

ME/1/69

Private & Confidential

T H E P U B L I S H E R S A S S O C I A T I O N

1970 Booker Prize

Publicity Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Publicity Committee
held at the Booker Flat, St. James' Hotel on
Thursday, 4 December 1969 at 3.30 p.m.

PRESENT

Charles Tyrrell (Chairman)
Mark Longman
Jocelyn Baines
George Hardinge
Eric Hiscock
Marilyn Edwards

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from John Murphy and Tom Maschler.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Publicity Committee held on 6 November 1969, circulated on 11 November were approved.

1. Introductory Press Party

It was agreed that a small drinks party should be held at the Booker Flat on 15 January at 6.30 p.m. to introduce the 1970 Booker Prize to the Press in order to gain their interest and future support. Eric Hiscock kindly agreed to liaise with Marilyn Edwards in drawing up an invitation list. It was agreed that an explanatory letter rather than an invitation card should be sent to them from Booker McConnell and the Publishers Association jointly. Mark Longman, as President of the Publishers Association kindly agreed to address the Press on this occasion.

2. Short-list poll

Eric Hiscock agreed to approach the Evening Standard with an eye to that newspaper running a speculative

poll on the short-list, in co-operation with its readers, on the lines of which book would they choose as the winner, and their reasons why.

3. Point-of-Sale Publicity Material

George Hardinge undertook to speak to Ross Higgins in order to gain his advice on the publicity requirements of bookselling shops in general.

Mark Longman agreed to talk to Dick Troughton in the hope that W.H. Smith will produce their own publicity material suited to the Booker Prize.

4. The Announcement of the Winner of the Booker Prize

Date of Announcement It was agreed tentatively that the Announcement of the winner should take place on Tuesday, 21 April.

Prizegiving After some discussion it was agreed that Mark Longman should approach Jennie Lee in the hope that she would be willing to present the cheque to the winner. It was also suggested that Lord Goodman, Malcolm Muggeridge and John Betjamen might be approached as speakers, but that the outcome of the invitation to Jennie Lee should be awaited first before acting further.

Place and Form of Announcement After much discussion it was felt that the Party should be kept as small as possible, still inviting extensive press, i.e. Editors, Literary Editors and Columnists. If publishers not involved directly with the literary prize were to be invited, then the tickets should be sufficiently expensive to encourage only the few who are most keen. It was agreed provisionally that a dinner was easier to control in all ways than a stand-up drinks party, and that this is what should be aimed at, as it would avoid freeloading and an inattentive audience.

After discussions about the place at which the Reception should be held, the Committee agreed that the six following should be suggested to television:

Chiswick House, Kenwood House, Brooks's Club, Stationers' Hall, Café Royal, Savile Club.

It was felt that at this stage no more definite arrangements could be made until television had been approached and given a chance to choose the place themselves as involvement on their part in this would provide us with a good publicity insurance. If this was not practicable, then plans would have to be reconsidered slightly. At this stage it was estimated that the party would consist of just over 100 people, but should be kept down as near as possible to that figure.

5. Television and Radio Coverage

Marilyn Edwards reported that Radio 3 were discussing the possibility of a programme on literary prizes at the time of the announcement with emphasis on the Booker Prize but she was waiting to hear; also that some interest had been shown by 24 Hours but again at this stage nothing was definite. BBC TV2's Review programme, which gave the Booker Prize such large coverage last year, unfortunately refused to do anything at all on it this year, but there was a possibility of Late Night Line-Up being interested.

6. Press Coverage

Eric Hiscock strongly recommended that the Sunday papers should be involved in the Booker Prize this time, and that a good person to approach would be Michael Bateman of 'Atticus' on the Sunday Times.

7. Literary Prizes in general re: Publicity

Jocelyn Baines made the point that from the publicity angle it might be reasonable for there to be one prize-giving day for all literary prizes in the country, which would surely benefit all literary prizes concerned as the publicity should be extremely large for an event that would be as major as this. The Committee considered the idea with much interest, and it was agreed to discuss it at a later date.

8. The Chairman thanked Eric Hiscock for attending and giving help and advice to the Committee.

No further meeting was arranged.