

VOL MOLESWORTH

A. BERTAM CHANDLER

# A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM

1935 - 1963

by Vol Molesworth

## PREFACE TO THE 1ST EDITION

Voltaire Molesworth began his career as a Sydney journalist. His father, Voltaire Molesworth, was a journalist and member of the New South Wales State Parliament. His grandfather was James Molesworth, a mariner in the days of the sailing ships. James Molesworth joined the William Lane expedition to Paraguay to found the socialist utopian colony. He put all his financial resources, as did the others of this group, into the buying of the vessel, the *Royal Tar* and, with his family, went to Paraguay. He became disillusioned with William Lane, his handling of the colony and its progress, and returned to Australia. By this time Vol's father had begun his schooling in Paraguay.

Vol Molesworth Senior in his young days was a member of the Young Socialists, and first entered the New South Wales Parliament as Labor member for the old Cumberland seat. He was also a journalist, and one of the group associated with the founding of SMITH'S WEEKLY and

THE GUARDIAN. He left the Labor Party in the 1920's and later became an M.L.C. as a member of the United Australia Party.

Vol Molesworth (the son) did his schooling at the Blue Mountains Grammar School and then at Sydney Grammar School. He left after gaining his Intermediate Certificate to become a cadet journalist with the Sydney SUN newspaper. Being a diabetic, Vol was ineligible for service in World War II but during these years he gained his wide experience in all aspects of journalism. Before he was out of his teens Vol wrote a number of short novels which were published as paperbacks by Currawong. The most widely known of these was the science fiction novel THE STRATOSPHERE PATROL the others were more like murder mysteries with a flavour of sf.

It is possible that Vol's interest in sf was a natural path for him, given his family's utopian interests.

After 1945 Vol's interest in writing turned to the literary novel. He wrote the unpublished novels, CRY FOR ME SYDNEY and CONCERTO FOR TYPEWRITER.

Through literature classes at WEA he gained an Unmatriculated Adult Scholarship to Sydney University, with the intention of majoring in literature. After winning the Caird prize for topping Philosophy 1, he went on to graduate B. A. and later M. A. in philosophy. He became a part time tutor for Sydney University's Department of Tutorial Classes, and lectured in philosophy to WEA classes. From these lectures he published two books, LOGIC FOR BEGINNERS, and LANDMARKS IN LOGIC. At the time of his death in 1964 Vol was working for a Ph.D. degree at the University of New South Wales, where he was tutor in the School of Business Administration.

Despite his interest in mainstream literature, philosophy, amateur radio (in which he gained Amateur Radio Operator's Certificate and Amateur Television Operator's Certificate), lecturing, printing and studying, Vol never lost his enthusiasm for science fiction and fandom. His HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM is his tribute to the people and events which over the years made that history.

Laura Molesworth  
October, 1980

## CHAPTER ONE.

In the year 1935 three readers of science fiction met in Sydney to discuss the prospect of forming a club. They were Wallace J. J. Osland, William E. Hewitt and Thomas M. Mallett. All were members of the Science Fiction League, the international organisation fostered by Hugo Gernsback, editor of *WONDER STORIES*, "in the interest of science fiction and its promotion". The League had enrolled well over a thousand fans<sup>1</sup>, and had chartered Chapters throughout the United States and the British Isles. Its Constitution provided that any three members could form a local Chapter, - why not one in Sydney?

The matter was discussed at three unofficial meetings, the third attended by a gentleman named Drury - and finally, on August 15, 1935, the club was officially formed, with Osland as Director, and Hewitt Secretary. In December it was given its Charter as Chapter # 27 of the Science Fiction League. Charles La Coste, who had written to *WONDER*, was contacted by Hewitt, and joined the group. Meetings were held fortnightly at members' homes, and by February, 1936, membership had increased to six.

One of the group owned a printing press, and the Sydney Chapter began circulating science fiction and League propaganda in conspicuous places and in science fiction magazines. Director Osland urged fans to attend meetings, if they had never before, "to learn for themselves what meetings of science fiction fans really mean to each other". Discussions were held on such subjects as "Science v. Religion".

In Brisbane a fan named Varow Rasche announced his wish to form a Chapter; and in the April 1936 issue of *WONDER*, a proposed Chapter was listed in Toowoomba (Queensland); but neither of these clubs apparently came to fruition. There are also rumours of a club organised in South Australia by John Devern, but these are not confirmed.

The Sydney Science Fiction League continued to meet until late in 1936, when general economic conditions turned members' attention to more urgent matters. La Coste and Hewitt continued to correspond, but no more meetings were held. Later, *WONDER STORIES* ceased publication.

In the year 1937, four students at Randwick Intermediate High School discovered they had a common interest in science fiction. They were William D. Veney, Bert F. Castellari, Ron Brennan and Ron Lane. They produced a hand-written publication *SPACEHOUNDS*, which featured fan fiction, and ran for 10 weekly issues. Although no formal club was established, the group met regularly to discuss stories. A fifth student - Bob Meleski - joined them.

In 1938, Veney contacted Eric F. and Edward H. Russell. Eric thought it would be a good idea to form an official club, and the Junior Australian Science Fiction Correspondence Club was created<sup>2</sup>, with Veney as General Secretary, Eric Russell as Secretary, and Castellari as Assistant Secretary, and

Meleski and Ted Russell as members. The club held no meetings because they five were busy with study.

Early in 1939, however, an active programme was decided upon. Three objectives were listed, -

- (1) to contact every other fan in Australia they could find;
- (2) to form a club in Sydney and hold meetings; and
- (3) to issue a fan magazine.

The Secretariat worked hard on the first objective, and contacted fans in four States outside New South Wales, Marshall L. MacLennan in Victoria; John Devern, and three others, in South Australia; Donald H. Tuck in Tasmania; and J Keith Moxon and Chas. S. Mustchin in Queensland.

To John Devern goes the honour of bringing out the first Australian fan magazine. Entitled *SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW*, it appeared in February, 1939, in a small 12 pp. hektographed format. It contained material mostly reprinted without permission from other sources. About 16 or 18 copies were printed, and although the full distribution was never traced, some did go to England and U.S.A. There was no second issue, and, "with the passing of *SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW* came the finish of all connection with Davern for he just didn't bother to write any more."<sup>3</sup> According to one report, he joined the Army<sup>4</sup>.

At the first formal meeting of the JASFCC, held on 26th February, 1939, attended by Director Veney, Secretary Eric Russell, Castellari and Ted Russell, a proposal was put forward that a fan magazine should be published. Approval was unanimous, the name chosen being *AUSTRALIAN FAN NEWS*. The editors were to be Veney, Eric Russell and Castellari. The next three meetings (March 26, April 16 and April 30) were largely devoted to the detailed planning of this publication relieved by discussion of stories and quiz competitions. Two new members, Frank Flaherty and Bob Meleski, joined the club. At the first meeting (May 14) it was decided to form a club library of magazines, and at the sixth (May 28) to have a club art gallery. Neither of these schemes came to fruition. No business of importance was transacted at the seventh and eighth meetings (June 11 and 25). After this, the club ceased to meet.

Only one issue of *AUSTRALIAN FAN NEWS* was published. Dated May, 1939, it appeared in a duplicated 12 pp foolscap format. Some 200 copies were widely distributed<sup>5</sup>. When future publication became impossible, decay set into the JASFCC. Brennan, Flaherty, Lane and Meleski dropped out, and the executive committee, who had banked so much on the success of the venture, lost heart.

During the early part of 1939, a Junior Science Club had been formed in Sydney by Vol Molesworth and Ken Jefferys. Through newspaper publicity, it enrolled thirteen members, and published three quarto-sized J.S.C. BULLETINS. two carbon-copied, the third duplicated. This was regarded as opposition to the JASFCC, especially as Molesworth and Castellari were personal enemies at the time. For more than three months the two organisations had battled silently for members, then suddenly, - for no reason apparent to its President or its foes, - the J.S.C. disintegrated. "Inside two

<sup>1</sup> *Calling themselves "fans" was a fundamental mistake of the science fiction movement. There was an image problem - still is - and this term has always made it hard for anyone to take it seriously. A "fan" is a creature that goes to a football game to throw beer cans or punches. No one seriously interested in something calls himself a "fan". Is a philatelist a stamp fan? Is the RSL for military service fans? Is someone who goes to church a god fan? Anyone who calls himself a "fan" is declaring 'Pay no attention to me. I'm a dickhead'. (Graham Stone),*

<sup>2</sup> *Here appears the indecision whether to have a local or a national body that recurs throughout this history. The stated objectives are obvious, but there is a contradiction. (G.S.)*

<sup>3</sup> *FUTURIAN OBSERVER, #31, 9 Mar 41.*

<sup>4</sup> *So he did, and was heard from no more till he reappeared in the 1950s in Brisbane under his correct name, John Dauvengne Gregor. In answer to my later query about SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW he wrote that I knew more about it than he remembered. (G.S.)*

<sup>5</sup> *I wonder at this figure. How could they find 200 prospects then? Twenty would be hard enough. Perhaps they printed 200 in hope. Eric Russell had a stack of copies when he gave me one two years later. (G.S.)*

weeks, what had been a powerful and efficient club, became a mere shell with only two or three members. After this set-back, Molesworth realised that science fans could not be introduced to science fiction, and plunged deeper into the realm of fantasy-science-fiction.<sup>6</sup>

Though by July, 1939, both the organisations in Sydney were defunct, much experimental work had been carried out, and the way was now open for an amalgamation of the executive in a new fan club. For this reason, as Veney wrote, "1939 can truly be tabulated as the year of Australian fan awakening. 1939 ushered in the first era of true Australian fandom".<sup>7</sup>

In October, 1939, Eric Russell brought out the first issue of his fan magazine, ULTRA. This was to be one of the stalwarts of prewar fan publishing. The first two issues (October and December, 1939) were in a carbon-copied, 12 pp. folded foolscap format; thereafter ULTRA was duplicated, and contained from 14 to 50 pages, featuring articles, fiction and verse. Between October, 1939, and December, 1941, fourteen issues appeared, roughly on a bimonthly basis.

In October a meeting took place between Veney, Castellari and Eric Russell. The trio decided the time was ripe for a full-scale club. They issued invitations to Molesworth, Meleski, Ted Russell, and a newcomer, Ronald B. Levy, to attend the inaugural meeting at Veney's home on November 5, 1939. Thus was born the Futurian Society of Sydney.

Throughout the year, Veney had been corresponding with two prominent American fans, Donald A. Wollheim and Frederick Pohl. To Wollheim, Veney wrote that he was forming a new Sydney club and that the name under consideration (recalling the events of 1935-6) was the "Sydney Science Fiction League". Wollheim replied immediately by air mail, protesting against any such name. Since Gernsback had left WONDER STORIES, and the magazine had been reissued by a new company with the prefix THRILLING, fans were no longer interested in the Science Fiction League. Most of the old Chapters had changed their name. Why not, Wollheim suggested, embody the term "Futurian" in the name of the new Sydney club?

The term "Futurian" had been coined early in 1938 by a fan in Yorkshire (England)<sup>8</sup>, who had published a magazine called THE FUTURIAN. At the time, the fan organisation in New York City had been split by fan feud, and the faction to which Wollheim belonged was trying to find a place and an organisation for itself. After several abortive attempts, a stable organisation began to coalesce late that summer, and the records show the first organisational meeting was held in August. It was decided to break with previous fan-club tradition and find a name for the new organisation that would not carry the hack term "science fiction", a new and more dignified name which nevertheless retained the science-fictional flavour. A committee comprising Wollheim and John B. Michel was instructed to discover such a title. They decided to use the English innovation, and the club was named The Futurian Science-Literary Society, which almost immediately was amended to the Futurian Society of New York. At that stage, the term "Futurian" was defined no more specifically than the obvious meaning of "person's interested in the future".

<sup>6</sup> "The Awakening", by W. Veney, LUNA #3, Feb. '40, p.5

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Rosenblum of Leeds, who became a key figure in the movement in England. A religious pacifist who would not take part in the war, he was accepted as bone fide by authority and exused service. With a fixed address and status he became the main contact point, and up to 1945 he kept scientifictionists in England and beyond in touch through his regular bulletin FUTURIAN WAR DIGEST. (G.S.)

Later more precise definitions were framed, but at this stage it is sufficient to note that among the New York Futurians "there was always one point upon which all were agreed, and that was that a Futurian was something more than just a fan. A Futurian always had an interest in the changing world, did not busy himself in a pile of musty magazines, but looked forward to seeing something of those magazine-dreams come true. In that sense, to be a Futurian is to be the possessor of an honoured distinction".<sup>9</sup>

When the inaugural meeting of the new Sydney club was held on November 5, 1939, Veney put Wollheim's suggestion to the four other foundation members, - Castellari, Molesworth, and the Russells, - and it was unanimously adopted. After reviewing past events, Veney spoke of the many fans who, if they had the chance, would join the Society, and mentioned also the possibility of evolving into an Australia-wide organisation.

His optimism was justified, for fandom now embarked upon a period of steady growth, marked by a great increase in activity. In the next ten months, eighteen Futurian Society meetings were held at approximately fortnightly intervals, and no less than twelve new members joined the club. The maximum membership, however, was never more than thirteen, as four members resigned during this period. Nevertheless, with a total membership of thirteen, most of them turned up to meetings. the Society was the largest organisation Australian fandom had yet known.

The primary function of the Society throughout this early period was to provide a forum for discussion. Meetings were largely occupied with discussion of magazines, quiz competitions, round robin stories, and ESP experiments. Later with the appearance of several fan magazines, factions began to gather around each fan editor.

In December, 1939, Molesworth brought out the first issue of LUNA in a duplicated 12 pp. foolscap format. The second and third issues (January and February, 1940) were 8 pp. quarto. Molesworth then abandoned LUNA and produced instead an all-letter magazine, COSMOS, which continued for thirteen issues, at first every three weeks, then monthly, until January, 1941. Quarto-sized, the number of pages varied from two to twelve. Two new fans, Neville Friedlander and David R. Evans, joined the Molesworth faction.

Late in January, 1940, Veney and Castellari produced the first issue of FUTURIAN OBSERVER, a foolscap sheet, duplicated both sides. From the start it was a force to be reckoned with. Although primarily a "newspaper" it soon became known for its frank criticism and biting satire. "Obs" as it became familiarly termed, appeared regularly every fortnight throughout 1940. Ronald B. Levy joined the Veney-Castellari faction, and the trio styled themselves "the Triumvirate". Four new fans, - Keith C. Hooper, Ken Williams, Ralph A. Smith and K. Noel Dwyer, aligned themselves with the Triumvirate; and later, in August, 1940, a new general magazine, ZEUS, appeared with six of these fans as its editorial committee. The faction led by the Triumvirate was the strongest and best organised, and had the upper hand during the greater part of 1940.

Meanwhile, the Russell brothers were still publishing ULTRA, and another newcomer, Bruce M. Sawyer, joined this faction.

The other new fans - Colin Roden and Len C. Stubbs, belonged at this stage to no particular faction.

For the first six months of the Society's life Veney held

<sup>9</sup> Wollheim in a letter to Molesworth, June 17, 1948

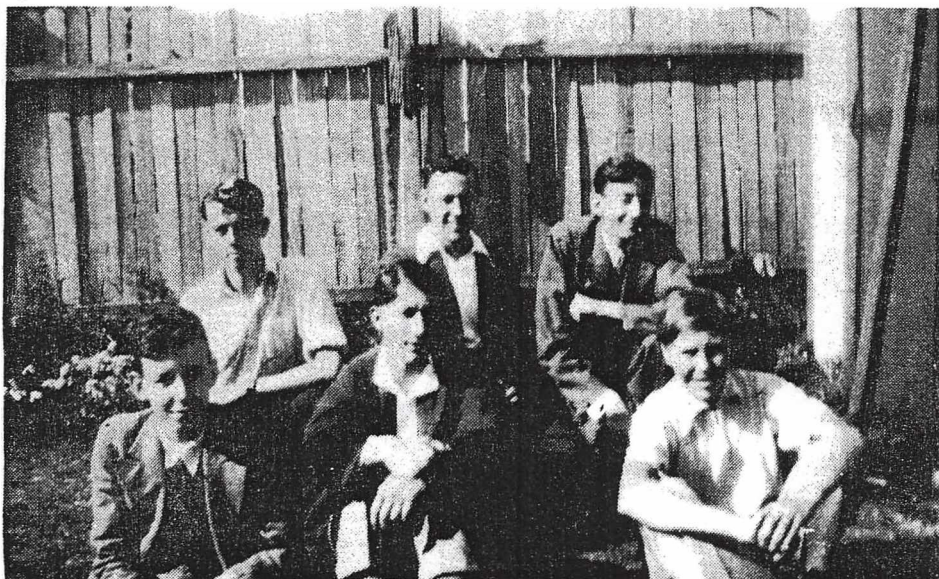


the Chair as Director<sup>10</sup> with Eric Russell as Secretary. The growing factionalism is evidenced in the elections at Meeting #7 (March 17, 1940), when Veney was re-elected Director, but Castellari replaced Eric Russell as Secretary. Later in the same meeting, when a proposal to establish a club library was carried by a 5 - 3 majority, Levy, the third member of the Triumvirate was elected Librarian.

The Triumvirate's success at the polls drove Molesworth and the Russells into an alliance, the basis of which was mutual non-aggression and a combined front against the Triumvirate, and COSMOS and ULTRA became associated in "Triangle Publications". It should be remembered, however, that throughout their science-fictional skirmishes, Veney and Eric Russell remained firm personal friends. Following a personal clash, Molesworth resigned from the Futurian Society on April 11, 1940. At the ninth meeting (April 28) the resignation was read out. Levy said he thought Molesworth "had resigned through a mistake, due to certain statements made by different people".<sup>11</sup><sup>12</sup> It was decided to invite Molesworth to attend the next meeting as a guest, and stand his chance of re-election.

Australian fans from the ready supply of science-fiction. To many fans, it meant the death of interest. To others, it meant that active steps had to be taken to obtain the magazines, primarily by correspondence and "exchange deals" with American fans. The position was to some extent alleviated by the arrival in Australia of British reprint<sup>14</sup> editions of ASTOUNDING, UNKNOWN and one or two other titles, but these were regarded as poor substitutes for the originals, particularly as the reprints soon began to omit serials. It was suggested that the reprints would be collectors' items in U.S.A., and so could be exchanged for the originals. That British fans would undoubtedly exploit this avenue was apparently overlooked by the meeting<sup>15</sup>. Magazines for the club library were to be obtained through the British Science Fiction Service, Forest J. Ackerman (leading Los Angeles fan) and any other available channels. The club library, however, did not last. An executive conference decided to dissolve the library, due mainly to the poor support members had offered it.

The Science Fictioneers was a fan organisation sponsored by the U.S. magazine, SUPER SCIENCE STORIES,



Top left: RALPH SMITH, VENEY, E.F. RUSSELL; Bottom L: E. A. RUSSELL, CASTELLARI, MOLESWORTH, 14.1.1940

Two other matters occupying the attention of this meeting were the proposed Government ban<sup>13</sup> on the import of U.S. magazines, and affiliation with the Science Fictioneers.

The ban, imposed as a wartime measure, cut off

edited by ex-Futurian Frederick Pohl<sup>16</sup>. The meeting decided to affiliate with this body, and the addresses of those present were taken to be sent to Pohl for his records. The Society was in due course chartered as Chapter 9.

Molesworth did attend the tenth meeting (May 15) as a guest, accompanied by David R. Evans, and both were elected to membership. At this meeting the question was raised of sending a congratulatory cable to the World Science Fiction Convention being held in Chicago, and Evans suggested the money could be put to better use in publicising the Futurian Society locally. No decision was reached, but the ensuing

<sup>10</sup> This was the title given chairman of Science Fiction League branches (called Chapters) and was commonly used by SF groups. (G.S.)

<sup>11</sup> quoted from the minutes.

<sup>12</sup> On another occasion Levy commented: "If you were to look at the minutes today you would find other misstatements which are not actually misstatements but which are nevertheless really very small misstatements. (G.S.)

<sup>13</sup> It wasn't a ban. Due to war conditions there was desperate balance of payments problem. The government brought in close control of all foreign currency movements and of imports, meaning blanket prohibitions of classes of items not essential to keep the war and the country going. Books and magazines from the USA were almost completely stopped, and there was little change till the system was finally scrapped in 1959. To be sure, there were loopholes. All the same, though this may seem hair-splitting, not being allowed to buy something is not the same as it being banned. It was never illegal merely to own or read SF. (G.S.)

<sup>14</sup> Semantic confusion appears here. Somehow the wartime British editions of American magazines were often called "reprints", though they were separate editions newly set and printed and never had the full contents of the American issue. Some were even new titles assembled from American sources. Later, in the 1950s, some magazines like AMAZING STORIES had British editions printed from imported stereotypes; but even these were generally incomplete with some rearrangement of pages. (G.S.)

<sup>15</sup> It was also illegal, as some never understood. If you couldn't send money you couldn't pay indirectly either. (G.S.)

<sup>16</sup> Ex-Futurian? Surely not. (G.S.)



discussion on club funds introduced the topic of an official club organ. Evens proposed that members should fold up all existing fan magazines and pool efforts in one official club publication. Fired by the idea, Molesworth immediately dissolved "Triangle Publications" despite a protest from the Russells. All present agreed to fold up their fan magazines except Eric Russell, who said he could continue ULTRA independently without clashing with the club magazine. From six suggestions, the name FUTURIAN FANTASY was chosen for the club organ, and Evans was elected to the editorship. For nearly an hour after this meeting, Evans was the centre of a group of members offering advice and help. It seemed that a common objective had been found which would remove factionalism.

During the next few days, however, several members underwent a change of heart. The fan editors realised that they were to lose their positions of prominence in the fan world, and they were dubious of Evans' willingness to share the editorial control of the club magazine. Several members approached Director Veney privately and voiced their objections. Accordingly, when the question arose at Meeting 11 (May 26) Veney said that since the tenth meeting members had been thinking over the club magazine and some now had different ideas on the subject. Evans suggested that they objected to his editorship, but "this was denied by all".<sup>17</sup> Eric Russell now took a firm stand on ULTRA; he would definitely carry on the magazine, denied that it would clash with FUTURIAN FANTASY, and rejected Evans' counter-proposal that ULTRA be made the club organ. A secret ballot resulted four in favour of a club magazine, six against, and one informal.

Upon hearing of this reversal, Friedlander resigned from the Society, "on the grounds of unanimity and ... general disagreement with the policy of the organisation".<sup>18</sup> This precipitated a general review of club policy at Meeting #12 (June 12). Smith claimed there should be more interest taken in scientific research, e.g. rocketry, to which Evans retorted: "Are we scientists or science-fictionists?" Evans criticised members for their inconsistency in connection with FUTURIAN FANTASY. He said that the independent fan magazines had caused this inconsistency; if there was one club magazine there would be no rivalry among fans for the best material. This was countered with the statement that jealousy would still exist with a club magazine mainly as to who did the best work for it. Levy said he had joined the Society to discuss science fiction, not write it. After lengthy debate, the meeting decided that the Society's policy in future would be the discussion of science fiction and kindred topics. Fan magazines were to remain independent and discussion on them was to be barred at meetings. The impracticability of this was quickly realised, and at Meeting #13 (June 30) Director Veney himself moved that fan magazines should be discussed at meetings, but discussion limited to one hour. This was carried.

