

### T H I R D   P E R T I N E N C E

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

So on with:

WE'VE GOT COMPANY (CONCLUDED ?) KEITH FREEMAN has what, I think, deserves to be the Last Word on this subject for some considerable time: "As a last comment (from me) on the Co., or Ltd., part of the BSFA - I agree with the people who say it's done and should not be re-fought over; I would add though that it's still very much a case of following the course of what was planned for the BSFA Ltd. and the actuality."

OBSERVING THE CONVENTIONS (CONTINUED) A number of people, I understand, have been under the impression that mentioning Conventions at all in PERTINENCE was intended by me as a deliberate attack on the Committee organising the one we've just had - Galactic Fair 1969, at Oxford.

For the record, it wasn't. I could, I suppose, have waited until G.F. '69 was over before issuing the original PERTINENCE. Then, of course, the 1970 Eastercon Committee might possibly have considered it as an incipient attack on it - before, furthermore, it had even had a chance to get into its stride. No - there will always (I sincerely hope) be a Convention Committee organising the next event, and thus anything said in public about Conventions is liable to be taken personally by its members. I thought that what I had to say was worth saying, nevertheless; so I said it.

Also for the record, Galactic Fair 1969 was (I thought) an excellent convention. I have not yet heard of anybody who thought otherwise, come to that.

Since there is to be an Eastercon in 1970, discussion of the subject of whether or not there should be one is of course irrelevant, and has therefore been abandoned herein.

JILL ADAMS just missed SECOND PERTINENCE with some very pertinent comments, reminding one of the existence of a fund that I, for one, had entirely overlooked: "One of the things that does stir me up is the Convention lark. I think, and always have, that the Convention ought to be under the BSFA's wing, not a privately run affair. The profits, if any, being handed over to the next Con committee as they used to be, the accounts properly published, the BSFA making good any loss, and taking steps to see it doesn't happen again !

"Dave Barber and I are custodians of a sum of money that is supposed to be used for pukka BSFA Cons. It looks as though we're going to hold it for ever !

"The ideal of course is for BSFA members only to run Cons, placing themselves under the BSFA committee who only keep a general eye on things. Under such an arrangement the final responsibility would be the BSFA's, not just financially but also for general conduct."

KEITH FREEMAN: "I personally consider the BSFA as a continuing body forming a stable background to annual Con committees. Stable, that is, in providing financial backing where necessary and allowing Con records to be passed on from year to year. There are only two ways the BSFA could really 'run' a Con: (a) by the Con-Committee being composed entirely of 'BSFA men', or (b) the BSFA appointing the Con-Committee. (a) is the likeliest, and (b) would never work !"

HARRY NADLER: "You seem to have an interesting discussion going here though whether it will ever arrive at a conclusion (or whether it is intended to) I don't know. Joan Brunner's comments re the amount of work he, as a professional

writer, has to cope with at the main period of time a Con-Comm will need for the convention, strike me that he thinks it is only writers that have little spare time on their hands. I've been working some pretty weird-hours on shift work at a publications printing house, where you turn in when they want you or else, and it was very difficult for all last year's Con-Comm to get together at all in the last few weeks before the Thirdmancon. Very many of my friends work nasty hours, so I don't see why being a writer should make all that much difference.

"Your 'ideal' hotel will only be found by trial and error. You just can't find out what is a good Con hotel until you have run a convention there."

CHRIS PRIEST: "If, as Martin Pitt suggests, the expensive hotels are the only ones with cheap halls...then perhaps an expensive hall should be found."

MARY REED: "When considering the BSFA/Concom, it might be as well to think about this point - how many people would have been at the con if they'd not found fandom and cons and all the rest of it, via that august organisation? I know I'd never have known about any of them if I'd not joined the BSFA."

"You can't put fen into one of the two categories of fannish and non-fannish, because even the maddest fan is capable of serious discussion, and no doubt during the con engages in some discussions of this nature, and the more seriously-inclined fan no doubt lets his hair down at times, and where better than at a con where you know you're in good company? Secondly, Fandom is somewhere where you don't have to prove yourself, unlike larger gatherings where you might be the only fantype present. So there is room for all sorts of people in cons, and how do you know you won't like it unless you try it? There is usually various types of events to satisfy all sorts of fen."

AUDREY WALTON: "I did not realise that outside people made bids to run the Conventions, and this seems strange to me; surely it would be better for an organisation to attend to its own affairs?"

