

SECOND PERTINENCE

Perpetrated by Archie Mercer of 10 Lower Church Lane, St. Michael's, Bristol BS2 8BA in the United Kingdom, during the month of February and the year 1969. Proofread by Beryl Mercer during the same month and year. E&OE.

PERTINENCE IS NOT intended to be a monthly. However, since the first one was launched (to a hand-picked public of sixty) there have been 14 replies - almost 25%. If I was to hold off another month, there would doubtless be more. But there's enough meat here to carry on, so here goes.

WE'VE GOT COMPANY (CONTINUED) Pride of place this time goes to DOREEN PARKER: "...the impression is given that the Association had to pay the new fees under the 1967 Act. This isn't the case. The papers had to be with the Company Registrar on or before 27th October which they were (ahem !) and that being the case, they were incorporated under the 1948 Act and we paid the lesser fees despite the fact the Incorporation is dated 6th November. I did query this very point and was informed that the Registrar simply didn't have time to date all the Companies prior to 27th October so he did them each day (if you follow me)." (=After all I said about having my facts correct and up to date, too ! Correct they may have been: up to date they may likewise have been: obviously, they were somewhat short of complete ! I guess I mis-read between some dotted lines, or something. And naturally, I'm extremely glad to learn that the above is the case. And extremely sorry to have ever suggested that things might be otherwise. AM⇒)

TED TUBB: "The BSFA has been a company for over a year now and any talk of whether or not it was a wise thing to do is quite academic. The thing is a fact - we have to live with it, not talk about what someone was almost about to do way, way back, and didn't."

BRYN FORTEY: "As you point out, the 'LTD.' tag on the BSFA is now a dead issue. The 'fors' and 'againsts' no longer count. The 'fors' won, whatever the means, and we must go on from there."

OBSERVING THE CONVENTIONS (CONTINUED) DOREEN PARKER refers to a recent conversation she had with RIK DALTON, who is a member of a number of assorted convention-holding associations, and who regards conflict between the convention committee and the general committee in each case as virtually inevitable.

JOHN BRUNNER: "Yes, you're quite right in the broad principles of what you say in your just-received circular, Pertinence. As you've probably gathered over the years, I don't generally involve myself in fan affairs - I think it's a remarkable bonus for people like me who make a living out of SF to have this body of amateur volunteers on their side, and to do too much in connection with Cons or BSFA or whatever smacks a little of meddling.

"Something obviously is wrong, however, when a state of affairs can arise such as developed at Buxton and no fan-composed Con committee can be found to plan for the following year. (Don't get me wrong; I'm sure Ken Bulmer and Ted Tubb and so on regard themselves, and are regarded by others, as being as much fans as professionals. But what I mean is that Ted and Ken and I who had to come running to the rescue along with Jean and Daphne and other strictly-fan members of the committee which set itself up on the spur of the moment. Let's come out of this damned parenthesis because I'm getting into something important.)

"Now there are certain advantages inherent in this situation: for example, a known professional can call on people not generally associated with Cons and thanks to his 'name' (or whatever) they'll be interested and perhaps offer support which might not otherwise be obtained. We're looking forward to a number of

instances of this at Oxford: Philip Strick of the British Film Institute, for one, is trying to hold over a group of the Trieste Festival films, booked for the National Film Theatre in March, so that he can bring them to show to us... and there are others.

"But there are also certain disadvantages. In my particular case right now, I've run slap up against them. A writer's working schedule has to be utterly flexible to take care of extra work that turns up without warning, and this is currently happening to me: I've got the chance of working on a TV series which I shall have to tackle not instead of but as well as my already contracted assignments on novels and stories. This means that just at that juncture when I ought to be spending most time on Con work - the final three months before Easter - I'm going to have less time to spare for anything apart from my actual writing. (We're also hoping to move house, but that's not directly relevant.)

"So this is something that future Con organisers ought to bear in mind, I feel, particularly when you have a scratch committee like ours widely scattered over a big city or a whole county which makes it difficult for them to consult except by phone, and when some of the members, like myself, don't work regular hours and can't be relied on to be free in the evenings. (I often work until two or three o'clock in the morning when I'm in a hurry to finish a book.)

