

THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION LIMITED

MINUTES of a COMMITTEE MEETING held at FLAT B, LAUREL BANK, LAUREL MOUNT, LEEDS LS7 3JY, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, on Sunday May 25th, 1969.

Present: Mr. J. Michael Rosenblum (Chairman of the Committee); Mrs. B. M. Mercer (Secretary); Mrs. D.E. Parker, Messrs. S.R. Dalton, A. H. Mercer, J.P.B. Rogers (Council Members).

AGENDA

1. Pricing of B.S.F.A. publications for sale and/or exchange to (a) members of NFFF, and (b) 'outsiders.'
2. The matter of possibly appointing a U.S. agent for the B.S.F.A., preferably a member of NFFF.
3. B.S.F.A. Badges.
4. The British Science Fiction Award.
5. Estimates for a new supply of B.S.F.A. membership cards and renewal 'stickers'.
6. A request for a loan from a member of the B.S.F.A.'s Information Service, for the setting up of a professionally-printed card index of information which would be fully available to the B.S.F.A.
7. Settling advertising rates for professional material in VECTOR.
8. Making good library deficiencies.
9. Complaint from the Offtrail Magazine Publishers' Association re the default of its former Association Editor, a B.S.F.A. member.
10. The non-renewal of certain formerly active B.S.F.A. members, particularly Robert Cooper, who is, or was, supposed to be running 'ORBITER'.
11. Cost of full-page ads in VECTOR to members wishing to advertise such things as their own fanzines.
12. A member's suggestion that other members should supply to the B.S.F.A. Bulletin, names and addresses of bookshops selling SF material in their own areas.
13. The present literary and editorial standard of VECTOR.
14. Clarification of the official contract between the B.S.F.A. Limited, and the 1970 Convention Committee (George Hay).
15. Any other business.

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1. After discussion it was agreed that future issues of VECTOR should be marked at 5/- per copy, but that the Secretary and the head of the Distribution Dept. should have discretion to reduce this price to members of NFFF, and other interested parties (such as Prof. Tom Clareson) who want VECTOR for genuine bibliographical or research purposes. The SF Writers Bulletin should be priced at 3/- per copy on a similar discretionary basis.

2. The Secretary was instructed to investigate the matter of appointing a U.S. agent for the B.S.F.A. Limited, by contacting members of the NFFF Committee. Dollars held by such an agent on the B.S.F.A.'s behalf might be utilised for B.S.F.A. members' subs to N3F, etc., or such projects as the purchase in bulk of N3F publications for distribution to the B.S.F.A. membership.

3. The Secretary informed the meeting that Mr. George Hay, who is the Chairman of the 1970 British Convention Committee, had presented a quotation from a firm of novelty manufacturers, of 450/- for a minimum order of 1000 plastic badges. It was agreed that these should be given away to the current membership, and to new members, until they were all gone, and then a new design would be decided on for the next 1000. Mr. Hay had been informed that if the badges were to be sold rather than given away, 55% purchase tax would have to be added. He had also submitted a number of possible designs, some produced by himself and others by a designer friend of his. After a lot of discussion, one design was chosen, and the Secretary was instructed to ask Mr. Hay to arrange for the production of the finished design. This would cost approx. 50/-.

4. The matter of the B.S.F. Award (formerly titled the British Fantasy Award) came in for a great deal of discussion at this meeting. The Secretary read out communications on the subject which she had received on various occasions from K.F. Slater, Gerald Bishop, and Michael Kenward. She also explained that she had, several months ago, asked Gerald Bishop, an Exeter member of the B.S.F.A.'s Information Service, to compile full and complete lists of all SF and fantasy books published in 1969 and eligible for the Award. Mr. Bishop was combining this with the service of presenting lists of all new and reprint SF/fantasy books as they became available from publishers. There had been some discussion as to the best method of presenting these lists (in VECTOR, in the B.S.F.A. Bulletin, or separately), and it was unanimously decided by the Committee that these lists would be best presented separately. Mr. Mercer, as head of the Distribution Dept., reported that Mr. Bishop had offered to stencil these lists himself for distribution, but that he - Mr. Mercer - was quite willing to stencil them if necessary.

Mr. Bishop had informed the Secretary that he would be distributing his lists of new books to other than the B.S.F.A. membership, and would therefore like the copyright to remain in his hands. Mr. Dalton gave it as his professional opinion that Mr. Bishop should be authorised to hold the copyright if he so wished provided that it is held under the auspices of the B.S.F.A. Limited.