(A number of readers who are comparative newcomers to the 'fannish' scene seem to harbour similar thoughts. The fact is, of course, that the annual Convention was an institution before ever the B.S.F.A. was founded; and not every 'fan' is currently a B.S.F.A. member. Some, in fact, never have been. To my mind, if there is one way in which the B.S.F.A. misfires, it is that by its very existence it divides us all into two distinct categories - members and non-members. AM)

ETHEL LINDSAY: "It seems to me that cons can help the BSFA more by making people keen on the delights of meeting. What the BSFA can do for con committees and con programmes, for example, is not very much. Some BSFA officials who are very hard-working have also taken on con committee work--but the credit for that should go to the individual officers concerned, not the BSFA as such."

"Someone mentions the N3F. Well that was a standing joke in US fandom for years. Not so many jokes about it nowadays and it does seem to be very helpful to young or new fans. Some of the goodwill towards it from fandom nowadays stems, I think, from two factors. One that well known fans went in and did some work. Two that they run a Hospitality Room at cons which have been very much appreciated by many fans new and old. Now there is something that the BSFA could well copy..the second thing, I mean. Again, however, it takes people who are BSFA members and willing to give up con-time to work. You know personally, I am sure, just what a small band of people that will be."

JOHN MARSHALL (of Leyton): "A couple of points I am not sure of. How do the members of the Con Committee get to be members of said Committee? Second; does the B.S.F.A. get any part of the proceeds of the Con - if not, why not?"

(To answer your first question: by volunteering. If there happen to be rival volunteers, a vote at the open part of the AGM (where members and non-members of the BSFA are equal) decides the matter. Once a "basic" committee is approved, it then co-opts additional help as it sees fit. As to your second question: so far as I'm aware, the B.S.F.A. has never kept any part of Convention profits, even where it underwrote possible losses. At one time profits were divided 50/50 between the B.S.F.A. and the next Convention; however, the B.S.F.A.'s shares were eventually handed back after much argument all round. AM)

KEITH FREEMAN in a further letter: "We've had problems before as far as getting volunteers for Con Committees goes - to my mind it's been made worse the last couple of years by fans feeling that if they do volunteer to run a Con they will not only have the chore of organising the Con but will also have the task of running everything not in their own way but in the BSFA's way (whatever that is).

"There is one point in Terry Jeeves's well thought out comments I'd like to add to. It was laid down a few years ago that bids would be taken for TWO years ahead. If my memory serves me correctly this was almost disastrous because a committee bid for the con was accepted two years ahead and was withdrawn the next year. What I would like to see encouraged is the discussion (in VECTOR or the BSFA Bulletin) of possible sites - hotels (sizes, prices etc.) - surely amongst the BSFA membership we have a pretty wide area of the country covered. Any con committee who have the details about various hotels that would fit their plans could then bid to run a Con. From this you'll probably gather that I don't think it necessary (highly desirable yes, necessary no) for a Con committee to live in the same town as the Con Hotel is.

"Up to now I seem to have concentrated on conventions - and in many ways I feel that conventions are the most rewarding part of fandom/BSFA: what else is there in the BSFA that justifies 30/- a year? To act as a reminder to myself I'll list the various things....." (Though I think the list can be taken as read, Keith. AM)

TONY UNDERWOOD: "I think there are a lot of people who get more out of a convention than the BSFA. If you don't use the library there doesn't seem to be much else bar VECTOR and that has its ups and downs. You get out of the BSFA what is put in and collectively there is very little put in. I mean (before you hit me with something flattening) there are a few people who put a lot in while the great majority do nothing. When the few vanish the lot goes. Conventions on the other hand are different. There everyone gets something at least out of it. Even if the food and con committee are lousy a good bottle and room party can drown the sorrows. There has to be a way to involve more people in the BSFA.

"I think the con committee should have complete control of the con within specific broad outlines and be backed by the BSFA, but as the BSFA would back the convention to a limited sum they would have the right to step in where the con committee clearly shows itself to be grossly incompetent."