The internal friction in the Society which had begun with the fanzine factionalism and intensified during the lobbying for and against the club magazine, now came to a head. Disorderliness was apparent at the thirteenth meeting, argument taking the place of discussion. At one stage Levy jumped to his feet, shouted "I resign", and walked out. Later he returned and apologised for his hastiness. Evans, defeated on the question of FUTURIAN FANTASY, took opportunity of the general feeling of discontent, and offered to "referee" discussions. Innocuous as the suggestion seemed at the time, - little more than the appointment of a Chairman of Debates or a Speaker in the House, - this marks the beginning of Evans' rise to power. "Director Veney gave Evans authority to maintain order in the club. No objections to his appointment were made, and Evans

said if he could not manage the job, he would nominate someone else for it."<sup>19</sup> Evans then gave the meeting an outlet for its discontent. He began asking questions about Molesworth, who was absent. Various members offered criticism of the absentee, "one even stating that all the trouble in the F.S.S. revolved around Molesworth".<sup>20</sup>

Whatever the tactics employed, Evans' intervention did quieten and stabilize the next few Society meetings.

The main business before Meeting #14 (July 21) was the proposal to extend organised activity beyond Sydney by setting up a registry of all Australian fans, "so that all will combine and be more closely linked".<sup>21</sup> Since the collapse of the JASFC there had been no organisation aiming at Commonwealth-wide membership, the main reason being apathy among fans in other states. In Melbourne now however, Warwick Heckley had just published the first issue of AUSTRA-FANTASY in a carbon-copied 16 pp. 8vo format; in Brisbane, J. Keith Moxon was planning a semi-professional magazine, IMAGINATIVE STORIES; and in Hobart, Donald H. Tuck was writing regularly to the Sydney group.

Though the Futurian Society approved the idea of a new national organisation, it took no official part in its establishment. This was done at a meeting between Randwick and Bondi Junction fans during the last week in July, 1940. The organisation was tentatively named the Futurian Association of Australia; and a provisional committee comprising Veney as President and Eric Russell as Secretary was appointed. The committee immediately went to work and contacted many interstate and local fans regarding the matter. In FUTURIAN OBSERVER #16 (August 11, 1940) they announced the definite establishment of the F.A.A. with its main aim being "To compile a complete register of all active Australian fans". It was specifically stated that the Association did not intend to charter chapters. A Board of Honorary Members was announced, comprising Bert F. Castellari, Chas. La Coste, Marshall L. MacLennan, Chas. S. Mustchin and H. Pinnock.<sup>22</sup>

The fifteenth and sixteenth meetings of the Futurian Society (August 4 and 18) proceeded without great event, some discussion being devoted to representation at the Chicago Convention, and the possibility of persuading an Australian publisher to try a science fiction magazine. Though Evans' control was effective, it began to be resented.

On August 14, Dwyer resigned from the Futurian Society, not because of any grievance, as was later suggested, but because of "another reason which has no connection whatever with the Society".<sup>23</sup> Dwyer emphasised that "something has risen at home" which forced him to resign.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, he considered himself still a fan and wished to remain on the staff of ZEUS. Levy and Castellari, however, refused to allow Dwyer to remain on the staff, and a gilbertian situation developed, Levy and Castellari publishing "official" issues of ZEUS, Dwyer publishing a rival or "pseudo-" ZEUS. A year later, Dwyer contributed several abusive articles to FUTURIAN OBSERVER, claiming that science fiction was a disease, but it is wrong to read back into his resignation in August, 1940, his attitude of mind a year afterwards.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> La Coste had resurfaced from SF League days and Pinnock may also have known that group. McLennan condesponded from Melbourne and Mustchin from Coolangatta, Qld. (G.S.)

<sup>23</sup> Quoted from letter in the club files.

<sup>24</sup> His family were antiscientific dingalings, the kind now called Creationists. Yet he managed to keep up some activity with his two rival issues of ZEUS and contributions to Hockley's publications. (G.S.)

<sup>17</sup> Minutes

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from a letter in the club files

At Meeting #17 of the Futurian Society (September 1) elections fell due. Veney said he could not carry on as Director, and nominated Evans in his stead. He also suggested that Molesworth should replace Castellari as Secretary. The Triumvirate were dissatisfied with the state into which the club had fallen, and were willing to relinquish their control if a new executive committee could restore order.

Evans made his position clear from the start. He wanted a free hand to run the club as he saw fit. Levy asked whether the members were to do whatever Evans told them, or vote on everything in democratic fashion. Smith replied that before it had been pseudo-democracy, and "the methods of mild dictatorial power explained by Evans was just what was needed". Evans said he was not a Dictator, nor out to glorify himself at all, but merely run the club in a more adult fashion. "We were too democratic in the past," he declared. Smith asked whether the vote would be for Evans, or both Evans and Molesworth. Veney said both, but Evans interrupted: "Only vote for the Directorship. I'll choose my own Secretary". He explained that his policy would enable the Director to choose at will his own Secretary, and dismiss him if he so desired at a moment's notice. The vote was taken by secret ballot, and the decision was unanimous. Evans was elected Director, whereupon he appointed Molesworth Secretary.

Not surprisingly, Evans' first act was to revive the idea of publishing a club organ. After Eric Russell, Molesworth and Castellari had each in turn refused to have his magazine taken over for this purpose, Evans said, "All right, we won't interfere with present fanmags, - I'll start a new one. I'll think of a name and a suitable format when enough material is at hand." The discussion was then closed.

Clearly, it was to be a one-man show.

Later in the meeting, Williams objected that the new regime was no better than the old. "We are not Futurians, but just fans," he declared. "We don't care about science fiction, but mostly fans. Fanmags are interesting, but I think it would be easier to resign and just read the fanmags." Veney and Levy ironically agreed. The question then arose, - what is a Futurian? Molesworth said he thought it meant any person who takes an interest in the *actual construction* of the future, with a view to making the world a better place.<sup>25</sup> Evans said the club organ would create something the Society could plan for, - it would attract new fans. "We might progress to two hundred members, and have junior and senior sections." He went on to say, "And I must start it off, - if I can't do it with the F.S.S. I'll start a new club myself."

After this meeting it was clear that a break-up was coming. The Triumvirate had handed over executive control of the Society to a person whom, rightly or wrongly, they now considered not to have Futurian principles at heart. Molesworth, who had supported Evans, now found himself thrust into the background. The faction around ULTRA felt themselves under rebuke for their continued refusal to allow their magazine to be taken over by the Society.

The break-up came at the eighteenth meeting, held on September 22. No official records exist, but a report appears in FUTURIAN OBSERVER #19. There was tension in the air from the start. Halfway through the meeting, Molesworth showed he was fed up by walking out of the position of Secretary. Castellari proposed that the Society should be dissolved, Veney promptly stated that dissolution was not necessary, and suggested instead that the club be suspended for a short period. The amendment was carried.

Walking home from the meeting, Veney, Castellari, Levy, Molesworth and the Russells talked over the formation of a new club. They decided to limit membership to a small active number, and to make it a co-operative effort by issuing a six-page magazine, with each of the six members contributing one page. The club was to be known as the Fantasy Club, with Molesworth as Director and Levy Secretary.



**FIRST CONFERENCE:** CUDDEN, LA COSTE, CUDDEN Jr, LEVY, EVANS, SAWYER, VENEY, EDWARD RUSSELL, ERIC RUSSELL, STONE, RODEN.

A few days afterwards, however, Molesworth became gravely ill, and was admitted to hospital, where he was to remain until the end of the year<sup>26</sup>. Plans for the Fantasy Club were shelved because of this, and in fact never revived. For a time, the Sydney group lost heart. Veney and Smith resigned from the staff of ZEUS, and Levy and Castellari announced they would "probably but not definitely" carry on

publication. The second issue did appear, in December, 1940, in a duplicated 16 pp. quarto format. In Melbourne, Hockley kept up quarterly publication of AUSTRA-FANTASY, a 30 pp. hektographed issue appearing in September, 1940, and a 14 pp. duplicated one in December. In Brisbane, however, Moxon went down with pneumonia and abandoned the projected publication of IMAGINATIVE STORIES. This was to be the finish of Moxon as an active fan<sup>27</sup>. Back in Sydney, Veney resigned from his position as President of F.A.A., due to pressure of work. Australian fandom, to use OBSERVER'S words, was now leaderless, no meetings were being held, and

<sup>26</sup> Vol does not mention it again, but his health was precarious and relapses often put him out of action. (G.S.)

<sup>27</sup> Moxon caught another disease, evangelical ratbagery, and was last heard of being indoctrinated as a missionary raver. (G.S.)

<sup>25</sup> FUTURIAN OBSERVER #18, September 3, 1940.



# A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM

1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

## CHAPTER TWO

"The Futurian Society of Sydney is the strongest organisation in the entire Southern Hemisphere of this planet. The Futurian Society of New York is the strongest club in the Northern Hemisphere.

"Now, New York State and Australia are almost exactly opposite each other on the face of the globe. Take a map and see. Draw a line directly between the Futurian Society of New York to the Futurian Society of Sydney and it will pass nearly through the centre of the earth. And that means that the science fiction world today revolves on a Futurian axis.

"What a thought! Now will you Futurians behave!"

This stirring challenge from Donald Wollheim, published in the first anniversary issue of FUTURIAN OBSERVER, on January 15, 1941, was both justified and timely; justified because the Sydney Futurians had not been "behaving", - late in 1940, through sheer inability to work in harmony, they had been forced to suspend meetings - timely, because the First Sydney Conference had decided on a resumption of club activity, and the date for the first new meeting was only a fortnight ahead. Symptomatic of the general revival of activities was the publication on January 24, 1941, of the first issue of THE F.A.S. BULLETIN, a single brown quarto sheet duplicated both sides and issued free to members of the Futurian Association of Australia by Acting President Eric F. Russell.

William D. Veney had drawn up a "workable basis" for the revived Futurian Society. Most of the active fans in Sydney agreed with the plan. It could, and should, have worked. But an unforeseen calamity wrecked the plan from the beginning.

It could without exaggeration be said that if Vol Molesworth had not caught an early bus to Veney's home on the night of January 28, 1940, the history of the Futurian Society would have been markedly different. But Molesworth did take the early bus, and arrived at Veney's home a good twenty minutes before the nineteenth meeting was scheduled to commence. In the lounge-room he met Alan Cordner, a newcomer to fandom, who had won the support of many Sydney fans during the past three months of club inactivity. Molesworth had been in hospital, and the two had never met. There was an immediate clash of personalities - each disliked the other on the spot.

Besides Veney, Cordner and Molesworth, those who attended Meeting #19 were Bert Castellari, Ronald B. Levy, Graham B. Stone, Colin Rodan, Eric and Ted Russell. Nominations for Chairman were called, and Castellari was elected unopposed. He then announced that the committee appointed to consider membership in the reconstituted Society had accepted all fans who had attended the first Sydney Conference - that is, all those present except Molesworth; and in addition, Chas. La Coste and Bruce M. Sawyer.

The first business before the meeting was the election of a new executive panel. Castellari was elected Secretary, and the next position to be filled was that of official editor, it having been decided at the Conference to publish an official club magazine. As it was known

that Molesworth had ambitions in this direction, the meeting decided to suspend the election until the question of Molesworth's membership had been settled. Since he had not been present at the conference, his name had not been among those considered by the Membership Committee. Molesworth was asked whether he would prefer a vote by members (secret ballot) or to be judged in the same way as everyone else had been. He chose to be considered by the Membership Committee. "The meeting temporarily adjourned while Veney, Cordner and Castellari left the room to decide whether Molesworth was eligible for membership. On their return they announced that Molesworth was found not to have the necessary qualifications for membership and as a result could not be considered one of the Society."<sup>1</sup>

Molesworth was staggered by this announcement. He remained seated while discussion resumed on the question of editorship of the club magazine. He heard Levy and Ted Russell each nominated for the job he believed would be his in the new club, and saw a secret ballot result in three votes each. Levy relinquished the position in favour of Russell. Molesworth got to his feet, said good-night, and left the meeting. His clash with Cordner earlier in the lounge room had paid off with a vengeance!

Back in the meeting room, violent argument broke out between Levy, Cordner and Veney, with others joining in. Levy demanded to know why Molesworth had not been accepted by the Membership Committee, and criticised whatever reasons were advanced. He contended that Molesworth should have been admitted to the Society. To Eric Russell's suggestion that members had been afraid of Molesworth because of his retaliatory action through magazines, Levy replied that this was scarcely the point, since Molesworth's actions could be opposed through magazines in the same way. Cordner then gave his personal reaction to and viewpoint on Molesworth. He said the "left wing"<sup>2</sup> wanted Molesworth because they were afraid of him. Roden and Stone argued that he would be more useful in the club than against it.

The meeting then decided not to elect a Director for a term of six months, but to have instead a different Chairman at each meeting. The fear of another Evans was not far from their minds.

When the meeting adjourned, Levy was furious. Walking home with Castellari, he declared that the non-acceptance of Molesworth had been unfair, and that in the case of other members the Committee had allowed their better qualities to override their bad ones.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, he was going to resign from the Society. Castellari proposed they should both "retire" from the Society for a period of from three to six months, and reconsider the question of resignation at the end of this time. Levy agreed, and both forwarded letters to this effect to the club. Castellari gave as his reason his disgust with the continual "bickering and squabbling" among members.

When the letters were read out at Meeting #20 (February 7) those present - Cordner, Veney, Roden and Stone - denied such a state of affairs existed. "In fact, quite the contrary was evident. The Society was now taking a firm stand against all elements tending towards internal disruption and the latest trends clearly indicated a change for the better was taking place. All present agreed this was correct."<sup>4</sup> If so, it was a pyrrhic victory.

Cordner stated that the present trouble had been caused by his influence on the club's management and offered to resign so as to reunite the older members. Roden instantly protested that such an action was unnecessary as "the club would be losing a member who had its interests at heart in exchange for some who had allowed outside interests to drag them away." This was backed by Stone and Veney, the latter adding that members had cast themselves on the side of progress and would eventually have every interested fan back with them.

At the close of this meeting, Veney suggested a resolution by members to continue the Society and uphold the idea of organised science fiction. He said a resolute stand, backed by a progressive

<sup>1</sup> Minutes.

<sup>2</sup> A mild joke. It happened that Molesworth supporters were seated on his left. G. S.

<sup>3</sup> From a letter written to the Society.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes.

plan of action, would tip the scales in favour of survival, and bring all sincerely interested fans back into the club.

There was no doubt that Veney, who had worked so hard for the revival of the club, was distressed at the way events had turned out. To add to his embarrassment, Castellari now launched an attack on the club in FUTURIAN OBSERVER. Veney felt he could no longer remain co-editor of a fanzine which violated one of the major clauses in his "workable basis" plan, and relinquished therefore his half-share in OBSERVER. Levy promptly replaced him. The result was that OBSERVER, which had faithfully kept up a fortnightly schedule for thirty issues, now began appearing irregularly. On March 9, Levy and Castellari published five issues together to catch up on a five month's lapse; and they made it clear, in an editorial, that their sole reason was "to compensate those fan-editors who have been sending us magazines during the past two months, and to ensure a regular supply of fanmags."<sup>5</sup> Never again did OBSERVER return to fortnightly schedule. On May 18, another five issues were released in a bunch, and thereafter this policy was followed until the magazine ceased publication altogether with its 57th issue early in 1942.

Despite the body-blow it had received, the Futurian Society pressed on with the publication of its own magazine, FUTURE, and decided to hold another conference of Sydney fans, at which it was hoped a solution to the disunity might be found. Plans for these two projects occupied the attention of Meetings 21-24, held during the next two months. It was decided that FUTURE would be published monthly in a 12 pp. 8vo format and consist of club reports and the most interesting lectures delivered at meetings. Only one issue ever appeared, however, dated May, 1941. At Meeting #23 (April 21) Veney tendered his resignation on the ground that most of his time would be taken up in future with the Y.M.C.A.

The Second Science Fiction Conference<sup>6</sup> was held at The Owl Library, Bondi Junction, on Sunday, April 13. Bruce M. Sawyer took the chair, and those attending were Cordner, Evans, La Coste, Levy, Molesworth, Roden, the Russells, Stone and Veney. A Newcastle fan, R. Cudden, also came along. Castellari was unable to attend, but was represented by a typewritten speech read by Levy.

Although much had been hoped of the Second Conference, it accomplished little. From the lengthy arguments, it was clear that differences could not be settled. On neither a local nor a national scale could fans agree. Discussion on the Futurian Association of Australia, the national register of fans, degenerated into a wrangle over the title of the organisation.

FUTURIAN OBSERVER #34 (April 20) scathingly criticised the Conference under the headline: "Sydney Bunfight Great Success!"

During the Conference, Cordner approached Molesworth privately, and admitted that he had been mistaken in his decision at the nineteenth meeting. He asked Molesworth to come back into the Futurian Society, and added that he would be dropping out. Molesworth was re-elected at Meeting 25 (April 22), and a week later Cordner tendered his resignation. Molesworth's first act was to take over executive control of the F.A.A., which Eric Russell was only too willing to relinquish. Both in the national organisation and in the Futurian Society Molesworth carried out a series of reforms. He renamed the former body The Futurian Federation of Australia and almost immediately published the first issue of its new organ, SPACEWARD. In addition to registering fans, he "copyrighted" fanzine titles. There was a good response, and in the second issue, Molesworth listed seventeen members. So pleased were Futurian Society members with this reorganisation that they decided henceforth the Coordinator of the F.A.A. should be an elected executive of the F.S.S.

With regard to the Society itself, Molesworth decided to overhaul past resolutions and decisions to find out just where the Society stood constitutionally. At Meeting #26 (May 4) he tabled a list of 59 resolutions which the club had carried in the past. Every

resolution that had been outdated, were crossed out, and finally the list was narrowed down to ten, which were approved. At Meeting #27 (May 16) Molesworth said the Society needed to be put on a more secure financial footing, and proposed the election of a Treasurer. Roden was elected to this position, and fulfilled the function ably.

Stabilized constitutionally and economically, the Society embarked on a restricted wartime existence. During the next few meetings ways and means of continuing publication of FUTURE were discussed, but without success<sup>7</sup>. Finally, at Meeting #31 (July 18) the position of Club Editor was dispensed with. Science fiction quizzes were re-introduced, and more discussion of stories was heard.

Meanwhile, activity had picked up in other states. In Melbourne, Warwick Hockley was continuing publication of AUSTRA-FANTASY, issues appearing in March, June and September, 1941; and he had also begun a news magazine, MELBOURNE BULLETIN, which ran for ten approximately monthly issues. He had visited Marshall L. MacLennan and contacted a new fan, Keith Taylor. In Hobart, Donald H. Tuck had contacted three new fans - Bob Gaepfen, John Symmons and Lindsay Johnson - and the group had begun publication of PROFAN, a duplicated quarto fanzine running to ten pages in its first issue (April) and 22 in its second (July). The third issue, dated September, contained 26 pages.

Back in Sydney, Russell was still publishing ULTRA on a bimonthly basis; Levy was issuing ZEUS; and Molesworth had produced a one-shot 4 pp quarto letterzine, TELEFAN. Colin Roden now entered the publishing field with a fanzine that was to break all previous records. This was SCIENCE AND FANTASY FAN REPORTER, a 4 pp 8vo. duplicated news-maglet. At first assisted by Russell and Stone, but very soon entirely by himself, Roden produced FAN REPORTER every week for an unbroken run of 34 issues, the first appearing on August 12, 1941, the last on March 31, 1942. It was strictly a newspaper, with only very occasional editorial comment. Its objective treatment and regular appearance gave a certain stability to fandom throughout its life.

In mid-1940 a new disturbing influence arose to plague the Futurians. This was the perpetration of a series of hoaxes, some of them vicious, others merely silly. The first was a report that David R. Evans had committed suicide. As Evans was in ill-health, several fans took the hoax seriously and were quite upset.<sup>8</sup> Next, a circular was issued stating that FUTURIAN OBSERVER was for sale, but this hoax was controverted by the appearance of OBS at the same time. Thirdly, there was a "Sydcon Report". Early in 1940, Molesworth and Veney had tentatively announced that an Australian Science Fiction Convention would be held in Sydney. Plans fell through and the project was shelved. Then a roneoed sheet, purporting to be a report on the Sydcon, was circulated. Copies were sent to England and the USA, and taken seriously by overseas fans. A condensed version appeared in the US fanzine, FMZ DIGEST. When the Second Conference was held, a telegram was received purporting to be from Melbourne fan Warwick Hockley, announcing his arrival in Sydney to attend.

It was, of course, another hoax. And so it went on, causing undue and unpleasant worry and suspicion. Just who was responsible for these hoaxes was never discovered. Levy and Castellari certainly perpetrated the suicide hoax, but hotly denied the others.<sup>9</sup>

The Futurian Society decided to try and eliminate the trouble that was caused by the pranks of the Hoaxer. At Meeting #31 (July 18) Molesworth proposed that an officer with some semi-legal authority, similar to a J. P., be appointed, whose duty would be to witness and endorse statements carrying official approval. Later a rubber stamp was purchased, and employed when necessary by Roden, who was elected Futurian Registrar at Meeting #34 (August

<sup>7</sup> I don't know why it was dropped. The one issue was nothing much, but the group should have produced something to make its presence felt and there was enough talent for it. G. S.

<sup>8</sup> This may seem strange, but Evans though not welcome in the club remained part of the community and was often visited by some members. G. S.

<sup>9</sup> My own belief is that some were the work of Levy and Castellari in collaboration, while others were perpetrated by Levy alone and without Castellari's knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> #31.

<sup>6</sup> Why a second Conference? Because, rashly, a large scale meeting, a "Convention" had been proposed for Easter 1941 and a preliminary announcement made, which was unrealistic and foolhardy. Instead of abandoning it completely it seemed a good excuse to invite everyone to an open gathering then and go over the various problems anew. G. S.



29). The action was effective - no more hoaxes were played.

The degree of stability that the Society had now obtained is evidenced by the decision at Meeting #35 (September 5) that a permanent Director should take over the duties of the Registrar. Roden was elected for a period of three months, and Molesworth became Secretary-Treasurer. The policy of the organisation was altered from "the discussion of science fiction" to "the discussion, and advancement, of science fiction", thus giving the term "Futurian" in the club's name a meaning.

Control of the F. F. A. was now taken over by a new fan, Arthur W. Haddon, who joined the Society at Meeting #36 (September 19). Haddon had planned to publish a fanzine, VENUS, but now abandoned the project as he would be editing the F. F. A. organ, SPACEWARD. In due course, Haddon produced the third issue of SPACEWARD, but it was so scrapily duplicated that he decided not to distribute it.

The Second Birthday Meeting of the Futurian Society was held on November 9, 1941, attended by Roden, Molesworth, Stone, Haddon and Eric Russell, and Evans, Veney, Ted Russell and David Boadle as guests. A telegram of congratulations was received from the newly-formed and short-lived Futurian Society of Melbourne, headed by Ian Hockley.<sup>10</sup>

Molesworth then read a short speech in which he stated that the club's records were in an unreliable condition, and proposed that a Court of Inquiry be held to clear up what he called "the tangled skein of the club's past". He emphasised that at such an Inquiry nobody would be "on trial": the only outcome would be "a set of questions and answers which, when combined with the existing records, would present an accurate record of the Society's first 34 meetings and what happened in between."<sup>11</sup> With the exception of the Russells, all present agreed that the Inquiry was a sound suggestion. Later, Hockley wrote from Melbourne that he strongly favoured the idea. "Perhaps I would be even more drastic than you intend to be," he wrote. "Why stop at clearing up the records of the F.S.S.? One thing that could stand a sane, careful and well-conducted investigation is the recent bout of Hoaxing."<sup>12</sup> He urged that the Court should not be dismissed after the Society's records had been clarified, but "should remain in office indefinitely, standing ready to investigate and inquire into anything which shows itself needy of such an investigation."