"I do, though, disagree about the notion of planning deliberately for a very small Con in 1970. We've been fortunate in spite of everything, in our work for Easter this year, because we've got the assurance of a large attendance and are therefore able to experiment with some new events. I think some of them will suggest regular items for future Cons and prove a considerable draw. No doubt the 1970 Con will have to be markedly less ambitious, but I think it would be a serious error to let the new committee go into it imagining that it's not going to require just as thorough and time-consuming organisation as any other Con in any other year. The success of a Con isn't measured by the total turnout, but by the imagination, inventiveness and devotion of the committee.

"This letter, by the way, is wholly personal and should not be taken as representing the view of any other member of the current committee."

(Regarding the ability of a professional to produce useful contacts out of his hat, an amateur committee can always co-opt a friendly professional to do precisely this, without his becoming any further involved in administration. In fact, it's already been done, in a small way. Sounding out potential Guests of Honour, for instance. Re 1970, all I said was that the organisers should plan for a much-reduced attendance. AM)-)

CHRIS PRIEST: "I would say that your comments regarding these (~~conventions~~) are slightly off the beam, since the conventions are now (since Yarmouth, I think) totally divorced from the BSFA. That is, the funds are passed on from one con to another. This also means that the BSFA cannot be in any way responsible for debts, etc., though there is a somewhat puzzling factor insofar as the 1969 convention literature clearly mentions the BSFA. It would be better, I think, if the system reverted to what it was a few years back, when the BSFA appointed a particular sub-committee to run the convention for the BSFA. It should be clear the con is a BSFA function, and that greatly advantageous reductions in registration fees should be available to members. (I don't think the present 5/- is a sufficient reduction.) The con should be given a much bigger advance publicity through BSFA publications, and there should be a BSFA office at the con." (At present, the relationship between the BSFA and the convention has to be re-negotiated every year, at much waste of time, postage, etc. The B.S.F.A. Bulletin always gives the latest convention news and tries to entice members to register - I may not do it well, but at least I try. And there is always a B.S.F.A. table at the con, manned by all too small a roster

Beryl points out that this is largely because people go to cons to attend the programme, etc., rather than to man tables. AM)⇒

TED TUBB: "So we need a permanent con site - is that news? What we are never going to get is a combination of luxury hotel and hostel - you can have one or the other but never both in one building. It's like asking for a sinner with a halo - the two things are mutually contradictory. So what is left to discuss?"

TERRY JEEVES: "CONVENTIONS..BSFA or Private. First, the facts as I see them :-

- "1. A yearly Convention is a 'good thing'
- "2. IF the BSFA can have a finger in the pie, it's a good thing for the BSFA (an extra perk for members if discount is offered, plus added publicity)
- "3. A Con needs a committee on the spot, it cannot be effectively organised from a distance
- "4. A private (non BSFA) convention need have no need to follow BSFA ideas

"Now we come to the finicky bits. Comes a BSFA con, and a group of bods bids for the next Con. They may not agree to tie in with the BSFA (viz Ella Parker at Harrogate) in which case, the BSFA may whip up an alternative site (viz KFS and Peterboro as an answer to the Parker bid). If the non BSFA bid wins, then the only possible way the BSFA can have is just whatever the organisers will grant in the goodness of their hearts...or what the BSFA can buy as value for giving a loan to the Committee. Now this case is very variable, and can only be altered by the BSFA sewing up cons so tight that no outside bidder will step in.

"To sew up cons, the BSFA must offer a better organisation (programme, hotels, etc) than the outsider is likely to come up with..but more than this, the BSFA MUST ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORGANISING each and every year...It cannot depend on somebody bidding for the con (though it can of course accept suitable bids).

"IF the BSFA is to organise every year it must have a permanent committee to do this, just as you suggest. (I don't think I suggested quite that. AM)⇒ The crunch is that I think this is impossible UNLESS the same site is used every year, and the committee lives in that town. This is also undesirable...unless we find a place like Kettering full of members like yourself and Beryl...willing to do all the work.

