

Minutes taken by G.H. at the meeting on Monday, July 6th about the next Booker fiction prize, at which were present Mark Longman, Tom Maschler, Mike Herder, Martin Goff and myself, John Murphy being ill and unable to come:-

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A plan was put forward, and seemed in general to be agreed, whereby the whole timing and organisation of the Booker prize would become quite different.

It would become an autumn prize and the announcement of the prize would come very close to the publication date of the prize-winning novel. This would be achieved by changing the rules as follows: to be eligible for the prize a novel would have to be submitted to the panel in proof between July 31st, 1970 and August 1st, 1971. Also to be eligible, a book submitted would have to be scheduled for publication between September 1st and November 15th, 1971.

The original rule that publishers could submit two titles only would apply as before. In order that there could be no risk of it becoming simply the 'Booker Autumn Prize', the panel would have the power to call in novels published between January 1st and September 1st, 1971, and any novels so called in would be equally eligible for the prize as those submitted by publishers.

The prize-winner would be announced in early November and it is hoped that the short list would be known and publicised from approximately October 1st. If this could be achieved, the result would be that the short list would be announced just before the publication of most of the novels involved, and the announcement of the prize would come just after the publication of the winning novel, except of course in the event that a book published earlier was called in by the panel and awarded the prize.

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The meeting went on to consider the composition of this year's panel and T.M. suggested that we should drop the original formula and simply pick five people suitable to judge such a prize. If we can agree on these five we can then make one of them chairman. G.H. said that this and all other

questions would have to be referred to J.M. but that he himself, and he thought probably J.M. too, would have no objection to such a suggestion, if a panel could be found that everyone would agree to.

T.M. then proposed Angus Wilson and was supported in this by M.G. and M.L. G.H. opposed this, as he has done on the previous occasions that Angus Wilson's name has been put forward as a possible member of the panel. In the absence of J.M. this, like many other things, had to be left in the air.

M.G. suggested Malcolm Muggeridge as a member of the panel on these terms. G.H. is sympathetic to this and knows Malcolm well but it depends on what the panel is going to look like generally and whether Malcolm is available.

G.H. said that J.M. and M.G. and himself all felt extremely strongly that if we were to have a literary editor as chairman again it could be nobody except Jack Lambert.

T.M. proposed F.R. Leavis and Christopher Logue as possible members of the panel. He pointed out that the catch about Leavis was that he was unlikely to accept. G.H. pointed out that he had previously suggested Christopher Logue for an earlier panel without obtaining general approval.

T.M. was opposed to having any bookseller at all. G.H. feels very strongly that a bookseller should be on the panel and this could be an issue that has to come down to a vote. G.H. suggested that if we were to have a bookseller, it should be M.G. It was then said that M.G. was now too closely mixed up with the prize and the selection of the panel to become a member himself, also that his great help and powers in publicising the prize from the National Book League would be very much diminished if he was on the panel himself. It was by no means agreed that there would be a bookseller on the panel, but it was suggested that if we were to have one, then the name of John Sando might be considered.

It appeared to be agreed by everybody that we need one linking person to carry on from the last panel and that, subject to the choice of the other four names, the most probable and suitable person to serve in this capacity (if she is willing) would be Antonia Fraser.

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Obviously another meeting is needed fairly soon, as soon as J.M. is better again, to agree the first part of the above minutes, so that we can put out an announcement of the Booker prize. There is one fortuitous advantage about this change, which is that we would not be losing a year - for instance, if we were to try and speed it up and do it this year (which I would regard as impossible from a practical point of view), the result would be two Booker prizes in one year, which seems ridiculous.

Having agreed on the new formula for the prize, the next point is to make some progress on the choice of the panel.

A handwritten signature or set of initials, possibly 'J.M.', written in dark ink. The letters are stylized and cursive.