It was at the Second Birthday Meeting that Veney burst his bombshell that another club existed in Sydney, - the Sydney Science Fiction Association. The information came out when Veney challenged the Futurian Society's monopoly on control of the F.F.A. Asked why he had kept the organisation secret, Veney replied there was "a bit of bad blood because a chap had been turned away from a meeting."<sup>13</sup> What had happened was this - some time after resigning from the F.S.S., Veney had met two people who said they were interested in science fiction. They were Jack Hannan and Darrell Cox. He mentioned this to Eric Russell, and said he would bring them along to a club meeting. Russell told Veney the maximum number of guests permitted at a meeting was two, so Veney took Hannan to Russell's home (where Meeting #33 was being held) on the night of August 15. Due to a misunderstanding between Roden and Russell, the visitors were not invited in. When the interrupted meeting was resumed, Molesworth moved that Veney and Hannan should be admitted. The motion was carried, and Stone was sent to catch up with the pair and bring them back. Stone could not find them, and the die was cast. Thinking they had been deliberately excluded, Veney and Hannan decided to form a club of their own. Supported by Alan Cordner and Darrell Cox, they held two unofficial meetings, at which it was decided to discuss science and science fiction. The club would refrain from taking any part in fan activities. "Finally, it was realized that time forbade any complete plan of organisation, so everyone just shook hands and said goodbye. About it being "secret", members did not want to say anything until the club was definitely organised."<sup>14</sup>

The Futurian Society now went ahead with plans for the

Futurian Court of Inquiry. Molesworth was appointed Examiner and a proposed list of questions was approved by members. Castellari was invited to attend Meeting #40 (December 5, 1941), and said he did not object to any of the proposed questions. He further agreed to take shorthand notes of the proceedings. Date for the Inquiry was set for December 28. At this meeting, Roden was re-elected Director for a further three months.

The first sitting of the Court of Inquiry was held with Rodan presiding, and Castellari, Evans, Haddon, Levy, Molesworth, the Russells, Stone and Veney in attendance.

The non-admission of Veney and Hannan to Meeting #33 was thoroughly examined, all concerned giving their evidence, and it was established beyond doubt that their exclusion had not been deliberate or malicious. Other matters investigated included Honorary Membership of the F.A.A., unfulfilled Society plans to meet J. Keith Moxon when he passed through Sydney, the actual membership of the F.S.S. following the 1940 collapse, and the identities of four "prospective" members who had not been contacted since. On the whole the Inquiry was conducted in a friendly spirit of co-operation, and even the inevitable satirical account published in OBSERVER admitted its value.

At the close of the Inquiry, letters were sent to Levy and Veney informing them that they had been permanently banned from rejoining the F.S.S. This made public decisions reached long before by the Society, following alleged violations of the "workable basis" agreement.

Interest now centred on the forthcoming Third Sydney Conference, to be held early in the New Year. The aim of the Conference, as expressed by Veney, who was responsible for its organisation, was "to find if there are any matters on which all fans agree."<sup>15</sup> The Conference looked like being a last-ditch stand for Australian fandom. Activities had ceased in Hobart when Tuck was called up for military service, and in Melbourne war work by Hockley and his friends had crippled the F.S.M. and Hockley suspended publication of his two fan magazines. The Sydney group was "the only active band of fans left in Australia."<sup>16</sup>

The Third Conference was held at the Y.M.C.A. Building on Sunday, January 4, 1942, with Veney in the Chair, and Castellari, Haddon, Hannan, the Russells and Stone present. It began with a discussion on Australian representation at the next American Convention, scheduled for Los Angeles. Due to the war situation, however, there was some doubt as to whether the Convention would be held, and Eric Russell was delegated to make enquiries. Veney then proposed that science fiction "social" activities should be planned, including visits to places of scientific interest, lectures and debates. Haddon caused some consternation by announcing he would resign from control of the F.F.A., as he was unable to produce a duplicated copy of SPACEWARD which was satisfactory. He was persuaded, however, to carry on. Veney again objected to the F.F.A. being controlled by the F.S.S., and demanded to know why the executive position could not be open to any fan. Veney also raised the question as to whether the F.F.A. should have any power at all other than as a register of fans and fanmags. The Conference went on record as recommending that the F.F.A. should remain a purely non-active organisation<sup>17</sup>. The balance of the afternoon was taken up with general science fiction discussion. Two recommendations were carried - first, that "a better, more descriptive title for the literature known as "science fiction" be found"; second, that another Conference be held about Easter, 1942<sup>18</sup>.

In FUTURIAN OBSERVER #53, Levy and Castellari featured a lead article, "Give The F.F.A. Power!" They argued that the F.F.A. had enrolled every active fan in Australia, which meant that Australian fandom had been united in some way. This unity should not be wasted - if the Association was given a reasonable amount of power it could take up matters of national science fiction and fan importance. "The control of national fan affairs by a club of which the members are of one city," they declared, "is undesirable." One matter of national

<sup>10</sup> Hockley's later description of this group was that he put on a brave face. G. S.

<sup>11</sup> From a roneoed copy of the speech.

<sup>12</sup> From a letter in the club files.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes.

<sup>14</sup> "Ramblings In Science Fiction": ULTRA, December, 1941.

<sup>15</sup> FAN REPORTER #17, December 2, 1941.

<sup>16</sup> FAN REPORTER #20, December 23, 1941.

<sup>17</sup> If you're confused, so am I. G.S.

<sup>18</sup> No more was heard of this. Of course conditions became a lot worse before then. G.S.

importance was that of Anglo-American-Australian relations in fandom<sup>19</sup>.

Shortly after this, Castellari was called-up for war service, and publication of OBSERVER was suspended. Veney also went into camp, as did Sawyer, Smith and others. Levy, Molesworth and Eric Russell were medically unfit; Roden was in a protected industry; Haddon, Ted Russell and Stone were under military age.

At Meeting #44 of the Futurian Society (February 1, 1942) it was decided to break away from the Science-Fictioneers on the grounds that affiliation had not helped the Society, and only two F.S.S. members were Science-Fictioneers. Stone said he utterly refused to have anything to do with professionally-sponsored clubs as they struck him as being publicity stunts. The dissolution motion was carried by a 4-1 majority<sup>20</sup>.

Roden then instituted his idea of a Soldier's Relief Fund, under which science fiction magazines would be sent to servicemen. This was established at Meeting #45 (February 3) and thereafter the Society carried out this war work, bundles of magazines being sent to the Red Cross for distribution to military hospitals<sup>21</sup>.

At this meeting also, the executive positions of Deputy-Director<sup>22</sup> and Secretary were amalgamated into a new office, Vice-Director, to which Molesworth was elected.

Attention was turned to the F.F.A. again when Haddon resigned from the Futurian Society in March, 1942. The Society decided to relinquish its monopoly on executive control of the Federation, thereby leaving Haddon as Co-ordinator. At Meeting #48 (March 13), however, Stone announced that Haddon had resigned from the Co-ordinership and the Federation was leaderless. The Society decided to circularise all F.F.A. members, seeking their views on the matter. At Meeting #55 (May 31), a reconsideration of the replies revealed that a majority (6-1) wanted the Federation continued. Roden proposed that instead of a single Co-ordinator, the Federation should appoint a representative in each major centre<sup>23</sup>. His action was carried by a narrow majority, and Roden was elected Sydney representative. Roden made no attempt to revive full-scale activities - in his opinion, this could not be done until the war had ended. His policy was "to keep fans in touch for the course of the war." In the first issue of BULLETIN, published in September, 1942 - actually the fifth F.F.A. publication - Roden said that if the F.F.A. could retain this last thread of what was once a growing fan organisation, until such time as it could again expand, it would have done its job well. Meanwhile, membership had increased to 26.

In Sydney, hopes were raised by the appearance of a series of sixpenny paper-bound novelettes, some of them featuring science fiction. Published by Currawong, the science fiction titles were written by J. W. Heming, some under the pseudonym "Paul de Wreder". As science fiction they were juvenile, but fans hoped the standard might be raised. Vol Molesworth, who had been a prolific writer for the fanmags, began selling novelettes to Currawong. The first, APE OF GOD, appeared late in 1942, and was followed in due course by nine others, including his STRATOSPHERE PATROL trilogy, and the weird SATAN'S UNDERSTUDY and WOLFBLOOD.

At Meeting #50 (April 12), Molesworth said members were dissatisfied with the way in which Futurian Society meetings were conducted, and claimed that a new "working basis" was needed. He put forward a plan throwing the emphasis back on science fictional activities, including a series of competitive quizzes with book prizes. On this platform, he was re-elected Director, and Stone became Vice-Director. Roden remained in charge of the Soldier's Relief Fund,

which he had dubbed "STF<sup>24</sup> for the A.I.F."

The Society now embarked on a peculiar phase of its history. Perhaps because of the shortage of science fiction, perhaps because it felt that its unsettled career had arisen from some fundamental internal flaw, meetings became more and more occupied with questions of procedure, on the powers of the various powers of the various executives, on the question of electing new members, and so on. So complicated did these discussions become that Molesworth composed a textbook on Futurian Society Law, embodying and explaining all the decisions that had been reached. It became obvious to members that the Society was "in a rut". At Meeting #61 (July 12) Roden said it was necessary to build up the club's strength before it was too late. "We have to find entirely new fans as there are none of the old ones left," he said. Everyone agreed, and it was decided to seek new members through various bookshops, and by advertising in Currawong books. It was also suggested that the writer J. W. Heming should be invited to a future meeting.

But in the latter half of 1942, the Society degenerated still further. As Stone wrote to Smith, "meetings were endless wrangles over petty disagreements, and members were at each other's throats all the time in an endless series of feuds. Science fiction had become a small part of the club's activities, subordinated to the eternal squabbles. We all realised that the set-up was wrong somehow, but we thought we could not see a way out. Or, worse still, we thought we saw a way out, and it only led us further into the maze. A horrible example is the "way out" tried by Molesworth, with some help from Haddon and myself. What this amounted to was the passing of endless rules and decisions, a particularly debased form of electioneering and intrigue, and a permanent split between the adherents of this "new order" and the other member of the club."

Stone here is referring to the Neofan Party, a group formed within the F.S.S. in July, 1942, "to strengthen the spirit of democracy in the club." It was backed by its own propaganda organ, FUTURIAN SPOTLIGHT, a duplicated 2 pp, foolscap sheet, which was published in July, August, and September, and devoted to criticism of the "right wing", - Roden and Eric Russell.

An infusion of new blood came with the re-election of Arthur Haddon, and the arrival in Sydney of two Brisbane fans, Alan P. Roberts and Bill White, who joined the Society at Meeting #65 (August 23). Roberts had become noted for his critical letters in the American fanzine, VoM, published by Ackerman and Morojo. He soon won the support of Sydney fandom, and was elected Director of the club at Meeting #67 (September 27). Haddon became Vice-Director and Roden Treasurer. But the gain was quickly offset by the resignations of Eric and Ted Russell, who objected to "the party politics of Molesworth and Stone."

Over the next few meetings the situation was considered, and efforts were made to save the Society from total collapse. Firstly, the expulsions of Levy and Veney were rescinded, and they were invited to rejoin the club. Secondly, it was decided to create goodwill by sending science fiction to known fans in the Services, instead of supplying material to the Red Cross for random distribution. Thirdly, it was decided to invite all ex-members to the Third Birthday Meeting in November, and endeavour to regain their support.

Meanwhile, definite moves had been made in the national organisation. The Sydney members had met on September 20 at Roden's house and decided to resign *en masse* from the F.F.A. and set up a new and more effective organisation. On September 29, Roden published the second issue of BULLETIN, stating that unless a majority of members wrote in favouring continuance, the BULLETIN would be discontinued. The Sydney group went ahead and formed the Southern Cross Futurian Association with Roden as President and Molesworth as Secretary. A rule was passed that each S.C.F.A. member must write at least one letter per month to headquarters, these letters to be published in the SOUTHERN CROSS BULLETIN. No "passengers" were wanted.<sup>25</sup>

The third Birthday Meeting of the F.S.S. was held on November 5, 1942, with Noel Archer, Evans, Stephen Cooper, Victor

<sup>19</sup> Good points, though by then there was no activity outside Sydney. G.S.

<sup>20</sup> I think the Science Fictioneers had faded out by then in any case. G.S.

<sup>21</sup> The background to this was that at Molesworth's suggestion Dwyer had been invited to rejoin. He had replied at length to the effect that the club was not worth while and we all ought to put our efforts into patriotic community work instead. G.S.

<sup>22</sup> Inevitably dubbed "Director of Vice". G.S.

<sup>23</sup> Sounds good, but only Hockley was left as a major centre of one. G.S.

<sup>24</sup> Not an error but an abbreviation for Scientifiction then sometimes seen. G.S.

<sup>25</sup> This wasn't enforced, but several issues did appear, later titled REPORT, if I remember rightly. (G.S.)



Cowan, Haddon, Molesworth, Roberts, Roden, the Russells and Stone present. Guest of honour<sup>26</sup> was J. W. Heming. Considerable discussion took place on ways and means of resuscitating the Futurian Society and getting all ex-members back. Finally Archer proposed instead that a Conference should be held to plan an entirely new club, and this was carried.

The Futurian Society had decided to commit suicide. The Sydney fans wanted a successful fan club, but all were dissatisfied with the existing set-up. Heming had put forward a number of vigorous-sounding ideas, and had the fans convinced that a fresh start was necessary. The way this was to be done was to dissolve the Futurian Society, move in to the S.C.F.A. and turn it into a fully active body. Accordingly at Meeting #73 of the F.S.S. (November 24, 1942) Molesworth moved that the club be disbanded. Roberts moved a proviso that an emergency meeting could be called in future if considered necessary, and this was carried unanimously. After three troubled years, the Futurian Society was dissolved. To the new club, however, it forwarded three recommendations - 1) that its Soldiers' Relief Fund should be continued; 2) that its Honorary Members in the Services (Sawyer, Symonds, La Coste and White) would be granted similar status in the new organisation; and 3) that the records of the F.S.S. should be preserved and referred to for precedence.

A meeting of the S.C.F.A. was immediately called, and Heming's proposal to change the policy and rules were enthusiastically carried. In a new election Heming became President, Molesworth Secretary, and Roden Treasurer. All the known Sydney fans except Evans and Levy joined the club, and Heming introduced several newcomers, bringing the total membership to eighteen. The Soldiers' Relief Fund was taken over, the other recommendations from the Futurian Society were rejected with only Molesworth in objection. Shortly afterwards, he resigned.

Heming now introduced a number of drastic reforms, the novelty of which impressed the members as evidence of progress. The S.C.F.A., he maintained, would not just be a science fiction club, - its aims and ideals should encompass a great deal more than the advancement of science fiction. "It should be a Futurian club in the real sense of the word, - it should be concerned, not only with science-fictional subjects, but with anything that may help the future."<sup>27</sup> Heming argued that the reason for fans' dissatisfaction with the old club had been that it provided no "outlet". He now introduced two new activities, - debating and amateur theatricals. While

meetings were more enjoyable, science fiction was slowly pushed into the background.

This was sensed by Veney, who attended the eighth meeting (January 24, 1943) while on leave. He complained that the debates set down generally were not very Futurian. In the ensuing discussion, Heming put forward his definition of the term, and despite opposition from Veney, this definition was officially adopted: "A Futurian is, in short a person who is active in the shaping of a better future." The policy of the club was defined as - "Interest in all subjects of possible benefit to the future of humanity, including futuristic fiction, scientific ideas, and the encouragement of youthful intellect".

Around this statement of policy, Heming began to build body of doctrine. His

plans were frankly of a political nature, and included ideas for postwar reconstruction<sup>28</sup>. Under Heming's direction, the Association now began seeking publicity in local newspapers, and enlisted the support of Mr. W. J. Moulton, then editor of the Waverly-Woolahra STANDARD. The general outline of Heming's political programme is set out in an article in the third REPORT, dated May 2, 1943. It was rather a vague, Utopian concept involving the removal of "isms" and the salvation of humanity in a World State with science in a leading position.

Meetings of the S.C.F.A. continued throughout 1943, becoming progressively more informal. In September, Heming gave an address on "The Perfect Future" to the Bondi Progress Association, setting out in detail his social reforms. All pretence of being concerned with science fiction ceased: such matters as helping the establishment of an out-patients' ward at a hospital became club business. The Association finally degenerated into a Sunday afternoon social group at Heming's home, devoted to amateur theatricals and informal talk.

In the early stages, Stone had attempted to organise a science fiction section within the Association, but his efforts met with little success.

Early in 1944, Molesworth contacted the former members of the Futurian Society of Sydney and sought their views on a revival of the club. All were in favour, and four meetings were held, attended severally by Molesworth, Stone, Roden, Haddon, and two new fans, Victor Cowan and Stirling Macoboy. Dissension occurred over the name of the club, those still under Heming's influence maintaining that the word "Futurian" should be dropped. These members outvoted Molesworth and Haddon and changed the name to Sydney Science Fantasy Society. At the fourth meeting, Molesworth and Haddon pushed through a motion reverting to the original name, and suspended activities until after the war.

The only other event of science-fictional interest in this period was a meeting between Veney, Castellari, and a British fan, in Kure (Japan), at which the possibility of forming a fan club was considered but not undertaken.

(Continued next issue)

[Photos and additional footnotes (in *italics*) courtesy of Graham Stone]



Jean Roberts, 1943



<sup>26</sup> Surely too strong an expression, but as an established professional author Heming was respected. (G.S.)

<sup>27</sup> REPORT, January, 1943

<sup>28</sup> An expression much heard at the time. After the war we were going to get utopia. Still waiting. (G.S.)

# A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM 1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

## CHAPTER 3

It was not until two years after Hiroshima that activities were resumed. In June, 1947, Graham B. Stone who had been stationed with the Air Force in the Australian tropics, returned to Sydney; and while awaiting discharge, discussed with Vol Molesworth the prospect of reviving activities.

The immediate problems were threefold: (1) to provide a meeting-place for local fans; (2) to link up fans outside Sydney; and (3) to obtain supplies of U. S. magazines and the hardcover cascade. The pair contacted personally or by letter various former fans, and the response was enthusiastic.

The 78th meeting of the Futurian Society of Sydney was held on August 9, 1947 - the second anniversary of Nagasaki. Mrs Laura Molesworth, Eric Russell and Stirling Macoboy brought the membership to five. It was decided to meet monthly; admit as associates fans living "more than 100 miles from Sydney"; publish a news-bulletin THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN; and build up a club library<sup>20</sup>. Russell was elected Director, Molesworth Secretary-Treasurer. According to the minutes, it was unanimously agreed that meetings should dispense quickly with business and then be thrown open for informal discussion. "No form of intense external activity of a political or other nature would be encouraged."

The first issue of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN appeared in September, 1947, in a duplicated four-page folded foolscap format. Fifteen issues, the later ones running to eight and once twelve pages, were published up to December, 1948. Between 100 and 175 copies were distributed through the English-speaking world.

By November, 1947, the membership had doubled and an appreciable quantity of books, magazines, and fanzines, had been donated to the library. The new members were Arthur Haddon, Ralph A. Smith and Stephen Cooper (Sydney), Colin Roden (Newcastle) and Warwick Hockley (Melbourne).

In that month two unrelated but important events occurred. Firstly Capt. K. G. Slater, a British fan, applied for associate membership in the Society. Secondly, Stone and Macoboy discovered that a group of book collectors had been meeting informally for years each Friday at a city coffee house, the Quality Inn. Some of them, including Stan L. Larnach and Harold Lennon, were interested in fantasy.

Slater's application decided members to drop the "of Sydney" from the club's name and henceforth to admit fans living anywhere in the world with the proviso that the use of the Library be restricted to members within the Australasian postal area.

The fifth issue of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN sounded a triumphant note for the New Year. Membership had jumped to 17, the newcomers being William D. Veney (just back from Army service in Japan), Stan Baillie, S. L. Larnach and Jock McKenna (Sydney),

Donald H. Tuck (Hobart) and Chas. S. Mustchin (Coolangatta). By February, membership had notched upwards again with the entry of Bruce M. Sawyer (Sydney) and Bob Geappen (Hobart), the latter having paid a flying visit to Sydney.

In March 1948, four Sydney fans, Stone, Macoboy, Russell and Molesworth, formed a syndicate to publish limited editions of science fiction and fantasy. Proposed name of the publishing "house" was Futurian Press, whose first book would be DREAM'S END AND OTHERS, a collection of stories by Allen Connell, from 1936-7 WONDER and 1941 PLANET. Three months later, however, the project was dropped as negotiations for the purchase of a cheap second-hand printing press had fallen through<sup>21</sup>.

Meanwhile, membership was steadily on the increase. P. Glick (Sydney), Roy Williams (Lismore), four Americans and two Canadians brought the total to 27. The Library had grown to 28 books, 71 magazines and 200 fanzines. Veney and Russell had been elected Director and Secretary respectively.

The eighth issue of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN was a special number, provided for distribution at the Toronto S. F. Convention, and in it appeared the following declaration:

"We believe that in the instability of this postwar era the time is ripe for a widening of the scope of fandom. Without desiring to destroy the independence of local fan clubs, we feel that some non-partisan organisation could be set up, to which fan clubs and individual fans in unorganised areas could affiliate. A basis for such a global organisation has been created by the formation of national organisations which in practice overlap. We hope for a truly international body in times to come."

And with it the following prophetic note: "Possibly in the future it may be found advisable to resume the original status of a local club, perhaps as a unit of that world-spanning organisation; but in the postwar revival of fandom we consider that the greatest service is rendered by acting as a blanket organisation."

The rapid growth of the Society was, however, causing some anxiety and at the 89th meeting, held in May, 1948, a unanimous vote restored the original name, Futurian Society of Sydney. Animated discussion took place on the status of the club, some members expressing the idea that it should return to being a purely local group. A motion to limit future membership to "within 100 miles of Sydney" was discussed; no agreement was reached, and the Secretary was instructed to conduct a plebiscite of full members. This resulted in an 11 - 3 decision to continue accepting associate members living anywhere in the world.

Graham B. Stone had now taken over the work of the Secretary and was editing these issues of the club organ.

The addition of A. Dick, Harold Lennon and Harry Brunen (Sydney) had raised the membership to 29 - Stephen Cooper having resigned - and as the Sydney members were not too numerous to conduct meetings at private homes, it was decided to meet on a weekly basis at The Quality Inn. For a while the Thursday night meetings were well attended and very enjoyable. Club business had been cut to a minimum (occupying only two minutes at Meeting 98 held on July 29) and the rest of the night was taken up with discussion, magazine marketing, and chess.

In September, Vol Molesworth became Director, Roy Williams Secretary and P. Glick Treasurer, and the Library, which for the preceding thirteen months had been run by Mrs Molesworth, was taken over by A. Dick.

The formation of a World Science Fiction League, advocated in SYDNEY FUTURIAN #8, received support overseas, and a provisional constitution was drawn up by the Canadian S. F. Association, to become effective when ratified by the four national organisations of Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the U.S.A. A select committee comprising Molesworth, Russell and Williams, had been appointed on September 23 to consider means of Australian representation at the Seventh World Science Fiction Convention at Cincinnati; and this committee was now given the task of examining

<sup>20</sup> Obviously a valuable idea, the shortage of SF being the main problem. The Library developed with difficulty into the group's useful feature. (G. S.)

<sup>21</sup> I originally suggested this. I knew a man who had used a hand press before the war and we were to buy it. But he found it had been stolen from his garage while he was away in the Army, so that was that. I don't know about three months. (G.S.)



the proposed W.S.F.L. constitution. After hearing the committee's report, the Society decided at its 110th meeting on November 18 to send the following statement to Canadian organiser, C. J. Bowie-Reed:

"The F.S.S. approves of the principle of a world science fiction league and is willing to support the present move. Due, however, to the present dollar restrictions, Australia could not send any money to the USA or Canada; nor, due to its limited finances, publish an organ for W.S.F.L. with a possible circulation of several hundred. We therefore cannot permit ourselves to be bound by Clause 4(a) of the provisional constitution, which provides for "certain powers or monies" to be delegated to the League. We recommend that a formation of a more loosely-knit organisation be considered, with a view to ascertaining the potential membership in the constituent countries."<sup>22</sup>

By the end of 1948, membership had risen to 34. The newcomers were Roger N. Dard, a West Australian; Nick Sointseff, who had migrated to Sydney from Shanghai; John Cooper (Sydney); and two Americans.