"So that leaves us with a risky compromise.... The BSFA draws up a booklet stating all the steps, rules prices and details of how to run a convention.... what to pay for halls, full details of numbers, rooms etc required at previous cons. In short all possible advice must be made available right from scratch, so that the organisers have a darned good idea of what to do, what to pay, numbers expected, services needed, insurance details etc etc...WITHOUT spending time and money writing around to find out what has been done before. THIS BOOKLET ALONE WOULD TAKE A LOT OF WORK OFF THE NEW COMMITTEE...they would save a lot of discussion time, plus research time by just looking inside.

"NEXT. The BSFA should ask (in Vector) before a con, for the names of any groups (members) willing to bid for the next con. Other people can still come forward at cons and bid... BUT ONLY IF NO BSFA MEMBERS ARE BIDDING FOR THE CON.

"I hope (though I know it isn't forced to be so) that with a combination of A BSFA CONVENTION book, + a members' committee, then the BSFA should have a better chance of slanting cons the way they want, and also keeping them under BSFA rules. The above is not perfect, but might ease the organising problem a bit. For instance, for the Supermancon (1954), a Postal Committee was formed with the result that much postage was wasted in bandying ideas around instead of a local mob going straight ahead.

"The Book would also include such items as :-

PROGRAMME organiser(s). Not more than four members to be solely responsible for a programme timing to be roughly as follows... list of programme times and items added as a guide.

HOTEL LIAISON. Two men to case hotels, beds, halls, PA gear, night service, etc.

LOCAL LIAISON. Finding alternate 'spill' or cheaper local hotels, cafes, bars etc., town maps and so on.

ART SHOW. Sub committee to be formed by Hotel Comm, once available room sorted out.

"And so it goes. I don't know if this will be of any use to you Archie, but I am positive that a GUIDE BOOK on running cons (drawn up by a symposium of previous holders) would be very useful for future committees."

(George Scithers, having chaired the 1963 DisCon, produced THE CON-COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S GUIDE - over 60 pages of American quarto, intended to guide the organisers of future Worldcons. I have no idea whether any of his successors has ever taken any notice. The main problem in using such a volume, I think, is that so many details go quickly out of date that the margins would be a mass of scrawled and illegible amendments. AM)

MARTIN PITT: "A point of economics I have never heard mentioned:- A ConCommittee usually heads for the hot els with the cheapest Con halls, which are usually the ones with the most expensive private rooms. The point is that a hotel which charges an economic price for the accommodation, and has thus a moderate profit margin, is forced to make some reasonable charge for the use of ballrooms etc.; conversely, an establishment with a high profit margin can afford to give away the main rooms as a loss-leader to get customers. I tried to get my university hall (£2 a day full board, with very good accommodation and food: many conferences and conventions come back year after year) but unfortunately they are closed at Easter. I reckon this is the sort of thing that is wanted since I for one cannot afford both to stay at the average con hotel and eat during the same period." (University Halls of Residence seem to close at Easter all over the country. We found the same situation in Bristol, and I think other places have also investigated with identical results. AM)

ETHEL LINDSLAY: "I can't really see why the BSFA would want to have control of the cons..and I can't ever see con committees agreeing to hand over control. In fact I've been wondering if anyone will be keen to take it on next year? I know I'm bent on going to Heidelberg..in which case I'll need all the money I can scrape and doubt if I'd go to any Eastercon. In fact, I was wondering if it might be suggested that Britain back the Heidelberg con to the extent of not having an Eastercon and urging folks to go there instead. After all they could combine it with a summer holiday..and even the youngest fans nowadays seem to be able to afford a Continental holiday. Wonder what you think of this idea?" (The B.S.F.A. Limited is obliged by law to hold an Annual General Meeting every year. If there was no Eastercon, either a special one-day A.G.M. would have to be convened, or the A.G.M. would have (if this is legally possible - Doreen ???) to be held at Heidelberg. AM)

BRYN FORTEY: "The neat of PERTINENCE concerned Conventions. I wish your perfect location did exist, because then I would almost certainly be able to attend each year. Up in the attic of course. That's one of the problems of being a pauper, but that's a personal worry and not concerned with the overall picture.

