



The 'Fifth'

(WORLD'S FAIR) CONVENTION

Held July 2 & 3
in Caravan Hall
in conjunction with
New York World's Fair.

In addition, an account of the Futurian meeting, July, 1939.

A series of articles
written by Jack Robins
in July 1939, but
published only in 1940.

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Note: These articles were written from extensive notes taken at the different meetings. The statements quoted are accurate to the extent that the human ear can hear. There is nothing quoted that had not been said by the person referred to. The attendance at the Convention was determined by direct count. The author counted the number of people present at least four DIFFERENT times during the day referred to in the articles.

The Convention was officially opened at 2:30 PM. There were about 120 present, of which no more than twenty were women.

Moskowitz was chairman of the Convention.

In speaking on the significance of the Convention, Moskowitz pointed out that readers of Detective Fiction and of Western Fiction had never had conventions, whereas readers of Science Fiction were now having their fifth. He mentioned that the Convention had representatives from all of the professional science fiction magazines and also from Argosy.

In speaking on New Fandom, Sykora said that the New Fandom movement was for fans interested in getting ideas from science fiction. He pointed out that a number of authors like C.B. Simak think that science fiction is escape literature. New Fandom was trying to bring science fiction to life, Sykora stated.

When introduced to the Convention by Moskowitz, Leo Margolies, the editor of Thrilling Wonder Stories, said regarding the Convention, "I am Astonished. I didn't think you boys were so sincere." Leo said that the success of this Convention made him regard science fiction fans in a new and better light.

A letter from Wandrei and Deerling on the Lovecraft Omnibus was read by Kenneth Sterling, a science fiction author.

After being introduced by Moskowitz, Frank A. Paul read a long speech on "Science Fiction, the spirit of youth," to the Convention. "Science fiction is growing up and more people are reading science fiction," he said.

The picture, Metropolis, was the next feature on the agenda. This motion picture illustrates a time in the future when monopoly has developed to such an extent that whole cities are controlled by single agencies. The master of the city, Metropolis, finds that a woman is organizing the workers of his city. He consults a scientist to see what could be done about this. He finds that the latter has invented a robot which could replace any worker in his city, could work all hours of the day, since it could not tire, and would not make mistakes, thus being able to keep the number of accidents occurring each day very low. The master of the city orders the scientist to make a robot in the form of the woman who was organizing the workers. When the robot's shape and features were completely altered to make it resemble the woman, the master ordered it to incite the workers to riot and sabotage, to discredit the organizer in the eyes of the workers, but really to have an excuse for firing large numbers of workers at one time. The robot does a good job; the workers have been suffering under low wages and long hours for so long a time that it is very easy for the robot to incite them to riot against the master, and sabotage all machinery controlled by him. The inflamed workers and their

wives leave their children at home in their underground city and proceed on against the machines, wrecking some and putting the powerhouse out of commission. The latter action causes the worker's section of the city, which is deep underground, to become flooded. The woman organizer, however, rescues the workers' children. The scientist is killed and the secret of the robot thus destroyed. The master of the city finally makes peace with the workers and thus the picture ends.

John W. Campbell, Jr., the editor of Astounding Science Fiction, traced the development of science fiction from the period of the first issue of Amazing Stories, until the present.

Before the first issue of Amazing Stories came out, said Campbell, there were no science fiction magazines and no regular science fiction writers. The first few issues of Amazing had, for the most part, reprints of the Jules Verne, Edgar Allen Poe, and H.G.Wells classics, he stated. The stories tended to be fantasy rather than science fiction, he asserted.

After Amazing had been on the newsstands for some time, continued Campbell, new American authors and new ideas appeared. E.E.Smith, he said, was the first to introduce atomic power in science fiction. The "rocket ship" was "another entirely new idea."

Astounding came on the field in 1930, Campbell told the audience. Characters were introduced at the time. Action on other planets was developed to a "further extent" than ever before.

The next period began with the appearance of new magazines, he declared. The two main types of readers at this time were those who were interested in "new ideas" and those interested in "adventures on other planets" as written by Weinbaum.

The present phase of science fiction, he concluded, is characterized by new ideas plus new and better characters. In the stories about Johnny, the bear, one of the new kinds of characters, the world is portrayed, said Mr. Campbell, not as human beings view it, but as Johnny, a non-human, sees it.

Mort Weisinger, an editor of Thrilling Wonder, gave anecdotes on how various authors got started, and mentioned an amusing experience on the part of Dr. Keller.