The holding of meetings in a coffee inn - caused by the growth of local membership to 14 - was not causing some dissatisfaction. At Meeting 112, held on December 2, Macoboy said that as the Society was becoming more and more a meeting of book collectors interested in fantasy, and less and less a science-fiction club, it might be advantageous to consider the dissolution of the club. Molesworth replied that the Society had done much to publicise Australian fandom overseas, and enunciated several advantages of the club in its existing form, notably the still-expanding Library.

Macoboy also argued that, although associated members were expected to pay dues<sup>23</sup> the only benefit they derived was the small club organ. Lennon said the best idea would be to produce a large, well-printed, quarterly magazine for distribution overseas, and an occasional news-bulletin for domestic consumption. It was finally resolved (on the motion of Sawyer, seconded McKenna) that publication of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN should cease with its 15th issue; and that a committee be set up to plan a larger magazine to be sent abroad.

The discontinuance of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN was a major tactical error<sup>24</sup>. The bulletin which replaced it, F.S.S. NEWS, saw only three issues, dated February, July and November, 1949. It carried a masthead designed by Stirling Macoboy, and consisted of two duplicated foolscap sheets stapled together.

In January, 1949, Molesworth announced that owing to pressure of work and study he could not continue as Director. He was replaced by John Cooper, while Lennon became Treasurer and Williams Secretary-Librarian. A Committee consisting of Cooper (ex-officio), Lennon, Macoboy and Russell, was elected to edit the new overseas magazine.

This committee reported back to the 117th meeting, held on February 3, that the magazine would contain about 40 quarto pages and feature articles by F.S.S. members and other fans. It would be named BOOMERANG and its policy would be "to convey an idea of the nature of Australian fandom". Copy was required by April 1. The magazine, however, never appeared.

At the following meeting, Williams resigned the Secretaryship, as he would be studying at night, and Sointseff was elected in his place. Meanwhile, membership had risen to 39, one of the new associates being the British author, A Bertram Chandler, who visited the club during January and February.

The unsuitability of meeting in a coffee inn was emphasised at Meeting 123 (March 3) when Veney asked Director Cooper to suggest to members that meals should be eaten before meetings began, and only coffee or soft drinks while the meeting was in progress. Molesworth asked all members to co-operate in a search for premises suitable for an F.S.S. Clubroom.

On March 24 membership reached its peak of 43, the newcomers being Ken Paynter, Val Ackerman and Ian Gray (Sydney) and John C. Park (Perth).

At Meeting 127 (March 31) a letter from Dard and Tuck, suggesting that the Society ask the Government to lift the dollar ban, was read. It was moved that this correspondence be received, and no further action was taken.<sup>25</sup>

The decreasing formality of the Society was again illustrated at this meeting, when the newly-elected Treasurer, Ken Paynter, suggested that a levy of 10 percent be imposed on all auction sales of magazines conducted by private persons in the club's time. Macoboy protested that 50 percent of meetings were held not because people wanted to discuss science fiction, but because they wanted to buy magazines. Penalising sellers, who created attendance, was improper. The motion was finally carried by a majority of one.

At Meeting 128 (April 7) it was found impossible to recruit a regular minute secretary, and it was therefore decided that in future any suitable person would be appointed to the position for a meeting. The result is that no further minutes are recorded until October 31 - a gap of six months. From the second issue of F.S.S. NEWS, however, we learn that no official meetings were held between May and June, 1949, although fans continued to gather at The Quality Inn on Thursday nights.

On July 7, Molesworth was elected Director, Sointseff Secretary, Paynter Treasurer, and Williams Librarian. Criticising the club's inactivity, Molesworth said that unless some action was taken in the very near future, the club would lose not only its interstate and overseas members, but the support of international fandom generally.

Despite this warning, inactivity prevailed, heightened by the closing down of The Quality Inn in August, 1949. Fans transferred their Thursday night meetings to another coffee inn, the Mariposa (later to become a Chinese restaurant, the Sun Si Gai), where the atmosphere of disunity was intensified by the fans having to sit at various small tables instead of one large one.

At the next recorded meeting, #150, held on October 31, Molesworth stated that members felt that the usual Thursday night gatherings had widened the scope of their interests beyond science fiction fan activities, and that the club should tighten up its policy and membership. To this end, it was thought desirable to hold separate meetings while maintaining friendly relations with the Thursday night group. The Treasurer reported that only Haddon, Lynch, Macoboy, Molesworth, Paynter, Sointseff and Williams were financial. Membership dropped to seven full members and fourteen associates. The following statement of club policy was compiled from members' suggestions:

"The F.S.S. is a group of active science fiction fans meeting to discuss and promote science fiction; to take part in international fan activities; and to publicise F.S.S. activities, and Australian fandom generally, in other countries. Meetings shall be conducted along Parliamentary principles." On Macoboy's motion, seconded by Lynch, the following resolution was carried: "While this organisation welcomes the exchange of magazines among members to assist their reading of science fiction, it emphatically will not consider itself a "magazine market", and no member shall expect to find magazines available for sale at each or any meeting, and no priority shall be expected by members in obtaining magazines from other members in respect of F.S.S. Membership." In view of this, the levy on auction sales imposed eight months earlier, was rescinded.

To this meeting, Macoboy reported that the 1949 U.S. Convention had voted that \$150 be spent to provide books for the F.S.S. Library. He was authorised to express thanks and handle negotiations.

Meanwhile, the Customs Department had been engaged in a blitz on parcels of magazines sent to Australia as gifts<sup>26</sup>, and at Meeting #152 (held on December 11) it was decided that a deputation should wait on the Minister for Customs to seek a clarification of the position. Support was offered by American fans, some even

<sup>22</sup> A few issues of a newsletter appeared, but otherwise nothing came of this idea, showing that the science fiction movement had effectively failed. (G.S.)

<sup>23</sup> In the form of magazines which went into the club library.

<sup>24</sup> As the reader will have seen, the main fault throughout this history was a lack of perseverance and continuity. (G.S.)

<sup>25</sup> The group was in a totally powerless position, and could not afford to draw attention to itself. (G.S.)

<sup>26</sup> They thought they were being paid for in some way, probably barter arrangements. (G.S.)

suggesting that U.N.O. should be petitioned. Happily, however, the blitz eased off, and the Society decided it would be wisest not to provoke the Customs further. A New Zealand fan, Thomas G. L. Cockcroft, attended this meeting.

On January 26, 1950, Soltseff was elected both Director and Secretary, Paynter Treasurer and Williams Librarian. No further meetings were held until March 26, when it was decided to prepare two double-sided 12 in. records for playing at the Eighth World Convention to be held in Portland, Oregon. These would provide just under 20 minutes speaking time. The discs were duly made, under the supervision of Stirling Macoboy, and created quite a hit at the Convention.<sup>27</sup>

In April, it was found that fourteen fans, including several F.S.S. members, were doing various courses at the University of Sydney. Accordingly, the Sydney University Futurian Society was formed, but only two or three meetings were held. Thereafter pressure of studies, plus lack of advertising, prevented a quorum being attained, and, in accordance with University rules, the Society automatically ceased to exist.

At the next meeting of the F.S.S., held on May 6, Molesworth reported that Treasurer Paynter had left for England, and Librarian Williams was returning to Lismore. It was decided there would be no point in electing new executives, and Soltseff was authorised to take over the Treasury and Library funds and property for safekeeping. The Society was now virtually defunct.

When Soltseff collected the Library, it was found that during the period of inactivity a considerable number of books and magazines had disappeared. A Meeting called on May 25 and attended by ten fans probed the matter, deciding ultimately that the only action the Society could take was to collect the remnants of the Library and ascertain what was missing. It was determined that the Library had dwindled from 30 books and 287 magazines to six books and 90 magazines!

Although it had taken a catastrophe to bring these ex-members together, an attempt was made to capitalise on the situation and re-establish the club's former membership and activity. An eight-point plan, providing for a strong Chairman, meetings once a month at some place where a single table could be used, reduced fees, better Library facilities, and a regular news bulletin, was put forward. These points were discussed by members and guests, and it was decided that a resuscitation of club activity was both desirable and practical. Accordingly, ten fans (including newcomers Michael McGuinness and David Ritchie) attended a special meeting on June 1.

Veney, who presided, said the Society, if reformed should not interfere with the normal Thursday night meetings<sup>28</sup>. Six or eight people were turning up regularly to these gatherings and they would continue to do so, come what may. Russell said people turned up Thursday nights to talk, but not necessarily about science fiction. Macoboy said he personally did not want to attend on Thursdays to discuss club matters. Disorderly argument followed on the desirability or otherwise of meeting at the Mariposa or somewhere else.

Molesworth said that to test the feeling of the meeting he would formally move the disbandment of the Society and the dispersal of its property. This was seconded by McGuinness. Opposing the motion, Macoboy said he felt it would be a pity to disband the club after all the effort that had been put into it in the past. "Although I am not interested in organisation I realise that there are people who are," he said. "I feel that the machinery for formal activity exists, and rather than consign it to the scrap-heap we should keep it repaired and oiled." McGuinness, supporting the motion, said that the present gathering seemed to be loaded down with past impressions. "If we could start with a clean sheet we might be able to get something done." Ritchie, opposing, said that a permanent society required a small but important alteration in the Constitution to provide a purpose, political or economic, to benefit members as individuals from the

existence of a corporate body.<sup>29</sup>

Russell moved, seconded Sawyer, an amendment that the Society be disbanded and its Library administered by a Trust organisation. The speakers for the motion were Russell and Molesworth; against, Macoboy and Ritchie. A motion to apply the gag was defeated 6 - 3. In the resumed debate, Macoboy said the original motion was impossible because it violated all sense of honour. Molesworth said the core of the problem, after 2½ hours of bitter and acrimonious debate, remained untouched. In prewar days, when there was an abundance of magazines, the F.S.S. had been a discussion group with an interest in international fan activities. In the post war period, the F.S.S. had been a magazine market, divisible into buyers (passive fans) and sellers (those active enough to write overseas and get magazines). Either the club returned to its prewar days of discussion or it resumed aggressive action. Stone said he could see no reason why anything was necessary beyond a drive for recruits. Russell withdrew the amendment, and the motion was altered to read: "This meeting recommends to the F.S.S. that it consider winding up its affairs." After three quarters-of-an-hour fierce and disorderly debate, the gag was applied and the motion was carried, 6 in favour, 4 against. Veney said the matter had now become purely a club affair and there was nothing the meeting could do. He vacated the Chair.

Resuming the discussion, Macoboy said it was evident there was a greater amount of interest being taken in the club, although nothing concrete had been arrived at. Stone said that if new blood were enlisted the club could carry on as it had done in the past. Soltseff said he could not carry the combined load of the four executive positions much longer. Molesworth said fans had to act as a team or refrain from expecting one or two people to do all the work for them.

On June 22, Soltseff reported to the 159th meeting of the Society that the conference had failed to reach agreement on a revival of club activity, but it had recommended that the club should hand its Library over to a Trust to consist of seven trustees, who would look after and administer the Library for the benefit of Australian fandom. Macoboy moved, Soltseff seconded, that this recommendation be adopted. The motion was carried and a transfer document signed.

Some days afterwards the F.S.S. Library Trust was established with Larnach, Macoboy, Molesworth, Russell, Soltseff, Stone and Veney as Trustees. Russell became Chairman, Veney Secretary, and Soltseff Librarian. Some seventy books and 200 magazines were handed over.

Only one further meeting of the F.S.S. took place in 1950. This was #160, held on August 13, at which Molesworth was elected Director and Soltseff Secretary-Treasurer. Membership had fallen to four full members and ten associates, and the prospect of resuscitation seemed remote. Nevertheless it was decided to keep the machinery intact and carry on with a restricted programme, which would include meetings when possible, and an irregular news-sheet. Only one issue appeared, however. This was THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN, Vol. 2, #1, dated September, 1950, in a 4-page 8vo printed format.

But although the postwar organisational bubble had burst, there was no cessation of individual activity. In Perth, Roger N. Dard issued a one-shot 12 pp. photolithographed fanzine, STAR ROVER. In Sydney, Nick Soltseff had published a 12 pp. folded foolscap duplicated fanzine, WOOMERA.

In September, 1950, Vol Molesworth purchased a new Adana printing press, and registered the business name "Futurian Press", the object being to publish limited editions and select fantasy.

Very soon a group of fans began to gather at Molesworth's home every Saturday afternoon, to help in printing activities, to discuss science fiction generally, to use the Library, and to have tea *en masse* afterwards. Keenest supporters were Nick Soltseff and Roy Williams. The first printed book, S. L. Larnach's CHECKLIST OF

<sup>27</sup> *There had been earlier messages sent which had been ignored. Neither, indeed, was this recording acknowledged, though it was mentioned by people attending the meeting. (G.S.)*

<sup>28</sup> *So an elite group and an underclass had become established. It shouldn't have happened. (G.S.)*

<sup>29</sup> *A good point. The idea of the library was the most obvious such benefit, and an effective newsletter should have been another. (G.S.)*



AUSTRALIAN FANTASY<sup>30</sup>, was released at a cocktail party on October 29, attended by thirteen fans, including A. Bertram Chandler.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, the regular Thursday night meetings continued at the Sun Si Gai, but no further attempts were made to set up a formal organisation.

Early in 1951, Nick Sointseff decided to abandon the duplicated format of WOOMERA, and start afresh with a 20 pp. 8vo printed magazine. The result was by far the best fan publication in Australia. The printed format and neat layout gave an appearance of permanence and dignity to the well-balanced contents. The first issue appeared in February, the second in September, 1951. The only drawback was the necessary slow typesetting and handprinting.

During 1951, Futurian Press published two works of fantasy, BLINDED THEY FLY by Vol Molesworth, and ZERO EQUALS NOTHING by Graham B. Stone and Royce Williams, each well received by the Press.

In the first issue of WOOMERA, Stone announced the formation of a new national organisation to keep Australian fans in contact. This was the Australian Science Fiction Society, which was to play a major part in the coming renaissance and break all the previous membership records. "Its purpose is to bring together for their mutual benefit Australians interested in science fiction", Stone stated. "This is to be accomplished by locating and enrolling all fans who can be contacted, making them known to each other, and issuing monthly a news-magazine, keeping them up to date on science fiction here and overseas."

To begin with, the news-magazine took the form of a printed 8vo maglet, SCIENCE FICTION COURIER. Three issues of this appeared, in March, April and August. Thereafter Stone realised that printing was too slow for the rapid dissemination of information, and changed to a duplicated folded foolscap magazine, STOPGAP, of which issues appeared in October, November and December.

The response to A.S.F.S. was phenomenal. An indication of the eagerness of scattered Australian fans to achieve the sense of "belonging" is given in the following membership figures:

March, 1951	.....10
April	.....25
August	.....40
December	.....55

and, to glance ahead of our chronological account, the 100 mark was passed in June, 1952.

From the beginning, Graham Stone was unashamedly a "dictator". He simply declared himself Secretary and went ahead. There were no meetings and no elections. But the system worked splendidly<sup>32</sup>. For the first time in years, Australian fans were united

in a community organisation, and they were regularly supplied with information, at a nominal charge of 2/6 a year.

The object of the A.S.F.S. was to cover all of Australia, not particularly bothering with Sydney, which, accordingly to Stone, "could or should handle its own special local problems."<sup>33</sup> And as the first half of 1951 drew to a close, there was mounting feeling in Sydney that these problems had to be solved. There was considerable private talk on a resumption of local activities, and a needle in the arm for the F.S.S. Library Trust. After thrashing out preliminary matters with Molesworth, William D. Veney stepped into the breach and called the Fourth Sydney Science Fiction Conference for July 7, 1951, "to bring together all the local active fans, past and present, giving articulate form to the general revival of interest."

The Conference was held in the small hall at G.U.O.O.F.



Haddon, Kevin Smith, Glick, Molesworth, Russell, Veney - 4th Conference

Building in Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Seventeen fans attended, including Jack Murtagh from New Zealand and George Dovaston from England. Veney occupied the Chair, and proceedings were recorded by Eric F. Russell. The following details were taken from a report, drawn up by Veney and Russell, but not published.

After a welcome address by the Chairman, the Conference was presented with reports from various organisations on their activities and future aims. Speaking on the F.S.S. Library Trust, Nick Sointseff said it had in stock 85 books and 200 magazines. Funds were low, and there was only seven borrowers.

Graham Stone, reporting on the A.S.F.S., said it had done what it set out to do, - that is to bring people together. The interest shown by people out of town was "overwhelming".

The Director of Futurian Press (Vol Molesworth) said that the Press had achieved something more than the publishing of a few books. Although created out of the need for dollars and the desire for self-expression, it had helped to keep the spirit of co-operation alive until such time as some sort of organisation on an official basis had been formed. The co-operation and good fellowship evidenced in the Saturday afternoon printing activities had been "one reason why he had kept his faith in fandom".

Reporting on the Futurian Society of Sydney, Molesworth said it still existed and had four members, but had not met for months. "The machinery of the Society had been kept intact."

Mr Sointseff reported that the Sydney University Futurian Society no longer existed because its registration had not been renewed with the University authorities.

Mr Macoboy reported that Australian representation at the 1950 American Convention had been effected by mean of recordings.

Resolutions were then accepted from the floor. P. Glick moved, seconded by Kevin Smith, that Australia be represented at the

<sup>30</sup> Larnach, an active member of the Book Collectors' Society, introduced serious collecting to the group. His Checklist was the first attempt at an Australian bibliography and revealed that much more early Australian SF existed than had been known. (G.S.)

<sup>31</sup> Chandler had visited Sydney from time to time since 1945 and made himself known to Macoboy and Russell before the group reformed. (G.S.)

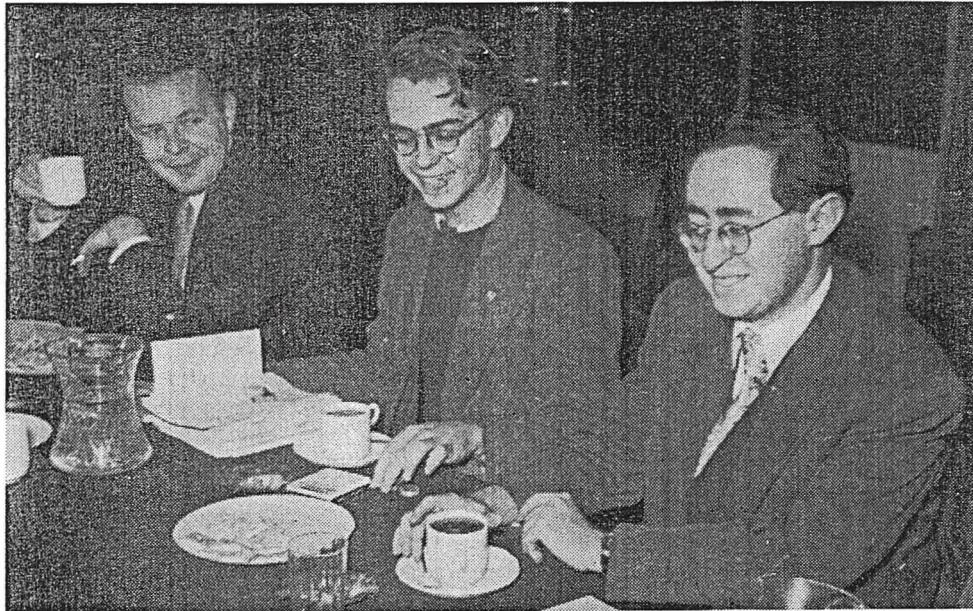
<sup>32</sup> Anyone who has served on a committee of an interest group will know that there are always members anxious to be elected to executive positions but not much use in them. (G.S.)

<sup>33</sup> STOPGAP, p. 15.



next American Convention. This was carried, and a committee of three - Veney, Smith and Stone - was appointed to this task.

The Conference was then thrown open for general discussion. Glick said that an opportunity had been missed to contact other fans when the film *DESTINATION MOON* was screened in Australian theatres. He suggested that the funds of the Futurian Society be used to contact fans by newspaper advertising. Molesworth inquired what would be done with newcomers contacted in this manner. Arthur Haddon asked whether the F.S.S. was interested in recruiting members and becoming an active organisation again. Molesworth said "this was a matter which could come from the Conference: it was for the Conference to take some action towards the club, - not turn to the F.S.S. and ask it for assistance." Soltseff said that if any person was willing to take an active part in the Society, so much the better, "but he did not think it was worthwhile if all the work rested on his own and Mr. Molesworth's shoulders." Considerable discussion followed on the question of reviving the F.S.S., Stone commenting that the best idea would be for an active local group to exist in the name of the F.S.S. in co-operation with the A.S.F.S. Glick argued that there was really no need for a Futurian Society. The A.S.F.S. did all the important work and the Library had been taken over. The only purpose of the Society would be to provide a meeting ground on a formal scale. But if meetings were held formally the same old trouble, - lack of interest, poor attendance, - would occur. In general, there was no longer any need for the Society, - that was why he suggested its funds be used on something constructive.



MaCoboy, Soltseff, Brunen - 4th Conference

The discussion was interrupted as the time for which the hall had been hired had expired. The fans transferred to the Sun Si Gai and resumed the Conference. Molesworth moved, seconded Soltseff, that Veney and Haddon be empowered to investigate ways and means of forming a club in Sydney. This was carried.

A motion by Stone, seconded by David Cohen, that a science fiction Convention be held in Sydney later in 1951 was also carried. A committee comprising MaCoboy, Russell, Stone and Veney was appointed to organise such a Convention. After a vote of thanks to the organising committee, the Conference closed.

Veney and Haddon, who had been given authority to determine how the new local club should be formed, decided that the best plan would not be to start an entirely new body, but to "invade" and invigorate the existing Futurian Society. Molesworth and Soltseff fell in readily with the plan, and three weeks later convened the 161st Meeting, to which all were invited. No less than eleven Sydney fans came along, and apologies were received from four others.

As soon as the minutes had been read, applications for membership were received from Lex Banning, Harry Brunen, David Cohen, Jock McKenna, Kevin Smith, Graham Stone and William Veney. All were accepted. "After going through a revised constitution

point by point, the members decided to drop associate membership and continue purely as a local club. It was felt that this was the best course now that Stone's A.S.F.S. was catering for fans outside Sydney, and the National Fantasy Fan Federation (of America), per medium of Westralian Roger N. Dard, was expanding into the Pacific area generally."<sup>34</sup> A new executive panel was elected for six months, as follows:

*Director:* Vol Molesworth  
*Vice-Director:* William D. Veney  
*Secretary:* Arthur Haddon  
*Treasurer:* Nick Soltseff

Veney informed the meeting that the U.S. Representation Committee had decided to send a group photograph taken at the Conference, together with a letter, to the American Convention. the Society decided to finance this project, and in due course the material was forwarded by air.<sup>35</sup>

With regard to the proposed Australian Convention, Veney said that mechanics were such that it would be hard to stage a Convention in 1951. Banning moved that the Society recommend to the organising committee that the Convention be held on March 22, 1952. This was seconded by Soltseff, and carried.