Mr. Slater had some time ago detailed a rather complicated method of voting for the Award, which involved both general voting by the membership, and selective 'weeding' by a panel of experts. It was emphatically agreed that neither publishers nor SF authors should sit on this panel. The Secretary reported that Mr. Bishop had offered his services in connection with the collection and counting of membership votes. After much discussion, Mr. Rogers was deputed by the Secretary to visit Mr. Slater at the earliest opportunity, and request him to reconsider his total resignation from the Association and to act as Convener with regard to the Award. All pertinent information and offers of assistance would be passed on to Mr. Slater, and Mr. Bishop's lists passed to him for vetting.

Mr. Kenward had stated that he was of the opinion that the Award was a publicity matter and that he, in his role as Publicity Officer for the B.S.F.A., should deal with it and prepare the necessary lists of eligible books. Mr. Rosenblum asked the Secretary to inform Mr. Kenward of the Committee's decision, viz., that the Award was primarily an internal matter of the B.S.F.A., and that any publicity accruing from it was strictly a 'side-effect'. The Committee was also of the opinion that Mr. Kenward must surely have enough to do with the

editing and production of VECTOR, and his other publicity duties, and its members did not wish him to become 'overloaded'. He was to be informed of the approach to be made to Mr. Slater.

5. The Secretary reported that the supply of blank membership cards was getting rather low, and she presented quotations from a printer for a fresh supply. Mr. Rosenblum, supported by other committee members, rejected the idea of stickers, and also expressed dissatisfaction with the shape and design of the present card. He showed to those present a flat card in a transparent plastic case, with the member's name and number printed on 'Dymo' tape and attached to the card. The Secretary agreed to investigate the price of having such cards printed, and the cost of the plastic holders; Mrs. Parker said she would undertake to get the 'Dymo' tapes printed as required.

6. Mr. Gerald Bishop had informed the Secretary that he was hoping to get his very extensive card index system properly printed and set up; he did not wish the B.S.F.A. to pay for this, although the information would always be freely available to the B.S.F.A.'s Information Service, but he would appreciate a loan of approx. £16. Mr. Rosenblum expressed great interest in this matter, from a personal viewpoint, and asked the Secretary to request Mr. Bishop either to visit Mr. Rosenblum or to contact him by post. He would then go into the matter of the loan more fully.

7. Mrs. Parker informed the meeting that the 'old B.S.F.A.' had agreed to charge £5. 5s. per page for professional advertising in VECTOR. It was agreed by the meeting that this rate should stand. It was also agreed that a minimum of a one-guinea mailing fee should be charged for the distribution of professional pamphlets with the B.S.F.A. Bulletin - more if the inclusion of such pamphlets increased the postage costs.

8. The Secretary, harking back to an earlier suggestion made by Mr. Hart re the abolition of library charges, said she had been informed that any spare monies should be utilised for the purchase of items to fill gaps in the B.S.F.A.'s book and magazine libraries. Mrs. Parker recalled that Mr. Slater had been given a sum of money for this purpose, which was never realised because the librarian had, so far, been unable to supply a list of missing items. The Secretary agreed to write to Mr. Bowman for such a list of magazine deficiencies, but it was generally agreed that the matter of book library deficiencies would have to be held over for a while, until the new librarian, Miss Elaine Wash, had become used to her duties, and could find the time to compile such a list.

9. The Secretary forwarded a complaint from the Offtrail Magazine Publishers' Association, about its erstwhile Association Editor, Herr Heinrich Arenz, a Frankfurt member of the B.S.F.A. Limited. The complaint stated that Herr Arenz has, since June 1968, retained possession of material (viz., a large number of British and American fanzines) which is not his property, and has not answered a number of letters from various people enquiring about these fanzines. Since the complaint was made, the Secretary added, a parcel of O.M.P.A. effects had been received from Herr Arenz, but this contained by no means all of the material in question. Mrs. Parker, as the B.S.F.A.'s unofficial legal adviser, was instructed by Mr. Rosenblum to write to Herr Arenz, asking him for prompt action and/or

explanation, and warning him of possible expulsion from the B.S.F.A. for unbecoming conduct.

10. The Secretary reported that Mr. Phil Muldowney, who had previously been an active member, had not renewed for 1969, and that no-one seemed to have had any contact with him for some time. She was asked by Mr. Rosenblum to write informally to Mr. Muldowney and try to find out if he was in personal or family difficulties, and if so, to ascertain if the Association could help in any way. This would also be done with regard to Mr. Robert Cooper, who had been running the 'ORBITER' story chain, and who also had not renewed. Mr. Rosenblum was of the opinion that someone should be on hand to make such personal enquiries of formerly active members, and try to provide help to any member in need of it. Mrs. Parker said that she would undertake this task a little later on, when she is more settled. With regard to Mr. Cooper, she suggested that the Secretary should also contact member Mrs. Audrey Walton who, said Mrs. Parker, is or used to be in close touch with Mr. Cooper.