KEN CHESLIN (excerpted from his OMPA:mine, WHATSIT 16): "About the 1965 Convention. While it is true that the BSFA committee and the organisers of the 1965 convention were nearly identical (me, Rog Peyton and Chas Winstone, BSFA, with Mike Higgs on the Con-committee) this was purely accidental. the main reason for this was that that year the Brummies were at the height of their activity. Two reasons why the Brummies made a bid for the Con in 1965 were, (1) the thought that we had best bid while we were going strong; (2) that year we didn't expect a big turn out, because of the Worldcon in London, and we thought that we might not get a hotel big enough to cater for a full convention. (As it turned out we were

wrong about the hotel situation, though we had a hectic time getting a hotel. Actually we were invited back any time we wanted.) It was therefore mere coincidence that the BSFA committee and the Con-committee were nearly identical....we tried to keep the two things separate as much as possible. (Actually we were going round...it was Platt time if you recall...giggling in pseudo power-mad ways, talking about taking over OMPA too...making, if I recall the phrase aright, a real YEAR OF THE JACKPOT for Brum.) Personally I like the idea of the BSFA having a customary, traditional place in conventions as a matter of course."

(=In case anybody wonders what is this "OMPA" that keeps cropping up, here is a plug. It is an association of people who can prove an interest in "amateur journalism"; based in this country. It is just another of the appendages of sf fandom, really. Membership is limited to 45 at one time, though there are currently vacancies. Each member produces a set number of pages per year - or more if he/she wishes - which are distributed centrally to the membership. The Association Editor, who will be delighted to give further particulars if required, is Beryl Mercer, who shares the editorial address of PERTINENCE.)=)

ANY OTHER BUSINESS is rapidly getting the action. KEITH FREEMAN has again something to say: "Let me first say that this, or something so similar as to be indistinguishable, has been (and is) needed, in my mind. ... BUT is it in any way constructive? Most certainly it isn't destructive in any way - but are there any constructive, and workable, ideas tucked away? Reluctantly I don't think so. It does put, in black and white, some of the problems facing the BSFA - if it's stirred up people to think about and produce answers then well done indeed. Stirred up though I am, no ideas have come to me."

CHRIS PRIEST: "Pertinence seems to be as good a place as any (and better than some) to re-air my idea about BSFA expansion. If anything can come of this, even at this late stage, then it's worth the trouble of writing it all out again. The whole idea is: if the BSFA had a membership in the region of or greater than 1,000 members, it would be able to afford to employ a full- or part-time secretary, at a competitive salary, to run the Association from a centralised address. This is where the BSFA goes wrong, surely? Everything that is done is voluntary and part-time. Keeness and vigour last only so long. When letters go unanswered for ages, or ignored altogether, or officials disappear, or when no decision can be reached at committee level....this is when frustration sets in. Not that any of these problems would be solved by having an employee...but he/she would be paid to follow them up and keep on following them up. If he/she doesn't, then someone else is found. If a little thought is devoted to working out the implications of having a full-time representative, then the advantages very quickly become apparent. To achieve this, though, the BSFA would need a minimum of 1,000 members (bringing in, as will be seen, a minimum of £1,500 per ann. plus whatever the membership fee is). (=5/- per new member. AM)=)

"I once worked for a book-club, where part of my job was to plan the expansion of the clubs. This planned expansion is fairly expensive and it takes time, but it will work. The latest estimates of people who regularly buy paperback sf books are a minimum of 100,000. If 1% of that readership cannot be induced to join the BSFA, then there's something wrong. The main reason they haven't joined so far is that either (a) they've never heard of the BSFA or (b) they've heard of it and don't fancy the sound of it.

"What I have proposed in the past is a series of paperback inserts which, if the right representations are made, should be obtained at a trade price. Over a period of time, provided that the books chosen for inserts are ones with a fair guarantee of popularity, then some of that vast potential membership may be attracted. But before this can be done. the image of the BSFA itself must be

polished up. Partly to attract new members, and partly to enhance its reputation with the world of publishing, to convince a publisher that if the BSFA were to expand then it would ultimately be to the good of the world of sf as a whole. At the present moment, if the BSFA is mentioned in professional circles, the reaction is a kind of hollow laugh. Instead of being the authoritative body on sf in Britain (cf. Society of Authors, Crime-Writers' Assn, PEN, Romantic Novelists' Assn, etc. etc.) it's a club for sf readers with a fanzine and a lending library.

"Therefore, we get back to the beginning: the image must change.

"To do this, a lot of thought should go into the appointment of its officers. Perhaps instead of waiting for volunteers ('I'd like to edit VECTOR, please....I have a typewriter') the BSFA should approach people and ask them to do the job for (say) a year. I believe the current Hon. Treasurer was appointed in just this way, and fulfills his functions with every enthusiasm and efficiency.

"I suggest the following (among other things): For every member who introduces another (new) member, allow a 5/- deduction in his (next year's) sub."