"I consider that the BSFA must and should be concerned with the overall responsibility for the Annual British SF Convention. But the problems, as you set them out, are formidable indeed. To set out a few points:-

"(a) Serving BSFA Officers have enough to do without running the Con.

"(b) The Con Committee should consist of people residing within the geograph-

ical area holding the Con each year.

"(c) Until the 'perfect location' is discovered it is the fairest system to hold it in different parts of the country each year.

"Now to the improvement of BSFA-Con Committee relationships. Two points spring to mind :-

"(a) No non-BSFA members should be allowed to serve on Con Committees.

"(b) The BSFA should appoint a permanent 'Convention Officer'.

"Let's go into these two points more fully.

"(a) might mean that the possible services of some excellent people would be lost (e.g. Tony Walsh at the Briscon), but it would mean that only people who think enough of the BSFA to join it would be connected with the running of Conventions and the BSFA's tie in with Conventions would be strengthened. Non-members in the locality could assist, but without actually holding a committee position.

"(b) A BSFA Convention Officer would liaise between the Con Committee and the BSFA Committee. His/her purpose being to advise both parties of the other's position should disputes arise, act as conciliation officer, and help an inexperienced Con Committee provide a good service to prospective attendees (so that they don't lie down on their job until a month before the Con). Ideally he should be a regular and experienced conventioner with a flair for both diplomacy and organising. Someone like Archie Mercer for instance. (All compliments received with the expected blend of gratitude and embarrassment - but I would point out the terms of your first (b) at the foot of P.4 - about residing within the geographical area concerned. AM)

"This couple of points would not provide a total solution to the problems under discussion, but they might be a step in the right direction."

ANY OTHER BUSINESS DAVID PIPER: "I'm a little puzzled as to what sort of reply you expect. Ie, the whole position re: BSFA seems to me crystal clear. Basically you have two distinct types of members :-

"a) The social get-together type

"b) The (un)social not gettogethertype

"How to cater to both ?

"Well, the easiest answer would be to have two Assns. That isn't practicable so what's to do ?

"Now, I'm a b) which does not mean that I'm unsociable..but - I'm a fringe fan and am primarily interested in the publishing and not the social aspects of the Assn. This is probably because I'm a late arrival on the scene. I just started getting a few Fanzines and paying my sub. to BSFA and just bumbling along and before I knew what was happening I was on Coulson's Xmas Card List ! My social life therefore bears no relation to that of an acti-social-fan of the type a) and the fact of the matter is that at this stage of my life I don't need social fandon.

"So being a b) I require a publishing type Assn...an apa you might say - a thought worth thanking upon.....to the exclusion of the social side. It follows, according to my infallible reasoning, that an a) fan whilst not being totally averse to the publishing side is primarily a member in order to meet and chat up other folks with like interests.

"So, to get back to the question of what to do.

"1) The BSFA should take over completely the running of the Annual Con and organise other social gatherings. To ease the burden on the Assn Officials you should co-opt enough members to spread the load.

"2) Close the membership list of the Assn.

"3) The publishing side should be improved and expanded. Ok. Ok. I

know ! How can you improve something or get help in improving something when the membership is, in general, apathetic and shows little interest in the Assn. This, of course, isn't peculiar to the BSFA..I've had a lot of experience (said he modestly) of a Staff Assn and it's just the same. However the SA is a semi-official body and has to be open to everybody. The BSFA doesn't and thereupon lies my tale or point or whatever. I haven't read the aims and rules of the Assn lately but seem to recall some high-flown and esoteric aim like 'improving SF's image with the General Public and creating interest in SF'. Forget it ! Simple answer, albeit a harsh one, is to make the Assn into a group of people interested in SF and who show such interest and take some pride in their Assn and being members. Chuck the rest out. They ain't worth the effort.

"The best issues of Vector that I've seen during my short membership of the Assn have been the Parker/Slater ones. They were sloppy and untidy but they were ALIVE. With a smaller and more active participating membership we could have such publications again I feel sure. P'raps I'm wrong. No doubt you'll correct me if I am !"