Sykora introduced science fiction personalities. Among the editors and authors he introduced at this time were: Charles D. Hornig, (the editor of Science Fiction Magazine,) Korshak and Reinsberg, (the official representatives of Amazing Stories,) Willey Ley, L. Sprague de Camp, Lloyd A. Eshbach; Manley Wade Wellman, Otto Binder, Jack Williamson, Harl Vincent, Charles Schneeman, Nelson S. Bond, Edmund Hamilton, Ross Rocklynne, R. D. Swisher, Malcolm Jameson, John D. Clark, Isaac Asimov, and John Peterson.

Two letters were read at the Convention; one came from John Russell Fearn, and the other came from Thornton Ayre. A telegram was received from Thomas S. Gardner, and another from Daniell McPhail.

Others introduced were: Ackerman, Morojo, Bradbury, Jack Darrow, some members of New Fandom, Raymond Van Houten, Giunta, the Philadelphia fans, Jack S peer, Connie Rupert, Dale Hart, Walter Sullivan, David Reed, Milton A. Rothman, and Julius Pohl.

Kyle stood up after Pohl had been introduced and asked permission to say a few words. When Sykora granted him the floor, Kyle spoke on science fiction which, he said, "develops creative imagination." "Creative imagination," he said, is "that thing which stimulates progress."

Kyle pointed out that the Convention lacked six prominent fans. He suggested that the Convention admit Donald A. Wollheim, Fred Pohl, Robert W. Lowndes, and the other three barred fans who were waiting outside, if these fans promised not to cause any trouble.

Leslie Perri stood up and asked for a vote on Kyle's motion that the barred fans be admitted to the Convention. Sykora said in reply to Miss Perri that no motions were permitted at this Convention, and he did not once mention the six barred fans, either then, or later on.

Moskowitz announced the auction that was to follow and closed the first day of the Convention.

THE CONVENTION AFTER THE CONVENTION

July 2, in the "Griddle" on Lexington Ave. near 59th St.

Michel: Sykora has won the war, we shall win the peace.

Rothman: I don't know what I shall get for dinner.

Wollheim: You should have stood up and yelled at the top of your lungs.

Kyle mumbled, his mouth full of food, as Dockweiler pulled off his shoe. Dock threw it in a forward pass to Fred Pohl and yelled to the latter, "It's Kyle's." Fred sniffed at the shoe and said, "Yes it's Kyle's."

Wollheim: He would have laughed and laughed and laughed.

THE SECOND DAY
Monday, July 3, 1939

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The second day of the Convention was opened by Moskowitz at 3:00 oclock. About fifty people came.

Moskowitz asserted that the first day of the Convention had been a complete success. He mentioned that New Fandom would print all the speeches that had been made on the first day of the Convention.

Since no official minutes had been taken on the first day of the Convention, what was read in place of the minutes was part of the Convention program as printed in the Convention "bulletin."

Moskowitz gave a brief history of fan magazines, beginning with the first hektographed magazines and ending with the probable future fan mags. "Science fiction has always had an aim---uh---product, of making a better world," said Moskowitz in reference to the changes he predicted.

"Science fiction," said Sykora, in speaking on the relationship between science and science fiction, "is a force which would improve mankind in the future...."

Mr. Ruroy Sibley exhibited an Astronomy movie entitled, "Seeing the Universe Through the World's Largest Telescopes." Among the objects described in the pictures were: telescopes, the Moon, the planets, the Sun, the Comets, the asteroids, the Milky Way, Nova, and the Spiral Nebula. Mr. Sibley clarified the movie by means of cursory comments.

After the picture, Sykora announced the location of the "Science Fiction Indoor Baseball Game" to be held July 4, the last day of the Convention.

Taurasi spoke about Fantasy News and about the Queens SFL.

The auction, which had not been completed on the first day of the Convention was then run off to its conclusion after which the meeting was adjourned.

THE CONVENTION AFTER THE CONVENTION

In Flatbush, July 3, 1939.

Wollheim: Michel is not real, he is a projection. He cannot be drawn correctly.

Gillespie: I was just the way Freddie was when he was drunk.

Pohl: He said he was a confederate soldier so I said I was a souvenir. I told him I was a member of the U. S. Caviar.

HIGHLIGHTS

At the Fifth (World's Fair) Convention

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The first day of the Convention was officially opened at 2:30 PM, Sunday, and officially closed somewhere near 10:00 PM.

Six fans were barred from it.

The minutes of the Newark (the Fourth) Convention that were read were a sketchy outline of the Newark Convention as seen by Moskowitz.

There were no more than 120 people at the World's Fair Convention at its highest point. There were no more than twenty women at the Convention at any time.

