

Tentative draft for lines of speech by M.F.K.L. on January 15th

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is not a speechmaking occasion, so I will be very brief. As Charles Tyrrell has said, the object of this small gathering is to establish contact between, on the one hand, those members of the press who really like books and believe that they matter and, on the other, the organisers of the biggest literary prize ever awarded in Britain. Between these two parties one would expect to find a strong mutual interest - though an altruistic one, since no-one stands to gain anything except the satisfaction of advancing the cause of book-reading in general.

If you believe that what I have just said expresses the situation correctly, then it really becomes a case of 'over to you'. Publishers and business men are not equipped to suggest the ways and means of journalism and literary journalism to an expert assembly such as yourselves. You have the imagination and experience of your craft - any attempt to teach you your business would be sheer effrontery on my part, or our part, so you will be spared any amateur suggestions or meddling.

But we would much like your suggestions for promoting the Booker Fiction Prize - for making it more widely known, and more of an excitement among the reading public, as is the Prix Goncourt in France. We would be grateful too for advice on two

particular points. They are these:

1. From the point of view of publicity in the press, would it be better if the gathering at which the announcement of the winner is made were held at midday - lunch-time - rather than in the evening? Would this give the newspapers that are interested a better chance of using and developing the announcement as a new item?

2. Would it be a worthwhile exercise to try to organise a press conference of short-list authors after they had been chosen but before even these authors themselves knew which was the winner? Would a representative from each paper be likely to come to such a conference? We seek your advice.

Having promised a short speech I will now keep my promise by thanking you all very much for your interest in this project, which I believe to be a genuinely exciting and important one, and for coming here tonight to discuss it.