(=With regard to closing the Association's membership list, two things immediately occur to me. One, the lesser, is that even those who are active now will not be for ever. So the numbers would gradually dwindle, and have to be augmented from time to time anyway. The other, and basic, thing is that the B.S.F.A. was originally instituted with the specific purpose of contacting more sf readers and getting them interested in hobby-activity connected with their literature - at the time, sf fandom was rapidly dwindling, and every annual Con seemed smaller than its predecessor. So what you suggest would be asking the B.S.F.A. to betray its origins, origins which its founders (myself included) deemed worthy and, at least in my own case, still do. AM)=

CHRIS PRIEST: "Thanks for Pertinence, and I hope that it does something toward achieving its aims....even if it should merely satisfy your own viewpoint on the matters raised. My own concern towards the BSFA is mainly a feeling that it should provide something for its membership that they cannot obtain elsewhere. This it does, of course, but it should do more. A greater effort should be made to get Vector out on a regular schedule. The BSFA should be publicised whenever possible, in adverts and out of them. (I myself joined through seeing mention of the BSFA on the cover of Brian's Penguin SF Anthology.) Obviously, Vector is the biggest single attraction for people to join, and as such should be really developed into something attractive. Other things should be devised (for instance, the SFWB) that are advantageous to members. I think this forthcoming anthology from fanzines is a good idea. (Whose idea was it, as a matter of interest ?) (=Greg Pickersgill as far as I know. AM)= For instance, members of the Science Fiction Writers of America receive free copies of new books from Ace, Ballantine and Berkley. What chances of getting a similar service from Corgi, Panther, Mayflower, Penguin....??? No-one knows ? Then appoint someone to have a go."

TED TUBB: "You sent out PERTINENCE and so I guess you want some reactions but, frankly, reactions to what ? If you're not happy with the way the BSFA is being run then you are not alone. I'm a member because I have to be to be on the committee and because of nostalgic associations at having been instrumental in launching the thing and not wanting to see the baby die. But, as far as I can see, the BSFA isn't doing what it was founded to do. It isn't presenting an official 'front' to publishers etc. It is running a library which is a good thing and it produces Vector which is too much like a fan mag to be taken seriously. And for some odd reason it seems to be a bottomless pit into which subscription money simply vanishes."

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"All right, if I'm so smart then why aren't I doing something to right what I'm saying is wrong? Fair comment which is why, up to now, I've made no complaint. But you've thrown a ball into the ring and I assume that anyone can have a kick. And, you know Archie, it seems an odd time to wail about the way conventions are run etc. Have I missed a hidden point? Just in passing, the Con committee in the last 'saturation mailing' have advertised the BSFA in no small manner.

"But, to get back to the first few words, just what have you left to comment about in PERTINENCE? What are the facts that are Pertinent, or impertinent? What, to be brief, is the point?"

(The gist of the original PERTINENCE was conceived not long before Christmas, and was thus timed to hit the mails immediately the postal rush was over. And oh yes, it might possibly have gone out just before the rush had I been working at the time. I wasn't, so it didn't. Nothing else was taken into consideration re the timing. AM)

MICHAEL KENWARD made quite a lot of specific suggestions re publicising the B.S.F.A., and offered to help put them into effect. On the initiative of the Secretary (Beryl), his offer has been accepted, thus that part of his letter is already irrelevant. He also says: "I have just received your 'Pertinence'. This, I feel, demands an instant reaction. The reaction being a loud cheer. Not so much because of what you say, more because you have said it.

"Neither of your particular groans moves me to do anything more than disagree with you. But it is good that there is some way in which we can discuss matters relevant to the BSFA, but divorced from the membership of the BSFA. You have clearly chosen those people who have at some time shown an interest in the BSFA for more than just that which they can get out of it. From this I deduce that your motive must be that of the furtherment of the BSFA which, in turn, helps further the cause of intelligent discussion of sf."

HARTLEY PATTERSON: "Conventions. I recall hearing that the Delta group last year were almost split on whether to accept BSFA support or not. Presumably those in fandom who are opposed to the BSFA can produce reasons for their opposition: the London University people with whom I had some correspondence a while back thought (wait a minute, I'll dig the letter out) "I personally have never found the BSFA worth bothering about. They don't seem to be dynamic enough". This may be a common objection, treating the BSFA as 'them' instead of us. Which is an argument against the Company I suppose.....

