

Booker Prize 1970

Notes of a Meeting held on 6 November 1969

At the meeting in the Booker Flat at the St. James's Hotel on 6 November, which was attended by Mark Longman, Jocelyn Baines, John Murphy, Marilyn Edwards and George Hardinge, the following first thoughts and initial suggestions were made about publicity for the second Booker Prize:-

1. It was thought that there should be a small, private drinks party, to which the literary editors and in each case the appropriate gossip columnists (i.e. a total of two people from each paper) should be invited to meet the PA and the Bookers Books Committee in an attempt to enlist their support in general and their good-will, since they are all people with a genuine interest in books and literature who are likely to take a sympathetic attitude towards the prize. The newspapers to be invited would, on first thoughts, be the Observer, the Sunday Times, the Sunday Telegraph, the Daily Telegraph, the Times and the Guardian.
2. It was suggested that some sort of outside poll should be run after the panel had announced their short list, so that there might be, so to speak, an alternative winner selected by a body such as the Library Association or the Booksellers Association. Or possibly the poll might be run by a national or provincial paper, such as the Evening Standard or the Scotsman.
3. As regards point-of-sale publicity material, it was suggested that Ross Higgins should be asked to give his advice about what should be done and what should be offered to bookselling shops in general, except for W.H. Smith shops. As regards W.H. Smith shops, it was agreed that Mark Longman would talk to Troughton and try to arrange for Smith's to produce their own material suited to the Booker Prize.
4. As regards the party for the announcement, it was thought that a private house within, say, 10 miles of central London and preferably with literary associations might be a promising and unusual venue. Various houses were suggested. There was some doubt as to whether we should take the cheapest and easiest and most practical way out, i.e. a drinks party free to the guests, or whether, at the other end of the scale, we should give a huge ball and general brouhaha with expensive tickets.

The next meeting of the Committee was arranged for 3.30 p.m. on 4 December, to be held at the Booker Flat.