

Book Prize 1973

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held at the National Book League
7 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BB, on Thursday, 21 December at 11.0 a.m.

Present: Mr Rayner Unwin (Chairman)
Mr Colin Eccleshare
Mr Martyn Goff
Lord Hardinge
Mr Tom Maschler
Mr Peter Smith
Mr Michael Weekes

In attendance: Miss Marilyn Edwards

1. Joint Chairmen

(a) Mr Rayner Unwin introduced Mr Colin Eccleshare who was to take up the P.A. Presidency in April 1973 and would therefore succeed Mr Unwin from that date as Joint Chairman of the Booker Prize Organizing Committee.

(b) Mr Michael Weekes then announced that because of his other responsibilities Mr John Murphy would no longer be able to attend the Booker Prize committee meetings and that he himself would succeed him as Joint Chairman. The Committee, while welcoming Mr Weekes, also expressed their regret that Mr John Murphy who had done so much to create the Prize initially, and given so much valuable help in the later stages, would no longer attend. The Committee's deepest thanks were conveyed to Mr John Murphy for his past services. Mr Peter Smith was then formally elected as the second Booker representative on the Committee.

2. 1972 Prize

Mr Peter Smith reported that Booker-McConnell Ltd were undisturbed by the publicity which accrued from Mr Berger's gesture on receiving this year's prize (but of course did not agree with the substance of Mr Berger's remarks) and that certainly the prize would continue for the originally agreed period of seven years, this having been its fourth year. Mr Smith reported, however, that a decision would have to be reached by the Directors of Booker-McConnell before the end of next year as to whether this period should be renewed.

3. Future Rules of Prize

(a) Short-list Publicity and Point of Sale Material

Under the current rules of the Prize 4(ii) publishers agreed to 'contribute up to £40 towards co-operative advertising if the book reaches the short list'. It was originally agreed by the Committee that this should include point of sale publicity material, but as the maximum amount of money that could be expected in any one year would

be £240, which would clearly not cover both co-operative advertising and a short-list poster or card, Booker-McConnell to some extent have been subsidizing this exercise. Mr Peter Smith reported that Booker-McConnell felt as a matter of principle that publishers should support and sponsor the point of sale material and therefore Booker-McConnell would no longer help to contribute towards this but they would finance co-operative advertising. The Committee sympathized with this argument and agreed that short-list publishers should be encouraged to participate more in the overall publicizing of the short list. In order to finance the point of sale material successfully, and in view of the fact that Booker-McConnell would no longer be part sponsors, it was agreed that Rule 4(ii) should be amended to read that short-list publishers should 'contribute up to £100 towards a co-operative poster'.

On the question of short-list point of sale material members of the Committee felt that publicizing of this in bookshops was extremely important. Mr Goff suggested that a permanent short-list poster should be designed and overprinted at the time of the announcement. This would mean that the posters could be sent to bookshops and libraries much more quickly than had hitherto been the case. It was agreed that liaison should also take place early in the year with W. H. Smith.

(b) Addition to Rules

The Committee agreed that an additional clause should be put in under "Conditions of Award" to read 'It is hoped that all short-list publishers will use every means available including sale or return, see-safe, etc. to get short-listed books into bookshops'.

(c) Charge to Publishers

As was agreed and is reported above, the charge is to be increased to short-list publishers (Rule 4(ii)). However, the Committee felt that Rule 4(i) whereby the winning publisher agreed 'to spend not less than £500 on direct, paid-for, media advertising of the winning book, including a winning poster or show card, within three months following the announcement of the award' should remain as it stands, on the basis that most winning publishers would spend much more than £500 and it should be left to their discretion.

(d) Simultaneous Paperback Publication of Winning Book

It was suggested that paperback publication of the winning book on announcement should be investigated. However, the Committee felt very strongly that this would be impracticable and not altogether desirable as the function of the Prize was not only to promote the novel but also to promote the sales of hardback novels.

(e) Timing

The Committee felt that the timing of last year's prize had been satisfactory and that the timing should remain the same for 1973.

4. Judges

The Committee discussed the future number of Judges and felt that the number would have to be related to the personalities of those involved. On the whole it was felt that three was the ideal number, but in certain

circumstances five would be preferable. The question of continuity was discussed and the Committee felt that while it was possibly useful it was certainly not essential. The names of possible Judges suggested for 1973 were:

Tom Stedman.

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| John Bowen | X Mary McCarthy |
| Anthony Burgess | X Karl Miller (<i>randomly decision</i>) |
| A. S. Byatt | <u>Iris Murdoch</u> |
| Margaret Drabble | Robert Nye |
| Jackie Gillott | V. S. Pritchett |
| John le Carré | George Steiner |

The Committee decided that to form the basis of the 1973 panel they should invite V. S. Pritchett and Mary McCarthy. Marilyn Edwards agreed to approach V. S. Pritchett and Tom Maschler Mary McCarthy.

finally

5. Co-ordination with Other Literary Prizes

The Committee felt that some measures should be taken to co-ordinate other literary prizes and suggested that the National Book League as an autonomous body should carry out this exercise. It was felt that as a result of this it would be seen more clearly whether others were in favour of a co-operative day/week or against, and if the latter at least steps could be taken to ensure that 'clashing' would not occur.

6. Presentation of Prizes

After some discussion the Committee agreed that the dinner was probably the ideal format, but that numbers had become too large to handle. It was therefore agreed that the 1973 presentation should be a dinner but that only 'essential' wives or husbands (i.e. the wife or husband of the winner, speaker etc) should be invited.

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7. Trophy

It was agreed that the trophy for future years should be scaled down to approximately 10", though the design would remain the same.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee would meet immediately replies had been received from V. S. Pritchett and Mary McCarthy to discuss the further planning of the panel of Judges.

(Marie Edelman) (46)
Elizabeth Jan Howard (49)
Karl Miller

John Wayne (47)

Edna O'Brien

Prize: 21 Nov
Noel Coward (1)
RAS Butler (2)
Peggy Ashcroft (3)
Paul Scofield (4)