"The general argument would seem to be of the 'I'm all right Jack' variety. Fans who already have a circle of Fanzines they write for/friends they write to/people they talk to at Conventions don't get much personal benefit from the BSFA. The information in the Bulletin filters through to them anyway, Vector is just another 'zine and why pay 30/- p.a. for it?

"Personally I should say this was a very cliquish attitude. I didn't happen to know any fans before I joined the BSFA, I still don't know of any within 10 miles radius of where I live. The BSFA is the only fan organisation which can make itself known to the reader-at-large (I found a BSFA small ad in an old New Worlds). As that Pickersgill letter in Vector pointed out, the BSFA isn't exactly perfect....but what else is there? Would Mr. Pickersgill have ever heard of fandom?

"The problem of 'them' and 'us' is one we have encountered in TechSFSoc, it's very difficult to convince members that we are students and not officials, that if the library is to be open more than three days a week, someone has to volunteer to do it. That if no new books appear on the shelves, it's because no one has asked for them, and so on.

"The BSFA is, or should be, at least partially intended as a 'clearing house' for fandom, introducing newcomers to the ins and outs of Locs, gaffiations and Hum . and Sway. This is why I think a BSFA anthology (what did happen to that ??) (It's happening - slowly. AM) is such a good idea. Why everyone should be besieging their local libraries (check the last new members' list and you'll see at least one result for my own effort, and I think there's another on the way). But once you're in.....

"How about a list of current fanzines + addresses occasionally? Better still, subsidise dear Peter to send Lostwithiel whatsit to new members. Then those lost souls who stay in one year only might find their place in someone's Loc columns.

"Yes, I got sidetracked.....why do Convention/BSFA people disagree? Being of short experience, I don't know the history of the past 10 years. Reductions in Con fees in exchange for free mentions in the Bulletin, fair enough. The AGM on Sunday morning is not a great strain on the program, as no one would be up at that hour without it. (I would - I like hotel breakfasts.)

"The idea of the Con committee making a mess of things and the BSFA being blamed is not I think very likely. Who is going to blame them? With only one offer per year there seems to be only the choice of whether there should be a Con or not. And the BSFA has no obligation to produce a Convention, it merely takes advantage of them and lends what assistance it can.

"Before fandom-at-large starts laying in to the BSFA, whatever its failings, it ought to consider the result of the organisation being disbanded. 'But in the USA they don't have a USSFA.....'. Well, there is N3F, and besides fandom in America is big enough not to need a central organisation. The local clubs and societies can manage their own recruiting. But here locally organised fans are in the minority. Bristol, London, a few Universities, Liverpool, Salford..... the rest scattered and very thin on the ground, and no money to spare for spreading the gospel.

"The Underground, despite a fortnightly newspaper and two periodicals with national circulation, is still unknown to the Majority of even Londoners. (They themselves being the odd Londoners, perhaps ??!! Sorry, but I couldn't resist the crack. AM) Fandom is probably unknown to a lot of keen sf readers. So we should rely on accidental meeting?

"So, to be constructive:

"(1) Vector about quarterly, with a list of all sf published since the last issue, reviews of the better books, of films, reports of Conventions, conferences, bits of fiction and poems perhaps not. Vector is not and should not be a fanzine, with articles unrelated to SF.

"(2) The Bulletin much as it is now, with advance information, small ads, information on the local clubs and on fanzines.

"(3) I've never had cause to use the library/magazine chain, no doubt they are worthwhile. The SF Writer's Bulletin is great for those who write, but - why send it to everyone? Why not a sampler to new members, then only for those who want?

"(4) And publicity. Is there any at all? If the anthology includes an editorial about the BSFA, fine, but just the name by itself sounds a bit exclusive, writers guild kind of thing. A small ad in the American magazines? An article in a Sunday paper?

"This is just thoughts as they came, hence very disorganised. How about a forum on the future of the BSFA during the Con?"

