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press release

From the Publishers Association, 19 Bedford Square, London, W.C. 1.

Embargoed until 8 p.m., Tuesday 22 April, 1969.

We would be grateful if all journalists attending the Drapers Hall reception would make this a verbal embargo until Dame Rebecca West has officially made the announcement so that the surprise element will be as great as possible.

BOOKER PRIZE

The winner of the first £5,000 Booker Prize for fiction is P.H. Newby for his novel Something to Answer For. This announcement was made by Dame Rebecca West in the Drapers Hall last night at a reception to celebrate the event at which she presented Mr. Newby with a trophy and, more valuable but less elegant, a cheque for £5,000.

Altogether 62 books were considered by the judges, W.L. Webb (Chairman), Dame Rebecca West, Stephen Spender, Professor Frank Kermode and David Farrer, who released their short-list of the final six contenders a month ago.

In his citation on behalf of the judges, W.L. Webb said:

"I come to praise P.H. Newby, but must first lay respectfully to rest - for this year at least - the other readers we short-listed. Two of ^{writers} them, Iris Murdoch (The Nice and the Good) and Muriel Spark (The Public Image), are rightly established among the most gifted novelists of their generation. Nicholas Mosley (Impossible Object) is an intriguing dark horse who has exercised many keen students of form. And the other two, Barry England (Figures in a Landscape) and Gordon M. Williams (From Scenes Like These) are not only men of promise, but writers who have delivered work worth introducing in such company.

"And now to the winning book. Something To Answer For is a considerable novel, a work with which, we think, Mr. Newby has extended his range, which was not the case with some other established writers on our list. Beside much that is genteel or sensational, too decorative or too thinly cerebral in English fiction today, its vision, its concreteness and its finely articulate energy are properly to be prized.

"These good sugar daddies (Booker McConnell) who have made all this possible can feel proud of this first novel to take their name. And all of us in the profession of literature and kindred trades can rejoice that such a modest and dedicated practitioner of the art of the novel should be respected and rewarded in this most practical way."

P.H. Newby, who is Controller of the BBC's Third Programme, is the author of seventeen previous novels. He won the Atlantic Award in 1946 and the Somerset Maugham Award in 1948. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Chalfont St. Giles.

For those interested in the tax aspect of literary awards, it has now been officially confirmed that the Booker Prize is tax free.

For any further information please telephone Jill Mortimer 01-580 6321