

Poughkeepsie, NY
November 15, 1964

An Open Letter to:

Anthony Boucher
Harlan Ellison
(Ben Jason)
Ethel Lindsay
Joseph Nesvadba

This letter is being sent to the members of the committee appointed by Pacificon II to investigate possible changes in the procedures for awarding the Annual Science Fiction Achievement Awards ("Hugos"). Each member of the committee receives a copy in his capacity as a member; Ethel Lindsay serves in a dual capacity as our liaison with the Loncon II committee.

Copies are sent to other selected individuals who may wish to make comments, or who have already made comments in letters or in print, or who have raised questions or volunteered assistance in letters or in person. Editors of sf or fannish newszines such as SF TIMES, SKYRACK, and RATATOSK are requested to digest the contents of this letter (if they find them palatable) and to publicize them to whatever extent they consider suitable, up to and including republication of the letter, in excerpted form or in toto.

Ben Jason is receiving this letter because he is chairman of the other Hugo committee, the one considering financial and technical problems related to the physical production of Hugo trophies. In addition to this contact, I am a member of Ben's committee and will serve as our liaison with that group.

Our committee was charged by the Pacificon II business session with two tasks:

1. To investigate Hugo procedures, reporting on an interim basis to Loncon II and on a final basis to the 1966 World SF Convention, wherever it may be held.
2. To conduct a poll of fandom for supplementary nominations for the 1964-65 Hugos (that is, the awards for 1964, to be presented in 1965 in London).

Because the second task is the more simply fulfilled, I will discuss it first. The London committee is conducting the customary poll of fandom for Hugo nominations. They will of course tabulate these in the usual manner to determine who appears on the final ballot.

Anyone who feels that a deserving work, because it appeared in a medium or publication not widely followed in fandom (such as a short story in a non-SF magazine) or for other reason, will not come to the attention of enough fans to receive fair consideration, may gain for such a work additional consideration by bringing it to the attention of any member of this committee. If possible, the letter should give the reason for special consideration, and should provide a copy of the work if it is not readily available.

This recommendation may be made to any member of this committee (Boucher, Ellison, Lindsay, Lupoff, or Nesvadba, although I doubt that Dr. Nesvadba will be able to participate actively because geographical and other considerations interfere).

The addresses for those members other than Dr. Nesvadba follow:

Anthony Boucher
2643 Dana Street
Berkeley 4, California

Harlan Ellison
2313 Bushrod Lane
Los Angeles, California

Ethel Lindsay
Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue
Surbiton, Surrey
England

Richard Lupoff
Merry Hell
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

One suggestion: Do NOT send a recommendation to a person who may face a conflict of interests in handling it. Two examples: do not recommend a Harlan Ellison television play to Harlan Ellison, you will face him with a dilemma of trying to lean over backwards so as not to favor himself unfairly...yet without leaning so far as to "disfavor" himself unfairly. Similarly, do not recommend a Canaveral Press book to me, for precisely the same reason.

Loncon nominating ballots are due March 31, 1965; I would have liked to have our supplementary nominations follow the regular nominations but time will not permit; therefore special nominations will open January 1, 1965, and close February 28, 1965, to permit us one month to process recommendations and forward any supplementary nominations to the Loncon committee at the same time that regular nominations end.

I can foresee only one sticky problem here. Loncon II has announced its categories, and they are the same as those used last year except for minor variations in wording. [What Pac II called Short Fiction, Lon II calls Short Story. What Pac II called Best Book Publisher, Lon II calls Best Publisher. Anyone for Bard Publishing Co, 625 Madison Ave, NYC?] Individuals may recommend for supplementary nominations any works they consider suitable.

If a concensus exists in favor of a work not included in any of the established categories, this committee will recommend that work to the Loncon committee for consideration for a Special Award. I believe this will obviate the potential constitutional crisis which might otherwise arise, over one committee trying to dictate categories to the other.

To repeat, then: the "regular" categories are as announced by the 1965 World SF Convention Committee. Supplementary nominations outside these categories, if any, will be for Special Awards.

Alarmists who fear that the control over the Hugos is being seized by a little clique will by now, I hope, have relaxed. Regular nominations are still made in the customary fashion. Final voting will still be made in the customary fashion. The only change now is that this committee may make supplementary nominations...and these will be based on recommendations received from anyone in fandom who wants to make them.