In speaking about the members of New Fandom, Sykora said, among other things, "They don't heckle, they don't pass literature around, they go ahead and do things." Yes, they even decide to bar other fans from the Convention, according to a statement Sykora made to Lowndes that day, and according to what Taurasi and Moskowitz did at the Convention.

Mr. Ray Cummings, when introduced to the Convention gathering by Leo Margolies, stood up, accepted applause, and then sat down again without saying a word. Hoo-ray for Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Frank A. Paul read a long speech from some long sheets of paper.

Moskowitz introduced Otis Adlebert Kline, and was he surprised to find out that Mr. Kline had left just a few moments ago!

Campbell traced the development of science fiction from the first issue of Amazing Stories to the present issue of Astounding.

Present day stories, said Mr. Campbell, require "new ideas plus something else;" this "something else" he, later, revealed to be "Character."

We wonder where we heard Weisinger's gags before?

In telling how he got started as an author, Jack Williamson said he saw an ad which offered a "free copy of Amazing Stories to any one who wrote one." So he wrote one.

Will anyone give Mr. R. D. Swisher some kind of offer so that he can finally finish his Time Travel article?

David Reed found out that everybody at the Convention was an author. "Let the three unprofessional fans leave, so that we can all talk shop," he said.

One of the persons introduced at the Convention was not a fan, never wrote a story, never bought one of the magazines, and in fact, never read the stuff. He was (as named by David Reed) the "Jeep."

Science fiction, said David A. Kyle, "develops creative imagination." Creative imagination, according to Kyle, is "that thing which stimulates progress."

Sykora stated that no motions were permitted on the floor of the Convention.

The "Science fiction" auction took two nights to complete.

The second day of the Convention was officially opened at 3:00 PM and was officially closed at the Auction.

There were no more than 55 people at the highest point of the second day of the Convention.

THE WAY SCIENCE IS PROGRESSING! Moskowitz showed us how fan mags will be prepared in the future. "You think into a machine," he said, "and your thoughts are recorded by a print process." To get an illustration, he stated, all you have to do is think into your machine, and presto---there's your illustration.

Jupiter has eleven moons, according to Ruroy Sibley.

Ruroy Sibley made some comments on the Moon, the Sun, the Milky Way, the planets, Spiral Nebula, and Comets; motion picture that accompanied his talk, explained what he meant.

Bradbury had difficulty keeping awake.

The title of Ruroy's motion picture was "Seeing the Universe through the World's Largest Telescopes."

Sykora looked over Rubinson's "stfan," examined its pages very carefully to see what was written in it, told Rubinson he was sorry he (Bill) could not trust him (Rubinson), finally stated that he (Bill) should not be "too bullheaded about it" and signed the "stfan."

Sykora refused to let Kenneth Sterling's resolution on the floor of the Convention on the grounds that everybody agreed with it, and that, therefore, bringing it up on the floor of the Convention was unnecessary. If Sykora agreed with the resolution, then why should he have objected to permitting it on the floor of the Convention?

Fans Barred From Convention

Donald A. Wollheim, John B. Michel, Fred Pohl, Robert W. Lowndes, Cyril Kornbluth, and Jack Gillespie were barred from the World Science Fiction Convention by James V. Taurasi, Sam Moskowitz, and William S. Sykora, the three leading members of the Convention.

Taurasi who stood at the door most of the time kept back the six fans and almost barred Dick Wilson. Sam Moskowitz let Dick in and was considering the admission of the other six because of the insistence of Morojo and other fans at the Convention. But Taurasi would not admit the other six.

Several individual attempts were made by Kornbluth and Pohl, two of the barred fans, to get into the Convention. But Taurasi and Moskowitz easily caught them and sent them dashing downstairs.

Taurasi and Moskowitz did not consult the opinions of the people present.

The majority of the people attending the Convention were of the opinion that the barred fans should have been admitted, according to Leslie Perri who had spoken to most of the people at the Convention.

In referring to the Convention Committee's action in barring six Futurians, Morojo said, "It has spoiled the Convention for me."

When Lowndes tried to pass the registration desk at the time of the official opening of the Convention, Sykora stopped him and said, "I'm sorry, Doc, but you're on the black list." In reply to Doc's query as to why Sykora barred him from the Convention, Bill said, "It's not my doing." At one of its meetings, the Convention Committee, said Sykora, decided to bar Lowndes, Wollheim, and other Futurians from the Convention.

Sykora, Taurasi, and Moskowitz, have many personal grievances against Wollheim, Michel, Pohl, and some of the other Futurians.

Kyle stood up once during the meeting and suggested that the Convention admit the six barred fans. Leslie Perri jumped up and asked for a vote on Kyle's motion. Sykora, who was temporarily chairman at the time, refused to permit a vote on this motion and stated that no motions were permitted at this Convention. Sykora did not say anything further in reference to the barred fans.