The Revival of the Futurian Society had caused a slight embarrassment to the F.S.S. Library Trust, - the ancestor, as it were, coming back to life and using its offspring's name. Accordingly the Trustees met on August 9 and decided to change the name to the Australian Fantasy Foundation.<sup>36</sup>

The reference above to the N.F.F.F. spreading to the Pacific is confirmed by the membership list published in the October, 1951 issue of *THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN*, which included seven Australian and one New Zealand fan, - Lewis R. Bennett, Roger N. Dard, Vol Molesworth, Rex Meyer, John C. Park, Nick Soltseff, Graham Stone and Donald H. Tuck. The February-March '52 issue lists two more - Arthur Haddon and Kevin Smith.<sup>37</sup>

Once re-established, the Futurian Society quickly went ahead. Meetings were held regularly throughout the year on the fourth Monday night of each month. The venue was the Board Room in the G.U.O.O.F. Building, where the formal business atmosphere provided a welcome change from the past experience of meeting in lounge rooms and restaurants. An added stimulus was the distribution of a booklet containing the Constitution and Rules, printed by the Secretary on his newly-acquired press.

At Meeting #162 (August 27) Cohen raised the question of publishing an official club magazine. Members felt, however, that publication of club activities was best left to individual fanzines such as *WOOMERA*, and *COURIER*, and on Glick's motion, seconded by Soltseff, this matter was shelved for three months. When the matter came up again at Meeting #165, the Society was so busy with the Convention plans that it was again adjourned to March, 1952. The idea was then abandoned.

At the August meeting the question of public relations was raised. It became evident that while some members favoured press publicity, as a means of contacting new fans, others feared it as a

<sup>34</sup> *FANTASY-TIMES*, #136, August, 1951, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> *As usual, there was no reply. (G.S.)*

<sup>36</sup> *The Trust had been a dopey idea in the first place, the change of name was a worse one. (G.S.)*

<sup>37</sup> *But there was little if any benefit from this body. (G.S.)*

vehicle of ridicule<sup>38</sup>. A motion limiting the duties of the Public Relations Officer to publicising the Society through "recognised sf. and fantasy" channels was carried 7 - 3. Glick was elected to the post.

At Meeting #163 (September 24) Veney said that the idea of holding an Australian Convention had been that of Macoboy and Stone. He had asked Macoboy, Russell and Stone to start work, but so far, only Stone had done anything. He stated that Macoboy had refused to help and he had been unable to contact Russell. As things stood, he added, the Convention "looked shaky".

Clearly, the gauntlet had been thrown down to the re-established club. Would it take up the challenge, take over responsibility for the Convention, - an event of major national fan importance, - or let the project collapse? Glick moved, seconded Banning, that the Society should adopt the former course.

Speaking from the Chair, Molesworth said that before the Society embarked upon the course suggested, the members should realise it would mean a lot of work. Those who were not absolutely in favour of it should not support the motion. Members should consider the reputation of the Society in Overseas fandom, and under no circumstances should the Society be held up to ridicule for having been unable to make a success of the Convention. He then put the motion to the vote and it was carried unanimously. Stone said that to prevent responsibility being placed in the hands of a few members acting as a committee and the work being left entirely up to them collective responsibility should be adopted. The Society then drew up a temporary agenda for a one-day Convention, and appointed a committee comprising Veney (Chairman), Stone (Secretary), Solntseff (Treasurer), Smith (Controller of Exhibits), Banning (Films), Haddon (Auctioneer), Solntseff (Editor of Booklet), and Glick, Stone, Smith and Haddon (Publicity). The Society also decided to invite Eric F. Russell to attend meetings and co-operate. Russell declined the invitation.

The controversial question of publicity arose again at Meeting #164 (October 22) when Smith moved that the Society advertise in THRILLS, INC. This was a science adventure publication which in some quarters was hailed as "Australia's first prozine", in others condemned as juvenile. Smith said that by advertising in THRILLS, knowledge of the Society would reach a wide field<sup>39</sup> and people interested in group meetings would be contacted. Stone said that a careful screening process of persons who responded would be necessary. Smith then withdrew his motion and moved instead that the society should advertise in THRILLS "in such a way as to indicate the existence of science-fiction fans in Australia." This was seconded by McGuinness, and carried unanimously. Brunen was deputed to investigate the cost of such an advertisement. He reported to Meeting #165 (November 26) that he had met with little success: he had been quoted 20 pounds a page, but considered this had been intended as a discouragement. The Society decided to write to THRILLS, requesting their advertising rates. At the following meeting, the Secretary reported that he had despatched a letter, but received no reply. The Society also decided to contact British publishers of science fiction, whose magazines were distributed in Australia, concerning their advertising rates. This was a move which was to bear fruit in the following year.

At this meeting, the Director informed members that the Society was twelve years old. Veney moved that "we, the present members of the Society, recognise that our organisation has been in existence for a period of twelve years, and that during the recent world war the threads of our organisation have remained intact; and we resolve to support the ideals of its founders." This was seconded by Ken Martin and carried unanimously.

During November, leading West Australian fan Roger N. Dard visited Sydney, and quickly became popular with Thursday night gatherings, now being held at the Moccador Cafe in Market Street. Earlier, two visits had been paid to Sydney by another Perth fan, John C. Park.

<sup>38</sup> *Knowing what treatment groups in the USA had received. On the other hand, publicising the Convention was an obvious function for a newsletter. (G.S.)*

<sup>39</sup> Estimated at 8,000 in FANTASY TIMES #132, June, 1951.

In December, Haddon published the first issue of TELEPATH, a printed 12 pp 8vo fanzine. It was somewhat marred by faulty printing but indicated the general upswing in activity.

The last 1951 meeting of the Futurian Society (#166) was held on December 28. It was almost fully occupied with details concerning the forthcoming Australian Convention. Such matters as the hiring of a hall and a film projector, catering, publicity, and the dinner, were thrashed out. Hopes were high that the 1952 Convention would be an outstanding success. The Futurian Society had thrown itself into the task of organisation with vigour. Its membership had been increased to fifteen during the year by the admission of Ken Martin, Royce Williams and Ian Driscoll.

As Veney wrote in WOOMERA, "Early this year we made quite a lot of plans and dreamt a lot of dreams. Many expressed doubts about our ability to carry out these plans and thought we were biting off more than we could chew. Yet, despite a few upsets and disappointments, the general pattern of our planning has been carried out exactly as we wanted.

(Continued next issue)

[Photos and additional footnotes (in *italics*) courtesy of Graham Stone]

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# A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM 1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

## CHAPTER FOUR

In 1952 the scene in Australian fandom becomes more complex, due to a general upsurge in activities. The influx of new fans was creating a problem for the group meeting each Thursday night in a Sydney coffee inn. The science fiction fans moved away from the Sun Si Gai, and after trying Repin's in King Street, were now meeting at the Moccador in Market Street. A small group of fantasy fans and book collectors continued to meet at the Sun Si Gai. The newcomers joined the science-fiction faction and soon became too numerous to meet comfortably in a coffee inn. On January 31, there was a record attendance at the Moccador of twenty-one, including five of the female sex. It was obvious that the plan of meeting under such conditions would not work much longer. "Sooner or later," observed Stone in STOPGAP<sup>1</sup>, "we'll have to hire a room in the city." Fans were asked to keep their eyes open for suitable premises in the city where gatherings could be held, and auctions conducted without members of the general public looking on and coffee shop proprietors grinding their teeth in the background.

In January, Nick Solntseff published the third issue of WOOMERA, in its usual 20 pp. printed format, and announced that this would be the last for some time as he would be handicapped by University honours work. Since both Vol Molesworth and Royce Williams would also be occupied with study, it was decided to close down Futurian Press after the publication of Molesworth's LET THERE BE MONSTERS! in April.

At the 167th meeting of the Futurian Society, held on January 23, the Secretary announced that he was written to the Atlas Publishing Co., London publishers of the British reprint edition of ASTOUNDING, and had asked if advertising space could be obtained to announce the first Australian Convention. The company had replied, suggesting that circulars might be inserted in the magazines when the next issue reached Sydney. Haddon said he had contacted Gordon & Gotch Pty Ltd., the local distributors of ASTOUNDING, who were willing to insert such circulars free of charge. The number required for NSW would be 1200. Haddon then astounded the meeting by producing a large parcel containing 1200 circulars, which he had printed himself. In due course the December, 1951, British reprint ASTOUNDING appeared in NSW bookstalls with the circulars inside them. Some 40-odd replies came back, among them letters from fans who were to become prominent in the coming months.

Attending this meeting was K. Stirling Macoboy, who was to leave Australia shortly on a visit to the U.S.A., to study television. To enable Macoboy to meet American fans as an official representative of Australian fandom, the meeting decided to elect him an honorary member of the Society. Before Macoboy actually sailed, the Society sponsored a farewell dinner to him. Held at the Allora Cafe in Pitt Street on February 7, it was attended by fourteen Sydney fans. "It was fitting that this dinner should have been one of the most pleasant

social evenings ever held by Sydney fans."<sup>2</sup>

Since Macoboy was one of the seven trustees of the Australian Fantasy Foundation, it was necessary to appoint someone to act as a proxy during his absence overseas. The fan chosen was Ian Driscoll, who had already shown a great deal of interest in the library, toiling at the weekend to catalogue it and erect shelves to house it. Accordingly, a Foundation meeting was held on January 24, and Driscoll was appointed both proxy for Macoboy and Librarian of the Foundation. The Library in Mr. Driscoll's hands underwent a remarkable transformation, - it grew from a mere shell with only seven borrowers to a flourishing concern with 47 borrowers, and increased in volume from 85 books and 200 magazines in July, 1951, to 130 books and 360 magazines a year later.

Elections fell due at the January meeting of the Futurian Society, and members indicated their satisfaction with the progress the club was making by re-electing the previous executive panel *in toto*. Director Molesworth then appointed Harry Brunen public relations officer.

At the 168th meeting (February 25) Vice-Director Veney reported that he had located premises which might be suitable for the Thursday Night group. This was the "Katinka" Library, in Pitt Street, which was available for 15/- per week. So long as fifteen fans turned up regularly, the charge would only be 1/- per head. Members decided that the Society should hire the "Katinka" and make it available to the Thursday Night group. "The unanimous verdict of the meeting was that there should be no formality about the Thursday group, and that no connection with the Society should be indicated."<sup>3</sup> Veney was delegated to handle the business arrangements with Col. Sheppard, proprietor of the "Katinka".

The move from the Moccador to the Katinka was made on March 6, and no less than 26 fans attended the first night. Thereafter an average of 29 was maintained, a maximum of 38 being reached on April 17. It quickly became apparent that soon ever larger premises would be needed if the present peak of enthusiasm was maintained. A feature of the Thursday Night gatherings was the auction of books and magazines from which the group took 10% commission. This, together with the surplus attendance money, quickly put the group on a sound financial footing. While Veney remained nominally in charge, two new fans, - Len Roth and Les Raethel, - soon became the "guardians" of the group, assisted by three other newcomers, Rosemary G. Simmons, Don K. Lawson and Bruce Purdy.

Evidence of the rising Sydney fan population is given by the theatre-party organised by the Futurian Society, on Veney's suggestion, to see THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL at the Regent Theatre on March 5. No less than 83 fans and friends went along.

The last week in February and the first three weeks in March were feverishly devoted to preparations for the Convention, scheduled for March 22. Biggest job was to cope with the fans responding to the circular in ASTOUNDING, and soon Convention Secretary Graham Stone was farming out letters to other Futurians to answer. Many of the "new" fans disclosed that they had been reading and collecting science fiction for years, but never suspected that organised activities were being carried out. Membership in the Australian Science Fiction Society jumped from 70 in February to 82 in April, and two months later passed the 100 mark. Taking 1200 as the number of regular stf. readers in N.S.W., Stone concluded that before this only 5.5% of fans in this state had been known. For Sydney the figure would be higher, about 8% perhaps. "If we were better able to make contacts it would have been much higher, - and it's going up sharply as new fans write in to ask for more information on the Convention."<sup>4</sup> Word was received that fans were coming from Melbourne, Coolangatta, Newcastle, Bathurst, Forster and Mona Vale, as well as many from the outlying suburbs of Sydney.

Though it had been raining furiously throughout the week, Saturday dawned clear and fine. In the large hall of the G.U.O.O.F. Building, fans were putting the last touches to their exhibits, while others coupled up the P. A. system, and pinned posters and movie stills around the walls. Nick Solntseff sat ready at the door with a

<sup>2</sup> NOTES AND COMMENTS, #3, May 26, 1952.

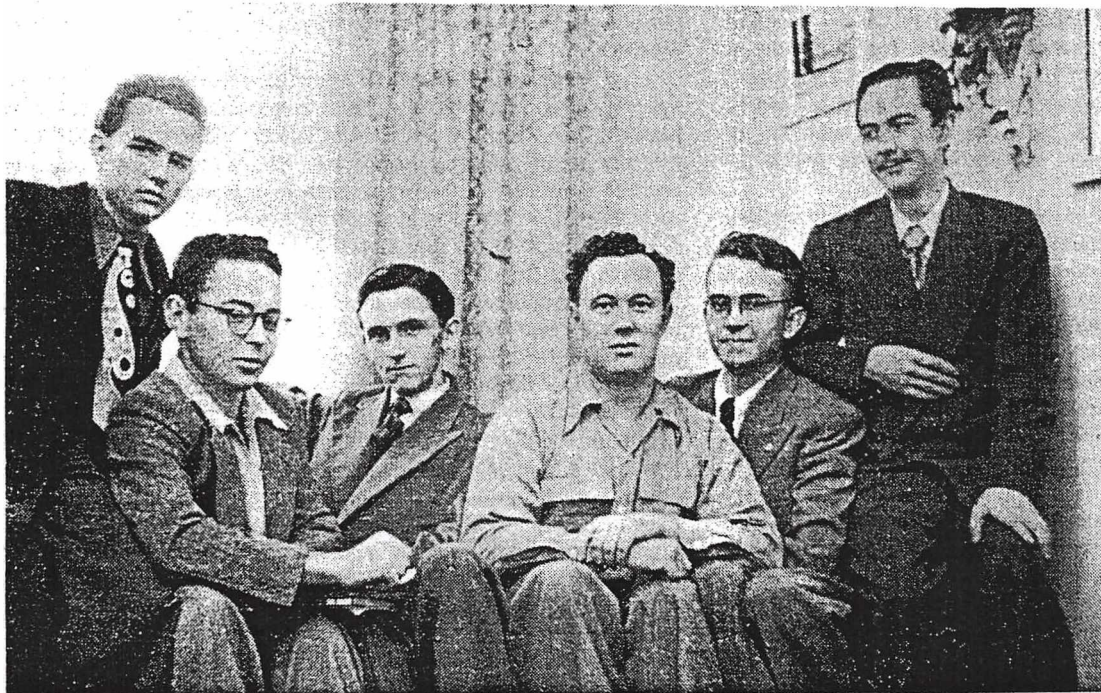
<sup>3</sup> Minutes.

<sup>4</sup> STOPGAP, February, 1952, P. 33.

<sup>1</sup> January, 1952, p. 22.



cash box, name cards, copies of the 20 pp. printed Souvenir Booklet, and also WHAT IS FANDOM?, a splendid 12 pp. duplicated explanatory pamphlet produced by the A.S.F.S. When the doors opened master-of-ceremonies Royce Williams began a running fire of welcomes and wisecracks over the microphone. Thirty fans were waiting to be admitted, and a further twenty-eight arrived during the afternoon, making a total attendance of 58, - by far the largest fan gathering ever held in Australia. Most of those attending naturally came from the Sydney area, but a national flavour was introduced by the presence of Race Mathews, from Melbourne; Ted Butt, Newcastle; and Bob Guy, Forster. Congratulatory messages were read from Kevin Smith (Ballina, N.S.W.), Roger N. Dard (Perth), Thomas G. L. Cockroft (New Zealand), and A Bertram Chandler (at sea).



Willy Russell, Kevin Dillon, Don Lawson, Wlm. Veney, N. Solnsteff, G. Stone - Sunday of 1st Convention.

As the official opening was not until 11 a.m. fans had an hour to get acquainted and look over the various exhibits. Qantas Airways had sent along two impressive items, - scenes contrived with vividly real 3-dimensional models, showing in one division the N.S.W. coastline seen from Trans-Pacific rocket height; in the other, a Lunar landscape with miniature rocket and spacesuited figures, all well in Bonestell's class.

Graham Stone had arranged an extensive exhibit covering the history of science fiction in both professional and fan spheres. This included samples of very early magazines (from 1926 to 1932), notable fan magazines (from a 1933 FANTASY FAN to the latest SLANT), and stff. magazines in other languages, including Spanish, French, Swedish, German, Dutch and Gaelic. Mr Stone conducted tours of this exhibit and gave explanatory talks to the newcomers.

Another centre of attraction was the Auction table, where Haddon and Purdy had put on display the 150-odd books and magazines to be auctioned later in the day. On the other side of the hall was the Foundation exhibit, where Driscoll had set out a choice selection from the Library between "rocketship" bookends. During the day he received 23 applications for borrowers' cards. On a fourth stand Futurian Press books were exhibited.

At 11 a.m. Chairman Veney formally opened the Convention, Molesworth then gave a 10-minute talk, "What Is Science Fiction?", following which Stone spoke for a similar period on "What Is Fandom?"

Next, the auction was conducted. It lasted for an hour and a half, and provoked a good deal of reckless bidding, up to 22/- being offered for current American magazines. The highest bid recorded was 30/- for the book edition of Weinbaum's BLACK FLAME.

After lunch came the main session, run in a business-like manner. Reports were received from the various fan organisations, questions were fired from the hall, and motions were debated on the floor. We shall return to this session in due course.

In the evening, a Dinner at the Mayfair was attended by forty fans, following which films were screened. It had proven impossible to obtain the programme originally contemplated, - to include METROPOLIS, and documentaries on rocketry, - and a scratch programme was shown, including THE MAGIC SWORD (A Yugoslav fantasy), LIFE OF PASTEUR, and a microphotography short (French), THE LOON'S NECKLACE, and FIDDLE-DE-DEE (Canadian). The screening was unfortunately marred by breakdowns.

The Convention closed at 11 p.m., but groups of fans kept talking until the early hours of the morning. Nothing had been organised for Sunday, but fans met informally in several groups, the largest being a gathering of eleven at Bill Russell's flat in Bondi Junction, where the history of Australian fandom was discussed in detail.

The Convention had been a grand success. Many factors emerged from it, but the most important one was that Sydney fans could work together as a team. "The problems of our isolated and lonely existence have tended to make us self-reliant and anarchistic," Veney wrote,<sup>5</sup> "but this was anything but a one-man show." Many valuable lessons had been learned by the Sydney fan community. "There were," Veney declared, "several bad points that the assembly graciously overlooked, but which were noted by the organisers. There has been much analytical discussion of the form and style of the main day's activities. There has been

much debate as to whether the most was exacted from the opportunities presenting themselves. All this is good and healthy. It is my belief that the best way to crush laurels is to sit on them."<sup>6</sup>

Returning now to the formal business session of the Convention, considerable discussion took place on the state of the Australian Fantasy Foundation, and the possibility of setting up branch libraries in other States. Race Mathews proposed that the Trustees consider bestowing Life Membership upon fans in return for suitable gifts of books and magazines. This was seconded by Nicholson, who suggested that donation of sufficient material should exempt the borrower from further fees. Opposing the motion, Doug. Stanborough said real fans would donate material and not expect any honour in return. When put to the vote, the motion was lost by 28 to 15.

Harry Brunen moved, seconded by Stone, that the Convention resolve, if not actually to boycott THRILLS INC., at least to express its disapproval of the way in which THRILLS had treated the Futurian Society when it had sought THRILLS' aid in publicising the Convention. Len Roth argued that it would be better to get THRILLS to improve the standard of the science fiction it published than to antagonise them by showing disapproval. Haddon said the publishers of THRILLS were not interested in the opinions of fans, - it was just another source of revenue to them. Molesworth said this was not the point, - "We want fans to know that this, the first Australian Convention went on record as expressing its disapproval of trash being marketed," he said. M. Lazar moved an amendment, seconded S. Dunk, that THRILLS be encouraged to publish science fiction of a "more mature and serious kind". The amendment was carried by 46 votes to 2.

P. Glick then moved, seconded Stone, that the Convention

<sup>5</sup> OFFICIAL REPORT, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

view with approval the increasing number of good quality science fiction stories appearing in local non-stf. magazines. This was also carried 46 - 2. Dave Cohen moved, seconded Purdy, that a second Convention be held in 1953. This was carried 48 - 3.

A vote of thanks to the Convention Committee was moved by Molesworth, seconded by Stone, and carried by acclamation.

Financially, the Convention had been very successful. Total takings from admission, sale of souvenir booklets, the auction, a raffle, and a donation, was 45.16.7 pounds. Total expenditure, including hire of the hall, P. A. system, catering, photographic and stenographic work, came to 22.19.8 pounds, leaving a credit balance of 22.16.8 pounds. When these figures were made available to the Futurian Society, members decided to make a donation of 5 pounds to the Foundation, and to use the balance to publish an Official Report of the Convention, and to help finance Australian representation at overseas Conventions. The report was issued in July, in a duplicated 14 pp. quarto format with printed blue card covers. Of the 190 copies published, one was supplied to each fan who had attended or materially assisted the Convention, and the balance was sold at 1/- per copy.

The 169th meeting of the Futurian Society of Sydney was held on the Monday night following the Convention as an "open" meeting, and no less than fourteen guests attended, including five women. After Veney had formally reported the facts of the Convention to the meeting, consideration was given to the recommendations that had come forward. Those concerning Australian representation at the forthcoming British and American Conventions were immediately adopted, and two sub-committees, headed respectively by Stone and Banning, were appointed to effect representation. A display board consisting of half-a-dozen photographs taken at the Australian Convention, with suitable captions, was later sent by air to the London group. With regard to the American Convention, the Society decided to investigate the possibility of making a 16 mm. film accompanied by a commentary on a tape-recording.

An unexpected storm broke at the "open" meeting, when a motion came forward that a women's auxiliary<sup>7</sup> be formed. Rosemary Simmons asked whether women were eligible for ordinary membership, and if so, a woman's auxiliary was unnecessary. It soon became evident that the present members, - all male - were divided on the issue. Stone and Banning spoke strongly against sex discrimination, Banning uttering his now famous, "Mr Chairman, I'm shocked! Are we Futurians or are we Victorians?" Molesworth warned the Society that the admission of women had caused trouble in the prewar days of the club<sup>8</sup>. After heated debate, a motion to admit Miss Simmons was defeated by six votes to three.

But the matter was not allowed to rest at this point. Banning and Stone exercised their right under the Constitution to demand a special meeting, which was held on April 7. Applications for membership from Doug. Nicholson, Bruce Purdy and Len Roth were carried unanimously, then a fresh application from Miss Simmons was read out. The voting resulted five in favour, five against. Director Molesworth then gave his casting vote against the motion. Banning moved that "this Society makes it clear that... it does not discriminate on the grounds of race, creed, party or sex in considering the eligibility of members." This was seconded by McGuinness, and carried.

Later in the meeting, Stone objected to the negative vote cast by the Director, and moved that the earlier decision be rescinded. This was seconded by McGuinness, and carried, 5 - 3. Stone then

moved, again seconded McGuinness, that Miss Simmons be admitted to membership. The motion was carried 6 - 4. This test-case having been established, an application for membership by Norma Hemming at the next meeting was carried unanimously. The election of Kevin Dillon on May 5 and Les Raethel on June 23 brought Society membership to twenty-three.

The fight for admission by the women did not discourage them as fans, - on the contrary, it gave new stimulus to their activity. Banding together, they published in April the first issue of VERTICAL HORIZONS, a duplicated 8 pp. folded foolscap fanzine, under the general editorship of Rosemary Simmons, Laura Molesworth and Norma Hemming. Another new fan - Norma Williams - assisted with the second issue which appeared in May. The third issue - November, 1953 - was a one-woman effort produce by Rosemary Simmons.

