

THE TIME HAS COME.....

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Dear Fellow Fan,

The heading of this letter is slightly incorrect, as it is not my intention to "speak of many things". I am going to concentrate on one, and only one subject.

Co-operation and co-ordination of the fans in the U.K.

I realise that this subject is one which you have heard much of previously - that is why I have purposely avoided using the term "organisation". But I do honestly feel that some effort should be made on the part of the fans to achieve some form of - er - sorry, the only word I can think of - organisation inside our borders. Not that we haven't one or two organisations at present; the B.F.L., for instance, which does a fine job of work within its own sphere of action. But what I am thinking about is something a bit bigger, and less restricted. I have no desire to tie anyone down with a lot of rules and regulations - what I want to do is open up channels of communication, so that all fen can hear of all things, as soon as possible. Therefore please don't get me wrong and give up this letter before I finish.

Another thing I must mention is that some of the long, grey-bearded sages in London have mentioned to me "It is up to the younger fen to get up a 'society' if they want one - we have done our bit". Agreed, several attempts at forming clubs, associations, and what-not have been made, and have failed. Not for me to hold an inquest, and find out why. It is a fact, and so an end to it. But I do think that a little advice and assistance from said sages would greatly benefit the younger, newer fen, and so help to start and keep running a club. But please don't be discouraging if you can't be helpful.

Set out in a number of attachments to this letter are my own ideas on how this club, association, or what have you should be formed. You don't have to agree with them, either in part or in whole. All they are there for is to serve as a basis. But I would like to hear from all fen who get this letter, giving their views, saying if they would like to belong to some similar - or totally different - co-ordinated group. And I would like to hear from any fen who are willing to take an active part in the formation of some such group. Especially those who have access to typewriters, and such like things.

This letter is going out to some 200 people - there are many more, but I do not have their addresses - please pass it on and around. Some of you will find spare copies - send them where they will do most good - and I don't mean THERE !

I have not argued the pro and con of what use the organisation will be - I don't intend to. If you are convinced that all such organisations will be flops, well, to be honest, I'd rather you stayed out. In that frame of mind you could never pull your weight. When (I say WHEN and not IF) we get it going, you will be welcome to come in. If you are interested enough to join, but don't want to be active - your moral support will be welcome.

And now your attention to the following diagrams, explanations, and other fantastic junk, please.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth F. Slater.

The Science-Fantasy Fan Federation of the United Kingdom.

The name is unimportant at this stage - that one is just to call it something!

Rough outline of original set-up:

The organisation ('orrible word) should be formed in chain-links, the lowest link being the single member, then town or area groups, county representatives, regional representatives, and at the top, a Council.

The number of links between the Council and the individual member will depend on the needs of each particular area. If say in one County there are only two fen, they will be in direct touch with the Council. If, in the Midlands, for instance, there are many fen, concentrated in several towns, with a number of odd fen in semi-isolated places, it might be necessary to have town, county, and a Midlands' intermediary links.

Purpose of this grouping is that matters of importance to all fen can be referred to the council, who can send out letters, etc, to the regions, who can reproduce, and send further down, and so the information will reach all fans in a shorter space of time than does the now existant hit or miss system.

It will also enable a central body to know the capabilities of fen in each area, and if a fanzine is desired, the work can be shared out to the various groups by the council, and when completed can be distributed through the chain.

It will enable a good assessment of how many fen are interested in obtaining certain books, magazines, and so-on.

It will make easily possible the organisation of such things as the 'Whitcon', of which numerous fen did not hear until too late - and not through the fault of the organisers - just that the organisers did not even know of the existence of these fen.

It will make it easier for fen to obtain their 'wants' or to dispose of their 'unwanted' items, as if the chain includes all fen - as I hope it will - all fen will know of each others desires.

It will enable fen to get books published, to take concerted action, and be of use in many other ways.

Original formation:

I would suggest that when I have word from all those interested, I notify a list of all persons in each locality to those individuals who are willing to be 'active', and that they in turn pass the word on. This will commence the 'chain-link' system. When this is done, we can commence the matter of laying down a definite plan. This can be thrashed out by the 'actives', and when the plan is laid, passed down for voting. The next step will be the election of representatives, and the formation of groups, and the Council. It is my opinion that very few rules will be necessary - if any- but local groups may or may not like to make their own rules, applying to their own groups, only.