I think that is all that I need say now concerning supplementary nominations for London Hugos. I am sure that the Loncon Committee will accept supplementary nominations, if any are made, in the spirit of continuity from one convention to the next, which has grown up in the nearly thirty years that these conventions have existed.

This Hugo Committee's primary task, however, deals not with supplementary nominations, but rather with the entire institution of Hugos. Considerable concern has arisen in the past few years over actual or potential abuses in the selection of winners (as well as in the process of nominations). The opinions of all members of this committee, and of the entire science-fiction community, are solicited at this time. When I have received sufficient statements from you I will assemble them, do whatever sorting and editing seems appropriate, add ideas of my own, and prepare a rough draft of a document which I will recirculate to the recipients of this letter.

You will then be asked for further comments and suggestions. I hope to run this potential document through the mill in the fashion described above at least three times, four if possible, by August. This document will then constitute our preliminary report to the Loncon business session.

To assist you in answering this letter, and to assist me in assimilating your answers, I will append a list of questions to this letter. You may answer any, all, or none of them, and may also provide any additional "free form" response you wish.

Thank you in advance for your assistance. You'll hear from me again late in January...please try to have your answers to this letter, to me by the end of December, in order to permit my recircularizing you in January.

+Dick Lupoff+

Q U E S T I O N S

I. CATEGORIES

Present categories, used by both Pacificon II and Loncon II, are: Best Novel, Short Story, Magazine (Professional), Magazine (Amateur), Artist, and (Book?) Publisher.

Many other categories have existed at one time or another, the most recent casualty being Drama, suspended by Pac II and not restored by Lon II. The most recent addition is Publisher, established by Pac II as a one-time award, supposedly, but retained by Lon II as a regular category. Now, our questions are: (1) Shall the six categories of the 1964 and 1965 conventions stand indefinitely? Or (2) Should Drama be reinstated? (3) Should any other existing category be dropped? (4) Should any other dropped category be reinstated, or any new categories be established?

Specifically, five of the six awards are in the "pro" field, with one only reserved for fan activity. (5) Should the Fanzine Hugo be retained? (6) Regardless of your response to (5), should any other fan-oriented awards be instituted as Hugos (separate fan awards are not the concern of this committee)?

II. NOMINATIONS

Nominations are presently performed on a more-or-less "open" basis, some years limited to convention members, and for the next two years supplemented by special nominations from our own committee. (1) Should this procedure be changed? (2) If so, how? [Should clubs, etc., be permitted to nominate and/or vote? What about other institutional members? Children? Pseudonyms?] (3) Who shall take over the task of making supplemental nominations when our charge expires? (4) Should the practice of supplemental nominations be continued at all?

III. ELIGIBILITY

At present literary works are eligible up to three times: magazine publication, first, hardcover book publication, and first paperback publication. (1) Should this be changed? (2) If so, how?

IV. VOTING AND TABULATION

Regarding who may vote, see questions concerning nominations. As to how votes shall be counted, should we change the system so as to assure majority winners rather than the present plurality winners? If so, how shall this be done?

V. VOTING TIME AND PLACE

Should voting at conventions be permitted?

VI. SPECIAL AWARDS

In past years the practice of making special awards has been utilized by a number of conventions in addition to the usual category awards. A high (or perhaps a low, depending upon one's point of view) was reached at Chicon III with its numerous and varied special awards. Pacificon II did not give any in the fashion that special awards are usually given, i.e., by the concom at its own discretion, but used the term special award for its new "Publisher" category.

I would like to receive your opinions regarding special awards. Should they be dropped altogether? If not, can we attempt to lay down any sort of guidelines at all for future concons to observe in determining whether to give any special awards, how many, to whom, for what and by what mechanism?

VII. THE UNASKED QUESTION

As indicated in the open letter which preceded these questions, I also want any general reaction, ideas, suggestions, opinions, etc., which you may care to offer.

I am certain that there is a question (or questions) which I have not asked, which might have elicited valuable responses if I'd had the brains to think of it and ask it.

All right, one-up me. Ask your own question, then answer it.

Again, please try to get your answers to me by December 31, 1964; I'll try to have a draft document back to you by January 31, 1965.

+ralt+