(Several ideas have been "cut" there either because they're already being tried, or it has been decided that the same effect can be obtained by other means. However, this apart, the main content of Chris's letter brings us face to face with the B.S.F.A.'s No. 1 policy-argument: is the Association's basic purpose to seek prestige for itself and the sf field as a whole, or is it on an altogether lower (though not necessarily less important) plane? Or a masterful combination of both? Or something else entirely? Or what? AM)

From a long letter from BOB RICKARD I excerpt the following kernel: "Does the BSFA hold the majority of members of fandom, or is it a minority? If the latter, any decisions it makes can not be expected to extend beyond its membership. Also its first major target becomes recruitment. The whole issue of recruitment (both wholly new and from within fandom) depends on the corporate image and the representation of the company - and the BSFA should honestly appraise itself, whether its ends are being served and whether indeed it has any policy or aims in this direction at all. My own opinion is that the BSFA successfully projects chaos and anarchy (not a criticism, a statement). OK. The officials are overworked and bedevilled at every turn by non-cooperation and apathy - the blame lies not with them but both with the BSFA image and the nature of the average reader of sf.

"The BSFA is the official spokesman of the membership and the field (by default). It does not behave as such. It has responsibilities both of representing SF and the membership to the outside world on the one hand, and providing services to the neo- and long-established fan. (For instance many a neofan knows little about fandom when he joins the BSFA - in this case what is needed is a booklet like Lin Carter's series on aspects of fandom in IF, also explaining how he can participate. I feel strongly about the representation of the BSFA outside the field. How on earth can anybody take it seriously if we don't? Ted Tubb talks of 'presenting an official front to publishers, etc.' (PERT 2): the potential here not just for respect, but for influencing recruiting and even finance from outside (you hadn't thought of that one) is inexhaustible. We should take example from the amateur bodies of other fields: the British Interplanetary Society, for example, is cited as an Opinion in the Press; NICAP on UFO sightings; or the European Technological Forecasting Association, or the Design Research Society. My God. We don't even have a policy on the introduction of SF material to various University courses.

"Which brings us to fans. One very good reason, but no excuse, for the

lack of official opinion, is that the BSFA officials, being a special sort of human, have enough on their plates without inciting animosity; but it is fatal (moralewise) for an official body to play both sides of the game. These officials do hard jobs to the best of their ability; they do it for love of the field that has given them much enjoyment; they volunteer and are elected often because nobody else will break out of their apathy and selfishness; they do it because, in the words of the song, 'it's so sad to watch a sweet thing die'. And let's not kid around, the same excitement we find in our reading is available in the fantastically changing social environment of ours: the BSFA does have exciting potential, and it is up to us to realise this, or by Crom we deserve all we get and moan about. The only person who has any right to complain is one who has tried to do something.

"Like Hartley Patterson's TechSFSoc, the larger part of the Aston group came simply to borrow books or to drink in convivial company: the next circle, perhaps one in ten, came to discuss and argue: the inmost circle, about one in twenty, actually wanted to do something. The BSFA, run by the last group, elected by the second group (perhaps) has to acknowledge all three."

(It is almost impossible to tell at any given moment just who comprises "fandom" in the general sense. The BSFA has a membership register, and its composition is known down to the last name. Probably less than half those attending the annual Convention are BSFA members, which is about the best approximation that we can get. Some non-members, though, have been members, possibly even found fandom originally through their BSFA membership. Which complicates things further. AM)

JOE BOWMAN: "If a member does not want to play any part in the B.S.F.A. activities and merely wants to read and follow up the news in his favourite medium, it seems quite right that he should, as long as he stays a member and thereby helps to keep the Association strong in numbers. I am new to the Association myself but the apathy of most members surprised me."

GORDON JOHNSON makes the point that many of the younger fans will not be able to afford to travel to Heidelberg, and the 1970 Eastercon should therefore be arranged with their interests strongly in mind. He also wants to see more advertising, to bring in some of the many readers who borrow sf from the library where he works and their ilk elsewhere. "Perhaps", he concludes, "we could propose a swap arrangement with s-f publishers - they put a small advert on the last page of their s-f books about us, and we give them free adverts in VECTOR, and possibly act in an advisory capacity on s-f for them."