At this time, also, Ken Martin and Vol Molesworth felt that the swollen fan population needed a medium of information more frequent than Stone's STOPGAP, which appeared roughly on a monthly basis. Accordingly, the pair purchased a rotary duplicator and began publishing an experimental 4 pp. foolscap fanzine, NOTES AND COMMENT, the title of which indicates its policy. Copies were distributed on April 28, May 12 and May 26, but the pair experienced increasing trouble with the duplicator, and could not keep up a regular fortnightly schedule. Rather than issue NOTES AND COMMENTS monthly or every six weeks, - which would destroy its value as a newspaper, they decided to abandon the project.

The Convention and its attendant publicity had brought to light many new fans. One result of this was to render the "Katinka" Library unsuitable for the Thursday night gatherings. Larger quarters had to be found. The Futurian Society took the matter in hand, and at Meeting #173 (May 26) Miss Simmons announced that she could obtain use of the Sydney Bridge Club in George Street. This had the added advantage of a supper service and the charge would be 3/- per head. The Society decided to hire these premises each Thursday night, and the move, made on June 5, was hailed a success by the 31 fans attending.

Meetings at the Bridge Club continued throughout the remainder of the year, with an average weekly attendance of 28. When Len Roth withdrew from activities, later in the year, Les. Raethel became custodian. Don Lawson devised an efficient means of conducting auctions. The Thursday Night group proved so profitable that it was able to hand 15 pounds towards the cost for the 1953 Convention. Beginning as a service to Thursday Night fans, but later being partly subsidised and more widely circulated, Rex Meyer's S.F. REVIEW saw its first issue in October, and continued to appear on a monthly basis. In a roneoed  $\frac{1}{4}$ to format, running from 4 to 8 pages, this publication aimed at providing critical reviews contributed by various fans of currently available magazines and books. It fulfilled a long felt need, both answering the demand for regular reviews, and providing a medium for co-operative effort.

Another result of the influx of new fans was a move to alter the structure of fan organisation. It was felt in some quarters that the Futurian Society would not be able to function efficiently with twenty-three members working in committee. Two possible remedies were suggested, - the first, that the Futurian Society should cease to be "the ruling body of fandom" and become more of a social group, and that a new Standing Committee or Council of Fandom should be set up, with delegates from the F.S.S., A.S.F.S., the Foundation, the Thursday Night group, the North Shore Futurian Society and such other groups as may be formed by the new fans. This was discussed at an unofficial meeting at Coogee attended by Stone, Sointseff, Brunen, McGuinness, Driscoll, Williams, Haddon and Molesworth, but no action was taken.

The second plan, proposed by Arthur Haddon, was put before the Futurian Society in the form of a set of proposed amendments to the Constitution. A radically revised Constitution, drawn up by Haddon, and incorporating amendments suggested by Dave Cohen, was considered at a special F.S.S. meeting held on May 5. Haddon agreed that structural alterations were necessary, but argued that these should be carried out inside, not outside the club. "In the twelve years of our existence we have gained some tradition and a certain amount of prestige," he said. "Should our control pass to this Council, we would lose all that, and to some extent ruled by a body bereft of

<sup>7</sup> I raised this in the first place, My idea being to do something for members' wives and relatives who weren't interested in SF. But it wasn't wanted. (G.S.)

<sup>8</sup> I dispute this. Very few women had anything to do with the early club and I wasn't aware of any trouble. For the record, the first who wasn't someone's wife or sister, and the first of all active, was Jean Roberts who was Treasurer in 1943. However, in the 50s there were some women on the scene who were not to be ignored. It will be seen that some members had strong views at this meeting: one reason was that the custom of adultery had been introduced and there was some, shall we say, controversy behind the scenes. (G.S.)



the experience of our many years as a fan body." He proposed instead that the executive panel of the Society should be increased in number from four to seven, and that it should meet apart from the general members. The enlarged panel was to be elected annually, and would be composed of members who had attended 75% of all meetings prior to their elections. All recommendations to fandom would be made by this panel and not the Society proper.

There was considerable opposition to the Haddon-Cohen amendments when the debate ensued. Stone said the existing Constitution was ideal because it was flexible. Director Molesworth surrendered the Chair to Treasurer Sointseff to speak as a private member against the motion. He said it was unrealistic to attempt to meet change by legalistic reforms of this sort. The Constitution should be interpreted by meetings in the light of whatever circumstances arose. Stone moved, seconded Molesworth, that the amendments be rejected. The debate was gagged, and the motion carried 8 - 3.

At the 173rd meeting, held on May 26, Stone introduced as a guest Lyell Crane, an Australian fan who had just returned from a world tour, in the course of which he had contacted fan groups in the U.S.A., Canada and England. Crane entertained the Society with a most interesting address, and concluded by urging that more activity be devoted to international relations.<sup>9</sup>

"When we get our long-awaited, real Aussie promag," Nicholson wrote, "we want it to spring from fandom, and have the interests of fandom at heart." Accordingly he invited contributions to FORERUNNER, a magazine "of indefinite size and frequency designed to feel the way for a professional, adult, Australian science-fiction magazine." Nicholson was critical of the type of fan magazine that was being produced; they were, in his estimation, an outlet for fan gossip. "This preoccupation with the trivia of fandom itself,"<sup>10</sup> he wrote, "is a fine case of tail-chasing. It could be called a second derivative of science fiction, - a concentration on the means in which the end has been largely lost sight of..." The first issue of FORERUNNER appeared in Spring, 1952, in an 80 pp. 4to format. The bulk of the issue was duplicated, with a small photolitho insert, and the pages were stapled between overlapping card covers. Some 200 copies were published, and apart from a few retained for overseas fans, the total issue sold readily. FORERUNNER #1 contained 30,000 words, - the first half of a serial by Molesworth, short stories by Norma Hemming, Norma Williams, C. Gilbert, and Royce Williams, verse by Lex Banning, and an article by Nicholson.

The 174th meeting of the Futurian Society, held on June 23, was largely taken up with plans for the Fifth Sydney Conference. This was the last meeting attended by William D. Veney, who had rendered such outstanding service to Sydney fandom in the past. Appropriately



Hemming, Leggett, Butt, Stone, Norma Williams, Picklum, Crane, Brunen, Fisher, Valerie Pauline, Glick - Wentworth Falls

Crane was one of seventeen fans who attended the "science fiction weekend" early in July. Held at the Wentworth Falls Hotel in the Blue Mountains, this was the first social of its kind. Some fans spent the entire weekend at the hotel; others drove up for the Sunday. The second weekend was staged on August 9 - 10. Twelve fans went along, including Ted Butt, who made the round trip of 340 miles from Newcastle. A carload of four swelled the numbers on the Sunday. The third, held in December, attracted only seven fans, but at this time University and Tech. College exams were in full swing.

The collapse of THRILLS with its 23rd issue in June confirmed Doug. Nicholson in his idea of publishing a semi-professional magazine which would serve as a "forerunner" for the real thing.

enough, Veney held the Chair for this meeting, the Director being unable to get along. Late in July, Veney left Sydney to take a position in Launceston (Tasmania), after nominating Ken Martin to act in his place as Chairman of the Conference.

Attendance at the Fifth Sydney Conference, held at the G.U.O.O.F. Hall, On Saturday 19, was disappointing<sup>11</sup>. Although nearly 100 invitations had been sent out, only 19 fans attended. Those present were considerably cheered by a telegram from Veney, who had spent a few days in Melbourne on his way to Tasmania. Veney reported that a local fan group had been formed in Melbourne, and a library committee set up, headed by R. J. McCubbin and Race Mathews.

<sup>9</sup> He had become interested in activities when living in Canada and been one of the organisers of the experimental Science Fiction International. For a while he took over much of the work of the A.S.F.A. (G.S.)

<sup>10</sup> STOPGAP, May-June, 1952, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> It had been organised on the initiative of Veney, who left Sydney before it was held, and seemed to have no clear purpose. (G.S.)



The Conference heard a report on the A.S.F.S. by Graham Stone, who told of a rapidly growing membership, continued publication of STOPGAP and special leaflets, a new magazine to be published later, and a planned division of executive duties. Ian Driscoll, reporting on the Australian Fantasy Foundation, told of a healthy financial state, steady additions to the library, and a proposed branch in Melbourne. A new catalogue was made available. Rosemary Simmons then reported on the VERTICAL HORIZONS group, and Doug. Nicholson outlined his plans for FORERUNNER.

Graham Stone reported that to effect Australian representation at the London Convention, a display had been prepared, comprising six photographs taken at the First Australian Convention, with identifying captions, plus a selection of Australian fan publications, and a message of goodwill. This material had been airmailed to E. J. Carnell, editor of NEW WORLDS, who had set it up prominently in the Convention hall. A letter of acknowledgement had been received from Secretary Frank Arnold, who had added that the display would also be placed on view at a regional gathering in Manchester.<sup>12</sup>

The rest of the Conference was devoted to discussion of the 1953 Australian Convention. It was decided that it should be spread over three days, preferably the last weekend in April. Nominations for the Convention Committee were called for, and a tentative list of names referred to the Futurian Society for ratification.

At the 175th meeting of the Society (held on July 28), elections for office bearers fell due. Following his excellent handling of the Fifth Conference, Ken Martin was elected Director unopposed. Vol Molesworth became Vice-Director; Len Roth, Treasurer; Arthur Haddon, Secretary; and Rosemary Simmons Assistant Secretary. David Cohen volunteered for the position of Public Relations Officer. At the next meeting, however, he relinquished this post due to pressure of private business.

When the Conference recommendations came up for discussion, Haddon moved that a liaison officer be appointed who would be responsible for the working of the Convention Committee between then and the date of the Convention. This was seconded by Stone, and carried 11 - 1.

For the position of Convention Chairman, four members were nominated - Haddon, Martin, Molesworth, and Nicholson. Molesworth was elected by preferential voting.

Discussion was resumed at a special meeting held at the Katinka on a Sunday, August 3. A proposed programme, drawn up by Molesworth and Stone, was adopted: it provided for a cocktail party on the Friday night, a general "Exposition of Science Fiction" on Saturday (exhibits and talks), films on Saturday night, the auction Sunday morning, and the formal business session Sunday afternoon. Dates were fixed at May 1-2-3, 1953.

The remaining members of the Convention Committee were then elected, as follows:

Liaison Officer & Secretary:	A. W. Haddon
Treasurer:	L. Roth
Auctioneer:	B. Purdy
Films:	L. Banning
Booklet:	V. Molesworth
Publicity: (general)	Miss Simmons
(overseas)	R. D. Nicholson
Master of Ceremonies:	K. Martin

Meanwhile, a storm was brewing in the Australian Fantasy Foundation. Of the seven trustees appointed in July, 1952, two were no longer in Sydney (Macoboy and Veney), and three had withdrawn from the active fan field (Larnach, Russell, and Solntseff). Solntseff had resigned from the Secretary-Treasureship, and the administration of the library was being carried by Ian Driscoll (proxy for Macoboy) assisted by Molesworth and Stone. Now, however, Driscoll found that he could not carry on as Librarian, and Molesworth asked that the Library, which had been housed for some time at his home, be moved elsewhere. A meeting of the Trust was convened on August 7, at which Driscoll formally tendered his resignation as Librarian. Two offers were then made to house and administer the library, - one from Graham Stone, the other from Arthur Haddon. Stone said that Haddon was not a Trustee, and that if Haddon's offer was accepted, the Trust would be allowing the library to pass from out of its control, and would therefore violate its constitution. Others present took the view that the Trust had the power to appoint a non-Trustee as its agent, and preceded to appoint Haddon. Stone thereupon tendered a letter of



Lawson, Stone, Pishblum, Dillon, Veney, Leggett, Crane, Raethel, Butt, Fisher - 1st W'Falls weekend.

PICKLUM

resignation; he declared that the Trust had defaulted and the library automatically reverted to the F.S.S. The meeting then elected Haddon to the vacancy on the Trust caused by Stone's resignation.

The dispute was brought before the notice of the Futurian Society at its 177th meeting, held on August 25. Haddon said that the Foundation records given to him "were in a chaotic state, and had been obtained only after difficulty." He accused Stone of withholding monies which were the property of the Foundation. Stone, in reply, said he had kept certain records and monies because, "with the Foundation no longer in existence, there were no officers of that body to whom he could hand those records and monies."<sup>13</sup> In reply to Banning, who asked if the F.S.S. had any jurisdiction over the Foundation, the Director said he had obtained a legal opinion, and had been informed that since the original transfer documents did not contain the word "irrevocable", the original owners could regain control whenever the Trust was shown to have violated its agreement.

Haddon moved, seconded Simmons, that the Society accept the validity of the transfer document, and recognise the existing body of trustees. The motion was lost, 2 - 3. Molesworth then moved, seconded Raethel, that the Society invoke the machinery of the Futurian Court of Inquiry to investigate whether the transfer document

<sup>12</sup> A first! (G.S.)

<sup>13</sup> I don't know just what was going on here. It's incredible that I would think of handling the library, for one thing, and I don't know why I would have had records, much less funds. (G.S.)





Molesworth and Veney - "Fake photo" both claimed.

was valid, and if the Trust existed. This was carried, 7 - 1, Stone in opposition, Banning and Nicholson abstaining.

The exact form that such an Inquiry should take was debated at the next two meetings (Sept. 22 and Oct. 27). Throughout this period, Haddon took the view that the legality of the Trust was *sub judice*, and ceased to operate the library. This caused considerable dissatisfaction among fans attending the Thursday Night gatherings, who were deprived of reading matter. To some observers, this two months' delay appeared to be procrastination; to others, it indicated that the question was very thoroughly probed before final decision was made. However, at Meeting #179, it was moved Haddon, seconded Stone, that the Court of Inquiry be held. The motion was carried 9 - 1. Members had obviously decided the Inquiry was necessary. To make it equally clear that no attack on personalities was intended, the meeting defeated by 7 votes to 4 a further motion by Haddon that "an Inquiry be held to investigate the actions and competence of the trustees only."

The second sitting of the Futurian Court of Inquiry was held at the Katinka library on December 17. Presiding was F.S.S. Director Ken Martin, assisted by Mr. Malcolm Milbery, LL.B, as Judge-advocate; and Vol Molesworth, as Examiner. Although notices had been sent by registered post to all Trustees, only three attended. Evidence was given by Simmons, Haddon, Dillon, Stone, Glick, Driscoll, and Molesworth. A transcript of the proceedings, running to 23 closely-typed foolscap pages, is in the club files.

In his summing-up, the Examiner made the following submissions: (1) that the recommendation made by the general fan rally on June 1, 1950, was merely that the F.S.S. should wind up its affairs, *not* that the Society should hand over its property to a Trust; (2) that Meeting 159 of the Society, at which the decision was made to hand over the library, was not legally convened; (3) that anything done by the persons Macoboy, Molesworth and Solntseff in a coffee shop on June 22, 1950 was in no way binding on the Society; (4) that the transfer document was bad in law; (5) that since the document contained only six of the seven required signatures, there was no evidence that any Foundation existed; (6) that even if it did exist, the Foundation had violated its own constitution by not holding regular meetings and elections, improperly replacing a Trustee, and failing to pay stipulated salaries.

Leaving aside the legal aspect, he continued, the *spirit* of the 1950 decisions was to accumulate a collection of books and magazines and administer it by responsible individuals for the use of Australian fans. He submitted that the continuance of the Trust in its present form would not achieve this.

The Judge-advocate stated that, on the evidence, no Trust of the library had ever been validly constituted. An essential condition for the validity of Meeting 159 had not been complied with, and the status of minutes, in law, was such that, however confirmed or

ratified, they could not retrospectively validate a meeting which, in law, was never held. The transfer document was defective because it did not contain any words which conveyed property to trustees for the benefit of a specific class of persons.

"I am inclined to believe that all the property, the subject of this Inquiry, is still the property of the original donors," he declared. "We have before us a practical, and not a legal, problem. We are to do certainly as nearly as possible what the donors intended."

To this end, he said, the Futurian Society should make completely new provisions for the control, ownership and administration of the library. The Society should amend its Constitution and Rules to ensure legal ownership of the library, and provide authority for a librarian to administer the library on the Society's behalf.

These recommendations came before the Futurian Society early in the New Year, and, as we shall see, were acted upon. The Society was, inevitably, criticised for the action it had taken, the Inquiry being described in one quarter as "a trial of the trustees", in another as "the rape of the Foundation". The facts, however, are incontrovertible, and a glance at the transcript will show that no person was "on trial": the Inquiry confined itself to questions of law. There may have been other solutions, and the question was - as Mr. Hilbery stated - "a practical one." The Futurian Society resumed control of the Library early in 1953, and once again it was opened to general fan borrowing. The Librarian became responsible to a regular meeting body, with regularly elected officers. The future alone could determine whether the move was beneficial to fandom.

The recommendation made at the First Convention, that Australia should be represented at the 10th Anniversary World Convention, to be held in Chicago on August 30 - 31 and September 1, had been adopted by the Futurian Society. At first, it was hoped to send either a short film, or a series of slides, accompanied by a tape-recording. This, however, proved too expensive, and eventually the Society decided to make a double-sided 12 in recording. This was cut at the Chas. E. Blank studios on Friday, August 8, and airmailed to America, the total cost being 3.14.0 pounds. The Society was dismayed to hear later that the record had arrived damaged, and was not played at Chicago.

In the last quarter of 1952, the Society turned more attention to the Second Australian Convention. Haddon reported that 3,000 circulars would be printed for insertion in a British reprint edition of *ASTOUNDING*. Nicholson reported that a large number of circulars has been sent to professional and fan publishers, and organisations, overseas. Haddon reported that the Woollahra Golf Club had been booked for the cocktail party, the G.U.O.O.F. Hall for the Saturday (12.30 to 11 p.m.), and the Bridge Club for Sunday. Convention charges were settled at a guinea for the party; 10/- for the Convention. Changes were made in the Convention Committee, Haddon taking over the Treasurer and the Booklet, Don Lawson the Films and Auction, and Stone local fan publicity.

During the year, Les Raethel, Jack Leggett and Christine Davison had joined the Futurian Society, while Roy Williams, Norma Hemming, David Cohen, Lex Banning, Ian Driscoll and Wm. D. Veney had resigned. On December 30, membership stood at nineteen. Fees were increased to two guineas a year on November 24.

Meanwhile, another fan group had become active in Sydney. This was the North Shore Futurian Society, formed by M. A. Bos and J. G. Crawford shortly after the First Convention. Composed mainly of younger fans, the group received considerable help in the early stages from Wm. D. Veney. Only one meeting of the club was held in 1952, attended by eight members. Bos was elected President, and G. W. Hubble Vice-President. On the Library side, however, rapid progress was achieved; starting on April 1, with only four borrowers and 34 books and magazines, it had twelve borrowers and 50 items by June; 49 borrowers and 200 items in October and 63 borrowers and 250



items by the end of the year. In October, N.S.F.S. produced the first issue of its NOTESHEET, a single roneod f'cap sheet, and plans were prepared for a club magazine, TERRIFIC. In Bos' words, "Somewhere along the line the club and library merged".

In the latter half of 1952, activities in other States began to take substantial form. In Melbourne, Race Mathews and Bob McCubbin organised regular fortnightly gatherings of fans at each others' homes, until their numbers grew so large - no less than seventeen turning up at McCubbin's home one night - that it became necessary to find public premises. At a meeting held at Mathews'

caused Stone to raise membership fees to 5/- a year, still only a nominal charge. The administration had increased to such proportion that in July Stone had appointed Lyell Crane as Secretary, mainly to assist with correspondence, and then elevated himself to President.

As activity grew in Victoria and South Australia, he appointed Race Mathews local secretary in Melbourne, and Ian Moyes local secretary in Adelaide.

On an Australia-wide front, fan activity was building up its tempo as 1952 drew to a close.

(Continued next issue)



Bryning, Veney and Mustchin.

home, attended by McCubbin, Marshall MacLennan, Gordon Kirby and Dick Jenssen, it was decided to form the Melbourne Science Fiction Group, a loose sort of organisation analogous to the Thursday Night group in Sydney. Meetings began at Vals' Coffee Lounge on August 14, and continued each week until a roll-up of nineteen forced a further move to the basement of the Oddfellows' Hall in Latrobe Street on November 14. Among the new active members of the group were Leo Harding, Mervyn Binns, and Ian Crozier. Early in the piece the Melbourne fans began a library, and film screenings were regularly given. As the year drew to a close, plans were being finalised for the publication of several fanzin

For many years, Queensland's sole voice had been that of Chas. S. Mustchin, veteran fan residing at Coolangatta. Early in 1952, however, Kevin Smith moved to nearby Ballina, and the two began working to stir up interest locally. Smith contacted Frank Bryning in Brisbane, who in turn contacted John Gregor, Harry Brook, G. R. Tafe, and other fans. The field was ripe for organisation when Wm. D. Veney left Tasmania in November and transferred his employment to Brisbane. There was a historic occasion on November 24, when Mustchin and Veney, who had been corresponding for 12 years, met for the first time at Bryning's home. Soon regular meetings were being held in Brisbane, and plans were considered for a library and a fanzine. Neither Brisbane nor Melbourne, however, got into full swing until early in 1953.

In Adelaide, several new fans had come to light, among whom Ian Moyes and Mrs. J. Joyce were the most active.

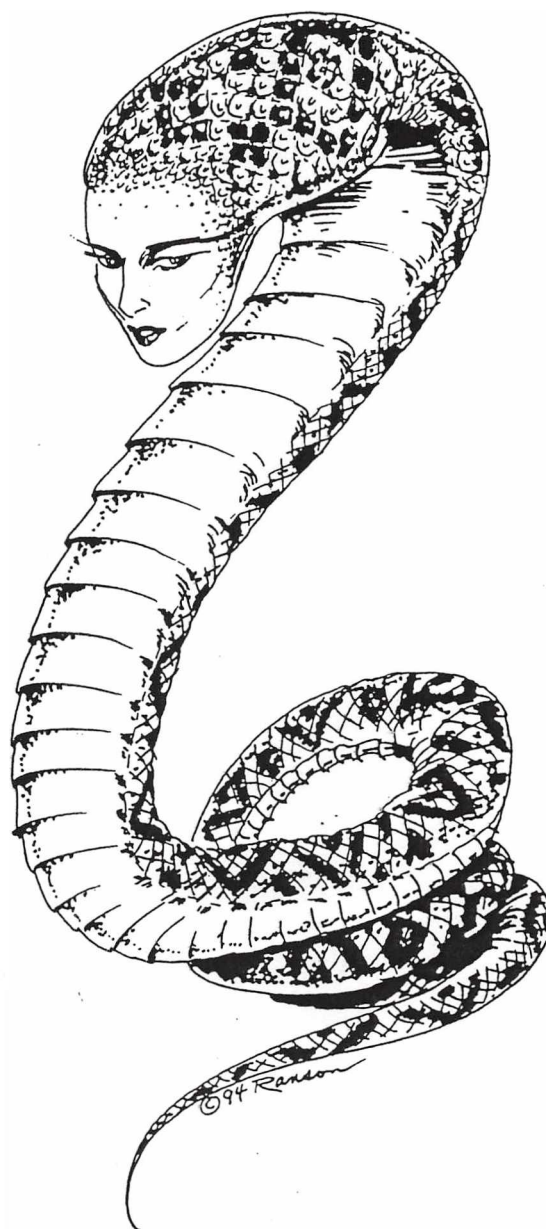
Throughout the year, membership had more than doubled in the national organisation, Australian Science Fiction Society. The actual breakdown in figures is:

January	62	June
February	70	August
April	82	November
May	93	December

Graham Stone had continued publication of STOPGAP on a fairly regular monthly basis, the last issue (#11) appearing in November. This was followed, in December, by A LETTER FROM SYDNEY, in a 3 pp. folded f'cap roneod format. The demise of STOPGAP, however, heralded a new publication in 1953.