(Note, folks, the clever way in which Hartley manages to talk simultaneously about the Company, Conventions, and things in general... AM)

BRYN FORNEY: "On a general level, it is reassuring to realise that someone cares enough about the future of the BSEFA (Ltd), Conventions and therefore fandom and the continuation of SF as a unified entity, to actually try and do something about the present haphazard state of affairs. Whether or not anything concrete will be born of your endeavour depends upon what degree of enthusiasm you are able to whip up. I am not sure that I have anything specific to offer, but at least you have roused me out of my apathy enough to write admitting my apathy.

"I hope a fair number of those who received PERTINENCE will reply. From many small ideas some big ones may emerge."

ALSO HEARD FROM, but not quoted from: Phil Rogers, Mary Reed, Gerald Bishop.

CIRCULATION: As Issue One, plus: Tony Walsh
Harry Nadler
Chuck Partington
Greg Pickersgill

each of whom has already had, or will have, the first issue as well.

AND THAT'S ABOUT the size of it for now. Thank you all very much indeed for responding. Further response is still solicited, whether on topics that have already been touched on or brand-new ones, so long as they are still generally relevant to the B.S.F.A. The next issue, if (as always) response warrants one, will probably not be until after the Con. Thanks again for listening. AM

STOP PRESS Bert Lewis, making a total of 15 replies, writes: "First of all, I am not hiding the fact that I have never been to a Science-fiction Convention organised since the coming of the B.S.F.A., although I did get to a few before it. The main reasons for me writing, however, are those of 'airing' my views on the Conventions and what they mean to me as such. I do agree that conventions as such could play a big part in the furthering of the cause of the genre. I also agree with you, that the Association should have the main, if not the whole of the say in the organisation of the conventions.

"Perhaps the convention committee does have the biggest say in them and that, to me, is where the whole thing is wrong. If they, as a separate body, wish to organise a Convention, then they should do it entirely on their own and completely dissociate themselves from the B.S.F.A., unless our members wish to attend such functions. But, they should be willing to do it without having to depend upon the B.S.F.A. to provide the necessary foundation on which to build them. By this I mean, that in their organisation of such a function, they should use only 'public' means of getting them 'off the ground'.

"Perhaps I have not made my point clear up to now; if so, please bear with me. I think I can do this by just bringing out one salient point about the 'Annual Convention' and that is, all advertising for the function is done by the B.S.F.A., through its own 'official' organ(s) - 'The Bulletin' - 'Vector' - or what have you? In so doing, the convention committee get 'free' advertising, 'free' publicity and without us really knowing it, we give it our 'free' blessing. Do you think that they would get very far with the organisation of a convention, if they had to depend upon any other medium for its advertising? If they had to do this, the only other medium would be the 'National Press' and what a nice penny that would cost them. They might get a lot more to attend, but at what a price.

"Please don't think that I am being 'cheeseparing' about this; I am just trying to show the practical application of what is involved. Perhaps the Convention Committee does want to have the upper hand; all well and good, but in that event, let them pay for that advantage, by paying for any advertising necessary to get the convention going as a paying concern and that is surely the main consider-

ation in such a project. If the B.S.F.A. wants to be magnanimous about it and give the project a bit of a 'shot in the arm', good for them. But on the other hand don't let us give them a series of free 'leg-ups' and then be rewarded with the committee's feet thrust in our faces.

"So please, let us be as practical about this convention business as an association, as the convention committees intend to be from their own particular standpoint."

(One thing, of course, that seems to have got lost is the fact that the Convention is also the occasion for the Association's A.G.M. That isn't all that seems to have got lost here, either. Very possibly I didn't make myself as clear in the original PERTINENCE as I should have done, but visualising the B.S.F.A. and the Convention Committee (of any given year) as two hostile forces fighting each other into unconditional surrender tends to horrify me. Any victory by either party achieved on such terms would be resoundingly hollow. If there are to be two separate independent bodies, then each not only needs the other for best effect, but knows this, and in various ways there always is a measure of co-operation. Precisely how much differs from year to year, though, and far too many tears are unnecessarily shed behind various scenes. Things surely must be susceptible to improvement, somehow or other. AM)=



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