AUDREY WALTON: "I have often wondered why we don't have a sort of follow-up Welcome Committee that keeps in touch with new members, say for the first two years, writing them a personal letter once a quarter. The aim being to encourage them to write to one another and take part in hobby-activities, or even to set up local groups. An anthology from fanzines and a short story issue of VECTOR are both things that are sure to arouse a new interest in BSFA activity both from the writer and the reader's standpoint. I also wish that we could see more artwork in BSFA publications, it does give relief to the eyes and makes things seem less like lesson papers. The story contest is another great idea to whip up some enthusiasm among fans.

"What about a professional editor - or is that too expensive an idea? Going back to encouragement for new fans - how about a sort of reading course for beginners with guidance from above? With regard to the short story VECTORS, why don't you sell them? You could put a slip in the previous VECTOR and those interested could send for it, or you could also make it optional in the subscription, i.e.,

30/- for 6 VECTORS or 35/- for 8 VECTORS (which would include the short story issues). (A concealed sub-increase, in fact! Might work, if we could guarantee the appearance of the extra 2. As it is, you're lucky if you see 6 per annum anyway. AM)

"Why did the idea of an emblem for the BSFA fall through? (It hasn't - yet. Or to put it another way, it's on the stocks again. Watch the Bulletin.) Also it could be used as a permanent part of the design on a VECTOR cover. It is a good idea to have something that can be recognised and become familiar. It might help to improve the VECTOR image somewhat. You ought to be able to see a magazine lying about and know it is a VECTOR without reading the inscription."

JOHN MARSHALL (of Leyton): "With the exception of closing the membership list, I agree with the comments and suggestions of David Piper. If spreading the good word on S.F. to the unenlightened is one of the aims of the Assn., closing the membership list seems pointless."

KEITH FREEMAN's other letter again: "The only people who can tell us what else is wanted are those members who require something else - let them ask and no doubt the committee will see what can be done."

"One thought has just struck me - could not the 'meat' from Pertinence be re-printed in VECTOR to get wider coverage? I'm not doubting your judgement on who should get Pertinence, but feel the essence of it should receive wider publicity." (Just so long as the editor of VECTOR agrees, and as someone other than myself is willing to do the necessary re-editing, I'm all for it! AM)

TONY UNDERWOOD: "As for why the BSFA was formed, LiG have their own version almost the same as yours but the words contained more alcohol." (LiG is the Liverpool Group, I'd better explain Just In Case. AM)

GERALD BISHOP: "I would like to see a section of VECTOR devoted to fanzine reviews, or possibly, as Hartley P. says, subsidise Peter Roberts's Lostwithiel whatsit, not only for circulation to neos, but the whole membership. I would also like to see the Bulletin a bit more newsey and chatty, and not the cold, clinical journal it is at the moment. It seems rather official, and might scare off new members from rejoining, as the BSFA at the moment offers no more than an irregular VECTOR and the Bulletin for thirty bob a year."

"I think that one of the most important functions of the BSFA is to act as a jumping off ground for the neofan into fandom at large. This it could do by the distribution of Lost CP or a similar review zine of fnz, which acts as a directory of fandom outside the BSFA into which the neo can expand. I have gained my intro to fandom through the BSFA, and only rejoined this year so that I can be of service to the neo and other fen via the BSFA Information Service. If it hadn't been for this, I would have been satisfied with writing for the zines outside BSFA which I have contacted through them, and my correspondences with its members set up over my period of membership. It is imperative that the Committee remember this fact, and try to cater more for it. 'Tis a fact of our existence, and cannot be ignored. The neo must be welcomed into fandom by us, and not frightened off by an officious Bulletin and irregular VECTOR, which all costs him thirty bob a year, and this sum, it must be remembered, means a lot to a young person still at school."

ALSO HEARD FROM were David Piper, Dan Morgan, and Sid Birchby; what they had to say between them amounted mainly to "Thanks", though Piper does mention contacting his solicitors on the grounds that I have been either exposing, or betraying, the Association's origins. All of you who wrote, many thanks for so doing. AM

RESPONSE to SECOND PERTINENCE was slightly less than that to the first issue. Altogether, a total of 17 letters were received following No. 1, and only 14 following No. 2. (Some of those on No. 1 were not received until No. 2 had gone out though.)

CIRCULATION: as before, plus Andrew Porter, Gray Boak, Rob Johnson and Pete Weston - who have also received copies of the first two. If there is a FOURTH PERTINENCE, however, the circulation is liable to be pruned heavily, only those who have acknowledged any of the first three, plus those actively involved in the administration of the B.S.F.A., being left in.

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