a deal of my time is spent attending Polemics). But, as I understand it the main idea of Pertinence was to produce some kind of action, or am I wrong ? and Pertinence is just another frolic in the hay.

"PS. The above notwithstanding, I truly enjoyed reading Pert (best thing since rice crispies) and hope you'll send future issues."

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CIRCULATION

Jill Adams, Brian Aldiss;  
Sid Birchby, Gerald Bishop, Gray Boak, Joe Bowman, John Brunner,  
Ken Bulmer, Bill Burns;  
Steven Carrigan, Ken Cheslin;  
Rik Dalton;  
Bryn Fortey, Keith Freenan;  
Vic Hallett, John Hart, George Hay;  
Terry Jeeves, Gordon Johnson;  
Michael Kenward, Roy Kettle;  
Bert Lewis, Ethel Lindsay;  
John Marshall, Beryl Mercer, Bruce Montgomery, Dan Morgan;  
Harry Nadler;  
Doreen Parker, Hartley Patterson, David Piper, Martin Pitt, Andrew Porter,  
Chris Priest, Bob Parkinson;  
Mary Reed, Bob Rickard, Phil Rogers, Michael Rosenblum;  
Ken Slater, "Bran" Stokes;  
Ted Tubb;  
Tony Underwood;  
Audrey Walton.