Finance:

Here we touch on a tricky subject. It is obvious that some form of financial support is necessary, and it is equally obvious that a subscription will be necessary, at least in the beginning. I hope that later this may be cut to a minimum by the production of a sellable fanzine, and by adverts in this, and by production of other items which fen will desire - and be willing to pay for. Normal postage expenses of individual fen will be their own responsibility, but those of a group cannot be borne by one man - so it may be necessary to have a smaller sub if you are also a group member. On the production of fanzines, etc, if a group does this under the Council, the council will naturally re-inburse all exes from central funds, and recover this from the charges for the fanzine, or what have you. These are points which must be thrashed out by the council in very early stages.

General organisation detail:

As the object of the association will be to co-ordinate fan effort, it will be necessary for each fan to register with the next higher formation his abilities, possibilities and so on. For instance, Joe Fan will tell his town group he has access to a duplicator. Josie Fan will say she can not only type, but she has a typewriter. Bill Bem may lay some claim to being an artist, and Bertha Bem has a good knowledge of 'weird literature'. This information will be collated by the chief fan of the town group, and forwarddd up, in total (not as individuals) and in turn the region, county, or what have you, will notify the Council. So the Council will have on tap all the info that they desire when they think it necessary for a 'zine, checklist, or what have you, to be produced. Again, perhaps Bill Bem works for a printer, and can get some handbills or something run off at a reduced rate - okay - the Council would like to know.

If a fanzine is required, or some special publication, the Council will be aware that in Scotland at the moment, they have nothing on hand - so out to the Scottish Region will go all the stuff the Council have on hand. The Regional head will break it down to various town groups and individual fen, who will each type part, draw something, and so on. One town group has been chosen to do the duplicating, as they are lucky and have a couple of duffers. So when the stuff is finished it is sent wright along to them. Joe Fan in the next county or shire has a really magnificent atom-powered stapler, so all the duplicated sheets are sorted out into order by the many willing (I hope) hands of the town group, and sent along to Joe to staple up. When he has completed them, he has from the Council (via the normal channels) a distribution list, saying that Southern region want so many, and Midlands so many, and so-on. So Joe does 'em up and sends them off. The individual expenses (supported by bills, etc) are sent up to town groups, who re-imburse, and then the final bill is sent up to the Council, who again, re-imburse the town group.

That is more or less the 'general' picture of only one type of action. Such a link up can be put to many uses other than these. If a fan wants a holiday in a certain town, he will be able to find out if any fen live there, and those fen, if they have the true spirit, will help him secure accomodation - this already happens - Nigel Lindsay has doen it for B.F.L. members - one of the London Fen can always be relied on to find me accomodation in town when I find the urge for a session at the White Horse overpowering.

It might also work a little with housing and job problems. With many more things than I can think of at the moment.

Publishing:

I don't know the picture here too well, these days, altho before the war I and some friends had a thousand copies of book privately printed for about 6/- a copy. But if we wanted to publish a book - enough of us - we could get it done it done, if we subscribed the cash first, and then got cracking. A mag such as FANTASY REVIEW would be about 1/6 - 2/- a head, if we did not advertise in it. It is possible that some such event as the Whitcon would make this worth while.

Further ideas:

In army parlance I have tried to 'put you in the picture' - there it is. You can see that with the whole hearted co-operation of all members, such an organisation could run smoothly without many rules and regs. A constitution of sorts might be necessary, but something as loose as possible to enable fans to have more or less free action. Finance may be the biggest snag, but most fen are honest, and I think that a few carefully chosen folk in the right place to keep the books would prevent it becoming to involved. This section is headed 'Further ideas' - but I am not giving them - it is all up to you now. Let me have your views, and please keep them as concise as possible.

Final word:

WHEN (not if) we get running, I do not wish to be more than a fairly active member. Being in the army precludes the possibility of my being any sort of a group head, and frankly, although I am quite willing to help and advise in any way possible, I would much rather YOU ran things, and told me what to do. Please do not think that I am saying 'Do as I preach, not as I do' - I will be whole heartedly with you all the way, and I am willing to work like a dog - but my first master is the Army - and the Army can be even less considerate of ones personal desires than other bosses normally are. Not that I don't find the army considerate of my wants - but I can't rely on knocking off at five o'clock, and finishing for the day. Nor can I rely on being able to start and finish something - this idea first strated before June - and would have been out in July if I had not gone on a month's course, and been more or unable to do more than write occasional letters.