During 1952, the increased circulation of STOPGAP, had c

[Photos and additional footnotes (in *italics*) courtesy of Graham Stone]





# A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM 1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

## CHAPTER FIVE.

In the first quarter of 1953 the Futurian Society of Sydney was largely occupied with the implementation of the recommendations of the Futurian Court of Inquiry. The library recovered from the Australian Fantasy Foundation had to be protected and preserved both legally and physically. The Society's Constitution had to be amended in various ways to make certain it would always exercise control over the library, and the physical tasks of collecting it, cataloguing it, determining who were and who were not borrowers, and putting it back into operation, had to be carried out. Finally, at Meeting #187 (23 March 1953) Les. Raethel was elected Librarian, and with the assistance of Martin and the co-operation of Haddon, the library was put into operation at the Thursday Night social meetings in April.

Here souvenir booklets, copies of S.F. NEWS, VERTICAL HORIZONS and UGH were distributed, and exhibits shown by the A.S.F.S., the North Shore Futurian Society, and Futurian Press. Master of Ceremonies for the afternoon was F.S.S. Director Ken Martin. Messages were received from Tom Cockcroft, Eric Russell, Frank Bryning and Harry Brunen.

Speakers were Vol Molesworth ("Science Fiction as a Development of Modern Literature"), R. D. Nicholson ("The Historical Development of Science Fiction"), P. Glick and G. R. Meyer ("Science in Science Fiction") and G. B. Stone ("Fandom").

Afternoon tea was provided by the Vertical Horizons Group, headed by Miss Simmons.

On Saturday night, a programme of films was screened by Don Lawson.

On Sunday morning, an auction of some 200 books and magazines was conducted by Don Lawson.

The formal business session was held on Sunday afternoon. A professional stenographer, Miss Woodlands, was hired to take down reports and motions. Reports were delivered on A.S.F.S. (Stone), F.S.S. (Molesworth), N.S.F.S. (Veney), Melbourne (Crozier), Brisbane (Veney), Adelaide (Mrs Moyes), the F.S.S. Library and the Thursday Night meetings (Raethel), VERTICAL HORIZONS (Miss Simmons), FORERUNNER (Nicholson) and Auctions and Films (Lawson). There was also a



## SECOND CONVENTION

Concurrent with this, planning had been proceeding for the Second Australian Convention, to be held over the weekend May 1-2-3. Once again circulars were inserted in an issue of ASTOUNDING, and publicity was obtained in several U.S. and British magazines. Considerable publicity was also provided by Australian fan magazines.

As a result, 84 people attended the Convention. These included delegates from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania, and from country areas of N.S.W., including Katoomba, Newcastle, and Woolongong. The Convention began on the Friday night, May 1. This was attended by about 38 people and proved a very enjoyable social evening. On Saturday morning a preliminary rally was held at the Sydney Bridge Club, and in the afternoon the Convention proper got underway at the G.U.O.O.F. Hall in Castlereagh St.

report on "Operation Fantast", an international commercial venture, by David Cohen, about which more will be said later.

During the business session, three motions were carried unanimously:

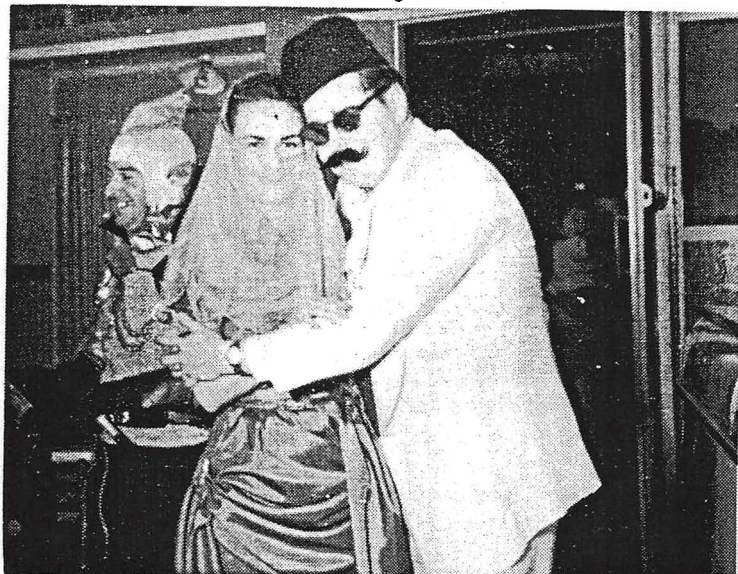
- 1) That a collection of Australian professional and amateur science fiction publications be despatched to the next US Convention;
- 2) That a Third Convention be held in Sydney in 1954; and
- 3) that one person be appointed by the F.S.S. to organise the Convention.

On Sunday night, a further programme of films was screened by Don Lawson.

On the whole, the Convention was a considerable success. It had accomplished its main aim, to bring together



fans from all over Australia, and to report to them what each section was doing. It was, however, marred by two factors: very bad weather, and some lack of organisation.



LEGGETT, GILES, GLICK

members of the Convention organising Committee. He claimed that the Woollahra Golf Club had been booked in January, that its manager had said no cash deposit was necessary to confirm



UNKNOWN & LYELL CRANE



FINCH, HEMMING, MELLOR



MELLOR, LAURIE GILES, LEGGETT

It had been decided to hold the cocktail party on the Friday night at Woollahra Golf Club, and 42 tickets had been sold at one guinea each. At the last minute, it was discovered that the booking had not been made, and the venue was hastily transferred to the Chiswick Gardens, at a financial loss. The opening arrangements on both Saturday and Sunday mornings had also been unsatisfactory.

Reporting on the Convention in a Melbourne fan magazine, Veney wrote: "The morning session on Saturday was a very dismal affair. Apparently all the work had been left to Arthur Haddon, and when he failed to make an appearance the whole Convention came to a halt."

The matter was discussed at Meeting #189 of the Futurian Society, held on May 4. The Liaison Officer (Haddon) said he had great difficulty in communicating with the other

the booking, and that the manager had subsequently cancelled the booking despite his promise.

"Communication" is a relation involving two parties, and Haddon's complaint that committee members failed to get in touch with him, was also invoked by some of the committee themselves who claimed Haddon had failed to get in touch with them. It should be remembered that Haddon had been the last Librarian of the Foundation, and that during and after its dissolution, he had been personally antagonistic to several Sydney fans. Whatever the reason, there had obviously been breakdown of communication among the people given responsibility for organising the Convention, with the results which Veney and others hostile to the Futurian Society criticised.

To avoid a recurrence of this, the Society at its 190th meeting (25 May 1953) appointed Walter Judd as Organiser of



the 1954 Convention, with power to co-opt his own committee. He was also required to submit regular progress reports to the Society. It was decided that the Third Australian Convention should be held over the Easter weekend in 1954.

In discussing the financial outcome of the Convention just held, the question was raised of the 15 pounds which had been advanced by the Thursday Night "group fund" towards Convention expenses. Should this be repaid? Molesworth pointed out that the Futurian Society had organised the Thursday Night meetings and both Conventions, and if any of those had been a financial failure the Society would have had to foot the bill. Raethel said he regarded himself as custodian of the Thursday Night takings and he did not regard the Futurian Society as being entitled to access to the money.

Throughout the year, Thursday Night meetings had been held at the Sydney Bridge Club the average attendance being 31, with a maximum of 46 on May 21. It was seen that if such numbers continued to attend, larger premises would have to be found. At the same time, the Futurian Society proper was notified that it would no longer rent the G.U.O.O.F. board-room for meetings, as the space was required by the owners. It was decided to look for new premises in which both the formal Society meetings and the informal Thursday Night gatherings could be held.

At the 192nd meeting of the Society (28 July 1953) the following were elected:

Director:	W. Molesworth
Vice-Director:	P. Burke.
Treasurer:	I. Raethel
Secretary:	D. Lawson
Asst. Sec:	Miss R. Simmons

The Director appointed B. Finch public relations officer, L. Raethel manager of the Thursday Night social gatherings, and re-affirmed the appointment of W. Judd as Convention organiser.

Meanwhile, the search for premises had gone on, and an offer had been received from a Darlinghurst tailor, Mr. Neil Eady, to make available an attractive clubroom on Monday and Thursday nights and all day Saturday, for six guineas per week. At a special meeting (#196) held on October 19 it was unanimously decided by the 18 present to accept this offer.

The new clubroom at McIlwraith's Chambers, Taylor Square, was officially opened on Thursday, December 3, with an attendance of 43. The premises contained a lock-up section for the library, a kitchenette, notice-boards on the walls, and a number of tables and chairs. It was gaily painted and modernly furnished.

At the last meeting of the year (#199, held on 23 December 1953) Raethel resigned from his positions as Librarian and Clubroom Manager because of lack of time. Mrs. Laura Molesworth was elected Librarian, Miss L. Giles, and Messrs. W. Judd, Brian Finch, Don Lawson, J. Earls and Alan South had increased membership to 24.

Membership in the Australian Science Fiction Society climbed steadily throughout 1953. At the end of 1952, Graham Stone had written off the deficit resulting from running the organisation largely out of his own pocket, apart from the nominal 5/- per annum subscription. In March, 1953, this was increased to 10/- per year, which entitled members to receive, post free, copies of Rex Meyer's SF REVIEW, FUTURIAN SOCIETY NEWS and VERTICAL HORIZONS as well as A.S.F.S. circulars and newsletters. By the end of 1953, membership had risen to 150, with members in the A.C.T., six States, and New Zealand.

Over the weekend, August 8-9, the First Interstate S.F. Conference had been held at Albury. It was attended by six Sydney and five Melbourne fans, with Albury fan John

O'Shaughnessy as host. This conference was very successful because of the enthusiasm of those attending. Reports were given on various activities in Sydney and Melbourne, and suggestions made for the 1954 Convention.

Activity in Melbourne grew steadily throughout 1953. The Melbourne Science Fiction Group, with McGubbin as Chairman enrolled 58 members, of whom about 15 turned up each week to the Thursday Night gatherings at the Oddfellows' Hall, where the library was open for borrowing, auctions were held and films were shown. Mervyn Binns, Dick Jennsen, Race Mathews, Leo Harding and Ian Crozier formed the Amateur Fantasy Publications of Australia (AFPA) and by pooling their resources, purchased a duplicator and supplies. The group's newsletter, which had been produced irregularly by McCubbin, was taken over, completely remodelled and produced by Ian Crozier under the title of ETHERLINE.

ETHERLINE appeared in a roneod folded foolscap format, beginning with 12 pages and growing to 22, fortnightly for the rest of the year. Containing news, reviews, articles, and occasionally fiction and verse, ETHERLINE was the best roneo publication ever produced by an Australian fan. It was also the longest-lived, bringing out its 100th issue 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  years later.

Harding and Jennsen produced PERHAPS, a roneod 4to journal, the first issue (February) containing 28 pages, the second (May) 48 pages, featuring mainly science fiction. Race Mathews produced BACCHANALIA, identical in format to PERHAPS, but devoted to fantasy. The first issue (April) contained 30 pages. Appearing in alternate months, the two magazines were intended to be complimentary. Leo Harding produced a roneod 4to publication entitled WASTEBASKET, with the editorial slogan: "We print what others throw out". Bruce Heron and Kevin Wheelahan produced another roneod 4to-sized journal, QUESTION MARK, bringing the total of AFPA magazines to five.

During August, discussion were held to place all AFPA publications on a regular schedule, to avoid overlapping of material and publication dates. The outcome was that the AFPA was reconstituted, with Binns, Wheelahan and Crozier full members, McLelland and Heron associate members. The AFPA would continue to publish ETHERLINE and QUESTION MARK, the other publications reverting to the care of their authors.

As the year drew to a close, the steady growth of activities indicated that a larger clubroom and a permanent home for the library was needed. Binns suggested that his garage could be converted for this use. It was decided to advertise in the newspapers for suitable premises.

In Adelaide, strictly informal meetings were held every second Sunday at the home of Mrs. Joyce, with an average of 10 fans attending. The library grew during 1953 to 620 items.

In Brisbane, the pattern of fan growth was the same as it had been in Sydney and Melbourne. On Saturday, February 14, a meeting of twelve fans was held at the home of Frank Bryning, including Ted Butt on a visit from Newcastle. The group decided to meet regularly each Thursday night at a coffee lounge in Queen St. A library was started, and Veney began publishing UGH, an irregular 4to roneo magazine of news and comment.

In Canberra, however, activity was begun on formal lines. On November 8, the Futurian Society of Canberra held its first meeting, with five members joining. Geoffrey R. Bennett was elected Director, and Peter Jones Secretary-Treasurer. The meeting decided to adopt the constitution of the F.S.S.

In Sydney, Nicholson had produced the second issue of FORERUNNER. The cost of the semi-professional magazine, however, was making its mark: although still excellently prepared, the second issue contained only 44 pages, as against 80 in the first issue. Between January and June,

1953, Graham Stone published SCIENCE FICTION NEWS on a monthly basis. This was a four page newsletter, printed by photolithography; the first fanzine to present good photographic illustrations. The seventh issue did not appear until 1954.

The big event of 1954 was the Third Australian Convention, which was scheduled to be held over the Easter Weekend (April 16-18) in Sydney. At the first meeting in 1954 of the sponsoring body, the Futurian Society of Sydney (#200, held on January 4) a number of questions were asked about plans for the Convention. As the Organiser (W. Judd) was not present, and had not been seen for the past few meetings, it was moved Lawson, seconded Martin, that "a transcript of part of the proceedings of the meeting be forwarded to Mr. Judd for his benefit, and if necessary, guidance." The motion was carried by five votes to four (Finch abstaining).

At the following meeting (8 February 1954) the Director inquired if the transcript had been sent to Mr. Judd, and was informed by Asst. Secretary Miss Simmons that it had not. The Director also asked Secretary Lawson if the agenda for the meeting had been sent to members at least seven days beforehand. Lawson replied that this had not been done.

Later on in the meeting, Judd asked what was to be done when officers of the Society failed to carry out directions - was the Society just going to accept this, or could something be done to see that legitimate instructions would be observed? The Director replied that if an executive officer was not prepared to carry out his duties, he should not have accepted nomination for election in the first place. He added that there were two reasons why a fan might seek a seat on the Executive Council - one, a sincere desire to accept responsibility and work for fandom; and two, a desire for self-aggrandisement.

Nicholson then moved, seconded Dillon, that the entire Executive Council be asked to tender their resignations. Nicholson said the policies of the executive over the previous six months called for censure. He claimed that the executive had "interfered with, attempted to dominate, control, and bleed of funds, every activity related to science fiction which Sydney had seen." Nicholson also claimed that "the Society's veteran members" had "systematically maneuvered inexperienced individuals into key positions, then as often as not caused them humiliation by direct and indirect attacks on their conduct, and also on their character." Nicholson also criticised the executive for "laying out what is for this Society an enormous sum of money on a pathetic little room".

Molesworth said that after hearing Nicholson's explanation of the import of his motion, he could not remain in the Chair, and asked Cohen to act as Chairman while the motion was debated.

Stone moved, seconded Judd, the amendment that the Society should ask for the resignations of the executives individually, and consider them in turn. "I submit there is no justification for the impeachment of all of the officers: I have every confidence in some of them, and do not see why all should be censured because of the defection of some", he said.

The chairman ruled that Stone's amendment was out of order, and discussion on the motion proceeded for one hour and ten minutes. Unfortunately, the debate was not recorded by the Secretary. Finally the motion was carried 10 in favour, 5 against, Dunk recording a negative vote, and Miss Simmons abstaining. Each executive handed in a written resignation from office, Burke also resigning from the Society.

Of what crimes had the executive been guilty? The key words in Nicholson's attack are "interference" and "bleeding of funds". He was referring to the taking-over of the Library of the Society from the Australian Fantasy Foundation, and the transfer of the Thursday Night meeting from the Bridge Club to

the new clubroom. Perhaps also some fans had been alarmed by the Society's anxiety that it had not heard from the Convention organizing committee, and supposed that the Society intended to "take it over", too. Some members of the executive had also been critical of fans' failure to support the new clubroom, and this was resented.

The Society proceeded to elect a new executive, as follows:

Director:	V. Molesworth
Vice-Director:	W. Judd
Treasurer:	L. Raethel
Secretary:	B. Finch
Asst. Sec:	N. Cohen

The Director then appointed Thurston public relations officer.

In the last section it was mentioned that a former F.S.S. member, David Cohen, had set up an Australian agency for an international commercial science fiction organisation, "Operation Fantast". This organisation bought and sold books and magazines, and arranged subscriptions to periodicals. For some months Cohen had carried on his business at the Society's Thursday Night gatherings. Cohen was approached by several dissatisfied fans, including Nicholson, and agreed to pay the rent for a new Thursday Night gathering at the Sydney Bridge Club. The breakaway group held its first meeting on April 1, 1954, and continued to meet on Thursday Nights.

At the 203rd meeting of the Futurian Society, held on April 5, Purdy moved, seconded Stone, that "the organisers of the recent walkout be banned from the F.S.S. clubroom."

Nicholson, who had allowed himself to become unfinancial, attended the meeting as a visitor. He claimed that six fans had formed the breakaway group because one of them had been repeatedly insulted at Taylor Square, and because the North Shore Futurian Society had "met with every possible hinderance."

The North Shore Futurian Society had been set up to service fans on the north side of the harbour: later it had changed this policy and had gone into open competition with the Futurian Society as a library operator. It had set up its library in the F.S.S. clubroom, and had traded in competition with its host's library only a few feet away. The clubroom manager had asked the N. Shore Librarian to take down a large advertising sign and to occupy a position less central in the clubroom. The N. Shore members then decided to join Cohen's gathering.

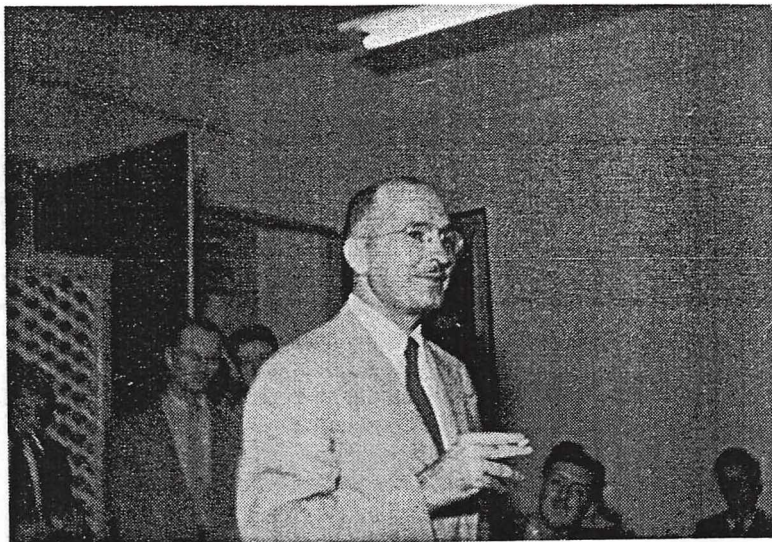
After nearly every member of the Futurian Society had spoken against Purdy's motion to ban the breakaway group leaders, the motion was defeated by 10 votes to 2, with three abstentions.

Whatever the justice or injustice of the matter, the fact of the breakaway movement sounded the death-knell of the Futurian Society's new clubroom. It had been opened in the expectancy that at least 60 people would visit it each week, the breakeven cost being 61 visitors at 2/- per head to meet the weekly rental of six guineas. Even before the breakaway, the average weekly attendance had been only 50, the breakdown being nine on Mondays, 32 on Thursdays, and nine on Saturdays. Visits to the clubroom by Dr. Blatt, from the University of Sydney on February 25, and by U.S. author Robert A. Heinlein on February 25, had attracted 37 and 58 fans, respectively, but it was obvious the Society could not continue to run the clubroom without a subsidy from its annual subscriptions, library income, and other revenue. With a rival clubroom operating elsewhere in the city, the breakdown requirement of 61 visitors per week was most unlikely.

The breakaway movement had also been well timed, as the Third Australian Convention was little for than a fortnight away, and new fans attracted by it would now find two separate Thursday Night meetings competing for their patronage.



The Convention was the first to be held in fine weather. It attracted 95 people, including delegates from the A.C.T., Victoria and Queensland, and from Newcastle, Cessnock and Tamworth in N.S.W. The Convention began with a "get-together" at Federation Hall, Phillip Street, Sydney, on Saturday morning, April 17. Displays were erected by the Convention



Heinlein in clubroom.

Committee, the F.S.S. Library, the A.S.F.S., and the fan publishing group in Melbourne. Fifty-five people attended this session.

The afternoon session, chaired by Rex Meyer, took the form of a symposium. Addresses were given by N. Cohen ("Science Fiction Calvalcade", prepared by Stone), S. Dunk ("The Future of the Machine"), H. Brunen ("The Future of Man") and V. Molesworth ("The Future of Culture"). Mrs. Gore and Messrs. Glick and Crane then commented on the preceding speakers. D. Lawson then spoke on the film as a medium for science fiction. This session was attended by 66.

On Saturday night, 60 attended a film programme screened by Lawson.

On the Sunday morning, 37 attended the auction of books and magazines conducted by B. Purdy.

The business session, held on Sunday afternoon, was chaired by Molesworth and attended by 48 people. Reports were presented on the F.S.S. (Flnch), Melbourne activities (McCubbin), Newcastle (Butt), A.S.F.S. (Crane) and N.S.F.S. (Hubble).

In reporting on the A.S.F.S., Crane said it had about 180 members and produced a mailing each month. However, as fan groups were growing up in other cities, the purpose for which the national organisation had been established had to a considerable extent been achieved, and the need for the A.S.F.S. to continue in its present form had become less urgent. In the discussion, Glick suggested that the F.S.S. should take over the A.S.F.S. and finance it, perhaps with help from Melbourne and other clubs and then appoint Stone to run it, as it had appointed Judd to run the Convention. Haddon moved, seconded Bos, that the A.S.F.S. organisers settle or plan a new policy of action, present it to an F.S.S. meeting, and the course decided on to be notified through the usual F.S.S. channels. This was carried unanimously.

It was then moved Haddon, seconded Bos, that the N.S.F.S. be responsible for the organisation of the 1955 Convention. Haddon said this would "relieve the F.S.S. of some of its burden" and give the younger fans a chance to show what they could do. Bos added that the N.S.F.S. "had the help of some members of the F.S.S. who had left". After discussion, the motion was carried, 22 in favour, 14 against.

Nicholson then moved that the Convention advise the science fiction groups in Sydney to settle their differences with regard to the locale of their separate meetings and that representatives get together to discuss this. When this was seconded by Glick, the Melbourne delegation obtained permission to withdraw as it was surely a domestic matter for Sydney fans. After brief discussion, the motion was carried by 18 votes to 2.

On Sunday night, a live three-act play, *THAT'S THE WAY IT GOES*, written by Norma Hemming, was produced by Mrs. N. Gore. It was an outstanding success. Two tape-recorded plays were presented by Molesworth, and three films screened by Lawson.

At Meeting #204 of the F.S.S. (3 May 1954) Judd presented his report on the Convention. He said it had achieved 1) greater numbers; 2) greater profits; and 3) less fiction, than either of the previous two Conventions.

Throughout the weekend, Bill Turnbull and Terry Clarke had kept two tape recorders running, and the tapes had been edited by Molesworth into a 50 minute documentary tape. At the meeting, the tape was unanimously endorsed as the official precis.

The meeting was then read a letter from Burke, who complained that an advertisement submitted by him had not been included in the official Convention handbook. Judd explained that the copy had arrived too late. This explanation was forwarded by the Society to Burke.