11. The cost to members wishing to advertise such things as their fanzines by means of full-page ads in VECTOR would be approximately half-price of professional ads, i.e. £2. 10s. per page.

12. Member Mr. Roy Gray had suggested that, to help members who move to a new area - particularly University students - all members should be requested, via the Bulletin, to give the names and addresses of book-shops in their area which specialise in SF and fantasy material. This was voted a good idea, but some difficulty was foreseen with the definition of 'specialising in SF', etc. Mr. Rogers wondered if Mr. Gray meant concerns like Mr. Slater's 'Fantast (Midway) Ltd.', and Mr. Rosenblum visualised a somewhat wider application of the term, to include shops which have a special section set aside exclusively for SF, fantasy, and allied material. The Secretary mentioned second-hand book-shops, some of which do have such a section, and Mr. Mercer pointed out that there is a difference between second-hand and antiquarian book-shops. It was decided that Mr. Gray's suggestion should be put to the membership in the Bulletin, but that those sending information should be requested to state what type of book-shop each address is.

13. Mrs. Parker reported that several people had complained that VECTOR was once again losing its semi-professional touch and becoming like a fanzine. There had also been a number of complaints about the most recent editorial; the Secretary corroborated this, but expressed the opinion that the B.S.F.A. could not be held fully responsible for VECTOR's editorials, and that all such complaints should be addressed direct to Mr. Kenward. As to the unprofessional appearance of VECTOR, she pointed out that the most recent issue had been an 'all-fiction' issue, and that as long as the magazine was duplicated and not printed, the vaguely amateurish aspect would remain. Mr. Kenward has been investigating the possibility of having the front cover litho'd; this would help to dispel the fanzine appearance.

14. It was unanimously agreed that Mr. George Hay, although not a member of the B.S.F.A., was proving to be a most helpful, enthusiastic and co-operative Convention Committee Chairman. The Secretary reported that he had agreed to a registration rebate for B.S.F.A. members, and Mrs. Parker reported that he had asked for

clarification of the contract between his committee and the B.S.F.A. She and Mr. Rosenblum therefore went over the present version of the contract and amended certain points. Mr. Rosenblum also said that Mr. Hay should be sent an initial grant of £25 from B.S.F.A. funds, this being half of the sum for which the B.S.F.A. stands guarantor for any Convention losses.

15. During a general discussion on Conventions, Mr. Rosenblum asked the Secretary to write to the 1969 Con Committee, thanking them for a very good Convention, and for the facilities and assistance afforded to the B.S.F.A. Limited. Re the grant to be made to Mr. Hay, the matter of the Trust Fund held by Mrs. Gillian Adams and Mr. David Barber was again raised. It was agreed that Mr. Rogers should write to these Trustees, asking them to transfer their Fund to the general funds of the B.S.F.A. Limited.

The possibility of a future membership of perhaps 1000 members was mooted, and the Secretary pointed out that in such a case, most departmental heads would need assistance. In this connection she agreed to investigate the possibility of acquiring cheaply an Addressograph machine and its accompanying plate-making machine. Mr. Mercer pointed out that, although at the present time the Secretary could not be paid, it might be possible to acquire a paid secretarial assistant to help cope with 1000-plus members.

Reverting to the matter of VECTOR, Mrs. Parker suggested that in time it might be possible to have a paid professional editor. The Secretary reported that this had also been suggested by member Mr. Chris Priest.

Mr. Mercer said that another member, Mr. Graham Boak, had suggested that the B.S.F.A. should run a Hospitality Room at Conventions, as the NFFF does in America, where coffee, soft drinks, etc., could be dispensed by responsible members (preferably female!) to first-time Con attendees and others wanting company and a chat. It was suggested that Mrs. Irene Boothroyd would be an eminently suitable person for this type of work.

The Secretary reported that, since drawing up the Agenda for the meeting, she had been giving a great deal of thought to the matter of her possible resignation from the Secretaryship next Easter. She had not yet definitely decided about this, but thought it only fair to warn the Council so that they might begin to consider the matter of her possible successor. She said that the secretarial work was taking up almost all of her spare time, and that she had recently joined two other organisations to which she wished to devote some time and attention. It was decided that an assistant secretary should be sought, to undertake for the present social-type work, but on the understanding that he/she might be called upon to take over the Secretaryship next year.

There being no other business for discussion, Mr. Rosenblum declared the meeting closed.

Beryl M. Mercer
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Beryl M. Mercer, Secretary.

A.H. Mercer
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A. H. Mercer, Council Member.