

1. We would commit ourselves to donating a prize of £5,000 per year.

2. We would commit ourselves to paying administration and publicity expenses of up to £2,500 per year.

We would commit ourselves to this total amount of £7,500 per year for two years in the first instance, with the option (and present intention) of continuing for a further 3 years in the second instance and with the option of continuing for a second period of 5 years in the third instance.

We would undertake to decide whether we were prepared to continue for the 3rd, 4th and 5th years half way through the second year i. e. we would give 6 months notice either way. We would give a similar period of notice before the beginning of the second five year period.

3. We suggest that it might be reasonable to ask the publishers of the book awarded the prize in any one year to contribute £1,000 to the administrative and publicity expenses for that year.

1. The Project

To institute a really significant literary award in the U.K. - along the lines of the Prix Goncourt.

2. The Award

For the best work of fiction to be published in England each year, written by an English author (or an author domiciled in England, writing in English?).

The award would be given to either an established author or to an author who had never been published before.

3. Objects in Instituting the Award

(i) To reward merit

In most other occupations there are formal awards (or honours). There should be one for authors too. The winning author would gain both honour and a very substantial financial reward.

(ii) To increase the sale of books

We believe that the award will help to raise the status of the author in the eyes of the public and thereby to encourage the public in the habit of buying books.

The immediate result of the award, if it is properly and skilfully publicised, must be to stimulate far greater sales for the winning book than it would otherwise have achieved. It is hoped that past or future works of the winning author will also have greater sales than they would have done. Lastly, it is hoped that book buying in general will be encouraged.

The beneficiaries will be the author and his hard cover publisher: there should also be a benefit later to the soft cover publisher.

(iii) To assist Bookers Books

The reason why Bookers Books is prepared to pay for the award is because it hopes thereby to enhance its reputation and encourage authors (not necessarily the prize winners) to become associated with Bookers Books in the same way that several well-known authors already have.

4. Name of the Award

We accept your argument that it is not essential for our purposes to have our name for the award and that for other purposes it would be better if the award were to have a more obviously public, national and high-sounding name.

We would not therefore insist on Bookers' name being stuck on to the award. But it is only honest to say that this makes it all the more essential for the award to be publicly associated - in publicity relating to the award as well as on the award-giving occasion itself - with Bookers Books and their business, which is an 'authors' business'.

Assuming that this were agreed we would fall in with your views on the best name for the award.

5. Judging the Award

The two aspects of this are who should judge and by what criteria.

(i) Who should judge?

Your view is that critics should be the judges. You were against the idea that publishers should be among the judges.

Our view is that certainly critics should be among the judges but we are not so sure that publishers should be automatically ruled out. Obviously there must be no hint of favouritism and a publisher member of the panel might be embarrassed to vote for his own author. But this problem is met and overcome in many other fields either by the judge not being allowed to vote for his "own" entry or some other simple mechanism. The great advantage of including some publishers on the panel seems to be that they are able to look at books in other than strictly pure (whatever that means!) literary terms. The relevance of this ability is clearer when we come to:

(ii) What criteria?

The obvious criteria is excellence (in the eyes of the judges). But we then run slap into the category problem. How do you compare an excellent historical romance with an excellent novel that features the racial problem in the U.S.A. today? Put another way - how should the judges judge between "Ulysses" and "Gone With The Wind".

5. Judging the Award (Contd.)

(ii) What criteria (Contd.)

You said the other day that you thought that one criterion (which might resolve the category problem) was that the award should be given to books susceptible of being read by the greatest number of people. I may be misquoting you but while we agree with you this might raise the question of avant-garde versus what is currently O.K. today. I think at our next meeting we should try to pin down our criteria more closely. But it is in this area where publishers as judges might help - in addition to critics - in following complicated criteria.

6. Conditions of Entry

We agree that only English publishers should be allowed to submit books. We suggest that the entry by each publisher should be restricted to one or two books at the most.

Incidentally, I take it that we are talking about manuscript rather than published books. Half the virtue and value of the award would be lost - wouldn't it - if the winning book was already out? How does this work with the Prix Goncourt?

7. Only One Prize

We would like the award to cover only one category i.e. fiction as we think that this will provide single, unified impact and interest. Later perhaps we might consider whether further prizes for categories should be instituted.

8. Administration

We are assuming that the Publishers' Association will be intimately concerned with the award. Can we rely on them for administration? Or must we think of some other person or persons?

9. Publicity

You have a candidate (Miss Graham Bell?) We'd love to meet her. We'd also like to be part of the team that briefs and continues to brief whoever handles the publicity. This is partly because we think we have something to contribute in this area and partly because publicity is the justification of our financial involvement.

10. All Other Points

To be discussed at our meeting.