At Meeting #205 (7 June 1954) a constitutional amendment was proposed that a council of seven be elected annually to carry out the affairs of the Society. Fifteen members voted for the motion (More than 50% of those entitled to vote), so the amendment was adopted.

The meeting's attention was then directed to the continuing financial loss being incurred by the clubroom. It was moved Turnbull, seconded Bainen, that henceforward the clubroom be opened only on Monday and Thursday nights. The first step in the ultimate abandonment of the clubroom had been taken.

Between April 1 (when the breakaway group opened its rival meeting) and June 26, the average weekly attendance at the Taylor Square clubroom was 19 on Monday, 20 on Thursday and six on Saturday - an average total of 45 per week, or an average deficit of 32/- per week.

From the first week in July, 1954, the proprietor (Mr. Eedy) agreed to charge 4 pounds a week for use of the premises only on Monday and Thursday nights, which would require a weekly attendance of 40 visitors at 2/- per head to break even. In fact, the attendance book indicates that the average attendance between July 5 and December 30, 1954, was 9 on Monday and 14 on Thursday - an average attendance of 23 per week, a weekly deficit of 38/-, a total loss over the six months of 47-10-0.

During the whole of this period, the breakaway group continued to meet at the Bridge Club. While no accurate figures are available, it was reported in August that "every Thursday Night sees a roll-up of around 20 or so."<sup>1</sup> Although 2/6 per head was charged, this was not sufficient to cover rent and supper, and the deficit was made good by David Cohen from his trading activities. In August, the charge was raised to 3/6 per head.

In July, the group began publishing a weekly round newsletter, *SCANSION*. A different editor wrote the contents each week, the editors during 1954 being Burke, Dillon, Norma Williams, Earls, Nicholson, Duggan, Haddon and Veney.

<sup>1</sup> *SCANSION*, #7.



SCANION quickly became a vehicle for attack on the Futurian Society of Sydney.

At the Futurian Society's 207th meeting (5 July 1954) Nicholson entered the Taylor Square premises at 9.25 pm. The Director declared that the meeting to be *in camera*, and requested Nicholson to leave, which he did. At the same meeting Lawson was expelled for failure to hand over minutes



TURNBULL - 3rd CONVENTION

which he had taken while Secretary.

The Executive Council for 1954-55 was elected, with Stone becoming Director, and McKenna, Purdy, Raethel, South, Thurston, and Turnbull Councillors.

The minutes of meetings held in the latter half of 1954 are handwritten and almost illegible. Only nine members attended the last meeting of the year, held on November 2. It was reported that the Treasurer, Raethel, had left Sydney for Ballina, and had taken the Society's account books with him. Brunen was elected a Councillor to replace Raethel, and a new member, Miss Pat Smith, became Treasurer. Since F.S.S. NEWS had been appearing erratically because of lack of help, it was suggested that more vigorous counter-publicity be engaged in by the Society to offset "the constant stream of abuse against the Society, most of it incorrect." Nothing came of this suggestion, however.

In Melbourne, group meetings continued throughout the year at the Oddfellows' Hall, newspaper advertising having failed to discover alternative premises. Bob McCubbin remained Chairman, the average weekly attendance being 12. ETHERLINE continued to appear every fortnight, varying in the number of pages up to 44, still excellently laid out and duplicated. In August, Crozier announced that Wheelahan had left AFPA due to pressure of other interests, and that

QUESTION MARK (which Wheelahan had edited) would appear on a quarterly basis. AFPA had also purchased BACCHANALIA from Mathews, and it would be published yearly. Late in December, Crozier announced that ETHERLINE would be taken over and published by the Melbourne Science Fiction Group, and that a statement of policy would be made shortly by the new publisher, McCubbin, for the Group.

In Brisbane, the increasing numbers forced the group to give up meeting in a coffee inn, and venue was changed to the home of George and Betty Tafe. About 15 fans turned up regularly.

The Futurian Society of Canberra held five meetings during 1954, all at the home of Director Bennett. It was decided that the Society would not seek its own clubroom until membership increased. A sub-committee consisting of Bennett, Arthur Porter and David Kerr was elected in May to arrange a series of film nights, and later six members of the Society visited Mt. Stromlo Observatory.

In Adelaide, the fortnightly Sunday afternoon gatherings continued to be held at the home of Mrs. Joyce, but on May 19 the Adelaide Science Fiction Group was officially created, the constitution of the Futurian Society of Canberra being adopted with slight modification to suit local conditions. Ron Gum was elected President, J. Johnson Vice-President, Mrs. Joyce Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian, M. Downes Financial Officer, and D. Walsh and O.D. Denton assistant librarians.

During 1954, Graham Stone published only three issues of SCIENCE FICTION NEWS, dated January, March and May.

In Tasmania, Donald H. Tuck produced A HANDBOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY, a oneed foolscap book of 154 pages presenting in alphabetical order information on most of the writers of science fiction, books, magazines, and to some extent fans and fandom.

During the year, Graham Stone, who was opposed to the North Shore Futurian Society organising the Fourth Australian Convention, had circulated a oneed newsletter, headed "No Convention in 1955". This created hostility towards Stone and the F.S.S., and drew scathing comments in SCANSION and ETHERLINE.

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# A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM 1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

## CHAPTER SIX.

Shortly after the Third Australian Convention, F.S.S. members P. Glick and Lorelei Giles had married and gone to live in Melbourne, Glick seeking six months "leave of absence" from the Society, his wife allowing herself to become unfinancial. The couple returned to Sydney to live, and attended the first meeting of the F.S.S. held in 1955, #211 on February 6. Glick reported that the whole attitude was deplored in Melbourne, and urged the Society to support the Fourth Australian Convention, which the North Shore Futurian Society was planning for the Easter Weekend, March 18-19-20. As the F.S.S. was in an unenviable financial position, it might pay to "turn the other cheek" and seek reconciliation with the breakaway group.

Molesworth said Glick had been absent too long to be "au fait" with current events in Sydney. The breakaway group had rented the Society's earlier meeting place, had unlawfully used the word "Futurian", and had vilified the Society in its publications. He denied that there was a feud between the two organisations, and claimed that the whole affair had been carried forward by the animosity of the people at the Bridge Club.

Glick said people had "heard" they would not be accepted to the Society if they were seen with regular attendees at the Bridge Club. It was moved Glick, seconded Brunen, that "this Society does not oppose any Convention being held in 1955 by the N.S.F.S. and will take no action against any member supporting the above Convention." This was carried by seven votes to three (two abstaining). A motion by Molesworth, seconded by Mason-Cox, that "the executive publish a list of persons banned from the clubroom or F.S.S. membership" was carried by a similar majority.

In the week between this and Meeting #212 (13 February 1955) Glick approached a number of former F.S.S. members and urged them to re-offer their support. The result was that 21 fans turned up to Meeting #212. The influx alarmed some of the executive council, who thought Glick was trying to "stack" the meeting.

The Chairman (A. South) declared that the meeting was to be held *in camera*, and that only financial members could remain. Glick moved suspension of standing orders to permit nominations for membership to be received. Martin attempted to second the motion, but was not permitted to do so because his membership status was in doubt. The motion was then seconded by Leggett, and carried by eight votes to two (one abstention).

Applications for membership were then submitted by F. Chaplin, N. Hemming, B. Gore, B. Finch, and Mrs. Gore.

The first application, (Chaplin) was refused by one vote. The next (Mrs. Gore) was accepted by one vote. On the next two applications (Gore and Finch) seven votes were recorded for and against, and the Chairman cast his vote in the negative, refusing the applications.

Three more applications for membership were then submitted (Mrs. L. Molesworth, Miss N. Hemming, and K. Martin), each of which was successful.

Miss Smith's resignation from the position of Treasurer was then accepted, and Mason-Cox elected in her place.

Molesworth said the meeting had been called to consider the club's financial position. The clubroom for the past three months had shown a decided loss, the average attendance being ten. "The problem now arises whether a move out of these premises is called for", he said.

Glick said many of the old members had ceased to support the club because of the feud it was contributing to against the Bridge Club group. "Many neutral members who have not specifically allied themselves with either group have been supporting the Bridge Club under the impression that, despite the odd publication SCANSION, it has taken little action against this Society, while this Society, via a banned list and threats of banning, has insulted many of these neutral members' friends. The only way we can get their support is to stop issuing a banned list," he said.

When the Chairman pointed out that there was no banned list, Glick replied that people had been banned in fact, whether or not any list was published. Mrs. Gore claimed that she had been shown a list by Stone on which were the names of Burke, Haddon, Veney, Nicholson, Bos, Hubble, two others, and her own name.

Glick said the Futurian Society, in his opinion, had been responsible for the split in Sydney fandom, and partly responsible for keeping the feud going. He believed that if the Society took the first step, the split could be ended, which would solve the Society's financial problems.

Molesworth moved, as a test motion, that the Society abandon its clubroom premises. This was seconded by Mason-Cox, and defeated by 10 votes to 2. Those present were urged to recruit new members and endeavour to bring old members back to support the clubroom.

Twenty people attended the next meeting, #213, on February 28, 1955. Applications for membership by Gore, Finch, E. Butt, Miss N. Williams and Mrs. Mason-Cox were all accepted unanimously. Glick moved that the Society elect a number of delegates to the Fourth Australian Convention to attempt to arrive at an amicable settlement of the differences with the Bridge Club group in open debate under the chairmanship of an impartial debate. This was seconded by Mrs. Glick.

Molesworth then informed the Meeting that on the previous Thursday night he had made a personal visit to the Bridge Club to apologise to the breakaway group and to invite them back. At a table near the doorway were seated Glick, David Cohen, and Finch. When asked who was in charge, Cohen had replied: "I am. I pay the rent and take full responsibility." Cohen then refused Molesworth permission to speak to the people at the Bridge Club, and three times ordered him off the premises.

Martin said the fact that Cohen was "something of a paranoid and had an intense personal dislike of Molesworth" was no an attack on the Futurian Society itself. Martin said Molesworth had contributed quite a stroke towards the healing of the feud by getting thrown out of the Bridge Club. "We now have reached the position where the Bridge Club is disgusted with the actions of their landlord, and we can now go on with a fair chance of healing this feud," he added.

It was pointed out that at the Third Australian Convention a motion had been passed at the request of Nicholson that a conference be held between the two segments to settle their differences. At the Futurian Society meeting immediately following the Convention, the secretary had been directed to write to the Bridge Club group asking where and

when they would like the conference to be held. No reply had been received.

The motion to send delegates to the Fourth Australian Convention was carried with 14 votes in favour, none against, and seven abstentions. At the following meeting (13 February) it was decided to send five delegates - Glick, Martin, Mason-Cox, Molesworth and Traeger.

Meanwhile, organisation of the Convention itself was being done principally by Arthur Haddon. The North Shore Futurian Society leaders - Hubble and Bos - had been criticised in SCANSION for failing to keep up a satisfactory library service at the Bridge Club, and had done little to arrange the Convention which their club had offered to organise.

The Convention was held at Dunbar House, Watson's Bay, over the weekend, March 18-19-20. It began with a fancy dress ball on the Friday night, attended by 42 people. On Saturday morning, about 30 attended a get-together at which original artwork from the British magazine NEBULA and NEW WORLDS was displayed.

The Saturday afternoon session was attended by 61 people. Dr. John Blatt spoke on "Science and Science Fiction" and Mr. John Spence on "Transportation in the Future". Guest of honour, British author A. Bertram Chandler and Dr. Blatt then answered questions from the floor. On Saturday night two full-length science fiction films were screened to an audience of 51.

Only about 20 fans turned up for the auction on Sunday morning. On the Sunday night Mrs. Gore's theatrical group, now styling themselves "The Arcturian Players", staged Norma Hemming's play, MISS DENTON'S DILEMMA, to an audience of 45.

The business session on Sunday afternoon was attended by 43 delegates, with Pat Burke in the Chair. Reports were presented on Melbourne Activities (J. Keating), Adelaide (Miss Finch), Brisbane (Veney) and Canberra (Molesworth). Butt reported that an organisation had been formed in the Newcastle-Cessnock area known as the Hunter Valley Futurian Society, but that it had ceased activity when he left Newcastle and John Jvile later left Cessnock. Miss Simmons, reporting on the Vertical Horizons group, said it was no longer in existence and publication of VERTICAL HORIZONS had ceased.

David Cohen then delivered a report in which he said he was "solely responsible" for the Thursday Night Bridge Club Group, which used premises provided by him. Asked by Glick if he would hand over control of these rooms to a committee of members, Cohen said he had no intention of doing so because he had borne the financial burden for over 12 months. He intended to run the clubroom as it suited him, and if people did not like it they need not attend. He added that certain people (whom he did not name) would never be welcome.

Ian Crozier, of Melbourne, was asked to take the chair, being a "neutral". Burke then moved, seconded Nicholson, that all organisations in Sydney disband within three to four weeks and that all their resources be put into a common pool. After considerable discussion, the motion was withdrawn. Molesworth moved, seconded Traeger, that the Convention agree that there shall be one club in Sydney. Veney then moved, seconded Nicholson, that the word "room" be inserted after "club" in the motion. The amendment was carried by 29 votes to 3, and as the motion by 29 votes to one. It was then resolved by 33 votes to one that a conference should be held in the F.S.S. Clubroom on Monday, April 4.

The attendance book of the Taylor Square clubroom shows that the conference was held, with Baldwin, Butt, Brunen, Mrs. Gore, Haddon, Norma Hemming, Hubble, Leggett, Mason-Cox and wife, Molesworth and wife, Nicholson, South, Thurston, Turnbull, Veney, and Norma Williams present. Unfortunately there are no written records of proceedings. The 31st issue of SCANSION (11 August 1955), edited by Burke, reported that

the meeting was "a dismal failure, marred by all the usual intolerance and clashes of personality that have wrecked Sydney fandom."

With the schism unhealed, the rival Thursday Night meetings continued in Sydney, with the inevitable result that on June 2, the Futurian Society was forced by lack of funds to leave the Taylor Square clubroom. The Library was moved to the home of Alan South.

The Bridge Club group was, however, also suffering from the schism. While Cohen continued to pay the rent, many of his supporters (including Nicholson, Burke, Veney and Haddon) no longer turned up, and by the end of 1955 attendance had fallen to six. Cohen took over the library of the North Shore Futurian Society, to run it as a business, and nothing more was heard of the Society (SCANSION, #33, 20 October 1955).

Twenty issues of SCANSION were published during the year, the editors being M. Baldwin, Burke, Earls, Fisher, Glick, Haddon, Hubble, Nicholson, R. Sebel, and Norma Williams.

The failure of the rival groups to reach agreement on April 4 prompted seven of the leading Sydney fans to form a new organisation, the Albion Futurian Society. At the inaugural meeting (10 April 1955), Arthur Haddon was elected Director, Vol Molesworth Secretary, and Neville Cohen Treasurer. The group continued to meet in members' homes throughout the year. It decided from the outset not to endeavour to recruit members, hire public premises, or publish a fanzine.

At the end of 1955, only nine members remained in the Futurian Society of Sydney. South was operating the library in his own home, but borrowing was slight. During the year Graham Stone published four issues of SCIENCE FICTION NEWS, in May, July, September and December.

Outside Sydney activities continued to flourish. In Melbourne, weekly meetings were held, averaging ten, and in October the group finally moved into its own premises at 168 Lennox St., Richmond. The library now had a permanent home. Throughout the year ETHERLINE continued its record-breaking run, appearing fortnightly under the editorship of Ian Crozier, and containing up to 44 pages an issue. ETHERLINE was now established as the news magazine of Australian fandom, featuring news from overseas and all centres of Australia as well as Victoria.

The Adelaide Science Fiction Group also continued to meet throughout the year. At the annual general meeting held on July 3, Norm Kemp was elected President, Dennis Walsh Vice-President, Mrs. Joyce Secretary, R. Kemp Treasurer, Hal Nicholson and Dennis Walsh Librarians, Margaret Finch secretary. The Library had grown to 1620 items.

The Brisbane Science Fiction Group also continued to meet throughout the year in the home of the Tates, meetings enlivened (and swollen) by visits by British author, Arthur C. Clarke.

The Futurian Society of Canberra held several meetings during 1955, these becoming more social gatherings than formal business sessions.

For 20 years Sydney had been the "hub" of Australian fandom, but after the internal disruption of 1954 and the failure to heal the breach in 1955, the initiative passed to the other capital cities and to Melbourne in particular.

For the next four years (1956-1959) the Futurian Society of Sydney was kept alive largely by the efforts of one person - Graham Stone. When South found he could no longer keep the library at his home, Stone moved it first to his own home, and then at his own expense rented an office in the city, where he installed the library and a duplicator. Stone spent the next few years slowly building up a group of library borrowers,



doing cataloguing and research, and issuing irregular newsletters and booklets. Issues of the quality SCIENCE FICTION NEWS appeared in May, September,<sup>1</sup> and November 1956; April, July, and October 1957; January, March, May, and October, 1958.

Meeting #217 of the Society was held in a coffee inn in Sydney on November 5, 1959 - the 20th anniversary of its establishment. There were only three members still financial - Stone, South, and Molesworth. Stone said that at the last meeting, held on December 14, 1955, the constitution had been amended to make three a quorum. He said that during the past four years he had made it his business to safeguard the property of the Society and to see that its name did not die out. He added that he had enrolled 66 associate members who used the library but had no right to vote. The meeting carried a resolution endorsing Stone's action. Molesworth was then elected Director, South Treasurer, and Stone Secretary-Librarian.

Under the constitution, a person who had completed 10 years' continuous membership automatically became a Life Member. Molesworth and Stone were qualified, and South became so in 1963.<sup>2</sup>

The Albion Futurian Society stopped holding formal meetings by the end of 1955, and turned into a group of friends visiting each other's homes.

Throughout the whole of this period, fans continued to meet at the Bridge Club on Thursday nights under the patronage of David Cohen. Only two issues of SCANSION appeared in 1955, one in January (edited by Royce Williams), the other in December (Michael J. Baldwin). Baldwin, assisted by Hubble, put out three issues of EXTANT, a poorly produced roneod foolscap magazine; and two new fans, Peter Jefferson and Roger Sebel, produced MC<sup>2</sup> in a folded foolscap format.

Melbourne had been given authority by the Third Australian Convention to organise the Fifth Convention in 1956. The date selected for the "Olympicon" was December 8 and 9, 1956. To raise funds, the organising committee decided to sell "registrations" for 10/- Aust, 7/6 stg., or \$1 USA, which entitled the subscriber to receive a badge, the Convention Booklet and the Convention Report.

At Easter, a gathering of fans was held in Canberra to discuss plans for the Convention. Those attending were Burke, Dillon, Molesworth and wife, Frederickson, Baldwin, Nicholson, Hubble and Fisher (from Sydney), Crozier, Latimer, Lyell, McCubbin and wife, McLelland, Mortimer, Salgram, Binns and Keating (Melbourne), and Bennett, Jones and Porter (Canberra).

Meetings of the Melbourne group continued throughout the year, but pressure of planning for the Convention made ETHERLINE fewer in pages and irregular in appearance, without departing from its high standard of layout and presentation. No Sydney news is found in these issues, and only occasional reports from Brisbane and Adelaide.

During 1956, the first overt sign of dissension occurred in the Melbourne group. Leo J. Harding published a roneod 4th fanzine, ANTIPODES, outside the AFPA group, and drew some criticism in ETHERLINE for some of his remarks.<sup>3</sup>

The Adelaide Science Fiction Group continued to meet during 1956, although with reduced numbers. The library, which had started with 183 items, had now climbed to 2113 items.

<sup>1</sup> *I should have given it up much earlier and gone back to a cheaper format, but it's easy to say that now. (G.S.)*

<sup>2</sup> *Later Laura Molesworth, Michael McGuinness and Ian Driscoll also became Life Members. (G.S.)*

<sup>3</sup> *Apparently the undesirables in the Melbourne group had been kept quiet. (G.S.)*

Annual elections resulted in Lyall Mason becoming President, Norm Kent Vice-President, Robin Kemp Treasurer, Mrs Joyce Secretary and Librarian, and Bob Simons Assistant Librarian.

The Fifth Australian Convention was held at Richmond Town Hall. No fewer than 147 had registered, the breakdown being 87 in Victoria, 24 in U.S.A., 19 in N.S.W., five from Queensland, four from Tasmania, two from South Australia, and five from elsewhere. Attendance ranged from 31 on Saturday morning, to 112 on Sunday evening.

On Saturday morning there was an inspection of displays put together by Mervyn Binns and Keith McLelland. In the afternoon, Chairman McCubbin introduced the Guest of Honour, Brisbane writer Frank Bryning, who spoke on "Some Things We Should Expect From Science Fiction". This was followed by Melbourne writer Wynne Whiteford on "Science Fiction", and Melbourne radio script-writer Harvey Blanks on "S.F. from a Radio View". On Saturday night Barry Salgram produced a play by Norma Hemming, BALANCE OF POWER.

Following the auction on Sunday morning, the Business Session was held in the afternoon. Reports were given on the Brisbane group (Bryning), Tasmania (Frank Hasler), South Australia (Mrs. Joyce), Melbourne (McCubbin) and AFPA. No reports were received from the Futurian Society of Sydney, the Sydney Bridge Club, the Futurian Society of Canberra, or West Australia.

Salgram moved, seconded Santos, that the next Convention be held in Melbourne in 1958. The motion was carried unanimously. Baldwin (Sydney) said that in his opinion there was no reasonable organisation in Sydney able to carry out the organising of the event.

On Sunday evening two feature films were screened.

In the issue of ETHERLINE reporting the Convention (#80) Crozier announced that there could be a break in publication until April, 1957, to give the editorial staff a holiday. When #81 did appear he announced that publication would in future be every three weeks instead of fortnightly.

Shortly after this, the Melbourne Science Fiction Club opened its doors at the St. James Building, in Little Collins Street. The club was to open on Tuesday and Thursday nights. The group had renovated the room, erected bookshelves, and moved its property from Lennox St., Richmond. Sydney's history was repeating itself in Melbourne.<sup>4</sup>

The Sixth Australian Convention was held at Richmond Town Hall, Melbourne, on April 5-6, 1958. This time 98 people registered, the actual attendance ranging from 30 on Saturday afternoon to 45 on Sunday night.

On Saturday morning an auction was held, and in the afternoon, Mr. Barry Clarke, of the Victorian Astronomical Society, spoke on "The Canals of Mars". Following his address, reports were received on Melbourne and Brisbane activities. McCubbin reported that about a dozen people were turning up regularly at the club, and there were about 30 others at irregular intervals. The core would be quite prepared to meet in each other's homes, if and when required, and thus evade the continual financial drain and worry of the clubroom, which was being kept open as a service to fans. Bryning reported that about five or six fans were meeting once a month in Brisbane, but nobody had the time to do any recruiting or organising.

No reports were received from other fan groups in Australia.

On Sunday, a barbecue was held.

<sup>4</sup> *Not really. They moved to a better location, and continued there for some years. (G.S.)*



Between 1959 and 1963 Graham Stone operated the Futurian Society of Sydney almost as a one-man band, although occasional help was contributed by Alan South and Kevin Dillon. In addition to opening the city office every Saturday afternoon for library borrowing, Stone carried out postal lending, published NOTES AND COMMENTS, library catalogues, and newsletters.

In August, 1963, Stone was offered a job in Canberra. Meeting #218 of the Society was held in a coffee inn on August

14, to confer Life Membership on South, and to elect Kevin Dillon to membership. Dillon agreed to look after the office and library when Stone departed for Canberra.

- Vol Molesworth -



#### HAPPIER TIMES:

Back Row: Bruce Perdy, Don Lawson, George Dovaston  
 2nd Row: Brian Finch, Graham Stone, John Earls, Lyell Crane  
 Front Row: Jack Leggett, Clive Mellor, Lorain Gyles, Kevin Dillon

LORAIN