The six barred fans were otherwise never discussed on the floor of the Convention.

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The meeting was opened at 2:30 PM by chairman Kornbluth.

The agenda was read to the assembly which accepted it after making a slight change.

The first point on the agenda was a discussion on the Future Science Fiction Club, the one most likely to succeed at present or in the near future.

Wollheim mentioned the good and bad points of the first and second ISA, of the FAPA, and of the SFL. New Fandom, said Wollheim, would most probably not be the science fiction club to take the place of the old science fiction clubs since it "grew up with the one specific aim of holding a World Science Fiction Convention."

Wollheim suggested that the future science fiction club be:

1. Functionally like the FAPA (with the duties of the officers specifically outlined.)
2. A large organization (as large as or larger than the old SFL)
3. Unattached to any professional organ or magazine.
4. Democratic.

Morojo felt that the club ought to be incorporated as a "Limited Corporation."

Gillespie thought that the club ought to be a "Federated Corporation."

Rothman was in favor of a Central Circulation or Mailing Bureau, and an organ like "Voice of Imagination."

It was suggested that an organization be formed, or an existing organization be reorganized, to make this new science fiction club.

General approval was given by those present.

Dick Wilson made the motion: that the minutes of this meeting be sent through the FAPA mailing with a ballot to enable FAPA members to vote on the various suggestions offered on the future science fiction club. This motion was carried unanimously.

The second point on the agenda was a discussion on the FAPA, in which Pohl pointed out certain illegalities in the recent elections.

The third point on the agenda was a discussion on the World Science Fiction Convention.

Lowndes suggested that those present at this meeting judge the Fifth (1939) Convention on the basis of the following points:

1. Did it offer a good program of science fiction entertainment?

2. Did it offer and permit free discussion of subjects of interest to all present?
3. Did it allow each person present to meet every one else, and did it permit the formation of little groups after the Convention to discuss the decisions of the Convention?
4. Did those who controlled the Convention respect the desires of fans as a whole as to how the Convention was to be run and did the Controllers respect the desires of the people at the Convention?

A good convention, said Lowndes, could be graded "good" on all four points.

The general opinions of the meeting can be summed up as follows::

1. There was sufficient science fiction entertainment. ("good")
2. Little free discussion was permitted. ("pocr")
3. The fans were permitted to meet in groups just before the Convention with the exception of six fans who were not permitted to enter. ("fair")
4. At least two persons tried to submit a motion to the Convention; one person tried to have a resolution submitted to the assembly but the Chairman of the meeting did not permit any motion nor any resolution on the floor. ("pocr")

The following motion was unanimously carried:

The group meeting here, found the Convention interesting but deplore the fact that no business or discussion took place, and that six persons were barred from the Convention, who might and would have attended.

The fourth point on the agenda was a discussion on the possibilities of future conventions.

It was stated that a conference was going to be called at Philadelphia to consider holding the next convention in Chicago.

The next convention must have something different and very attractive to be able to collect fans on a national scale, it was pointed out.

It was suggested that those who were members of out-of-town organizations bring up the matter of a Future Convention in their respective organizations.

The following motion was amended and carried as amended by the FAPA members at the meeting::

Persons here, who are members of the FAPA, consider themselves in favor of the proposal that an FAPA day be held on the day following the next Convention, but will not be made part of the Convention, and that FAPA members present will bring this matter up in the FAPA.

The following motion was also carried:

The group meeting here favors the proposal that the next Convention be held in Chicago.

A motion was passed changing the last point on the agenda from a discussion of "Michelism" to general discussion.

A committee was appointed to answer questions on "Michelism."

The following were some of the questions asked, and a paraphrase of some of the answers given:

1. Can one be a "Michelism" if he doesn't embrace any Communist ideas?

Answer: Yes.

2. Can a Fascist be a "Michelism"?

Answer: No, because Fascism is opposed to the free development of science.

3. What, in brief, is "Michelism"?

Answer: "Michelism" includes all those who believe in science fiction, who want to do something to make science fiction ideas come true, who want to further the cause of science fiction, and who want to make science fiction true to science. It was not originated by Michel but was named in his honor since he was the first to suggest a change in the traditions of science fiction.

4. Can one be a "Michelism" and adhere to religious doctrines?

Answer: Yes. "Michelism" opposes only those aspects of Religion which throttle science.

5. Does "Michelism" favor a Scientific Socialist World State?

Answer: the "Michelism" favor any Scientific (World) State whether it be founded by Esperantists, Technocrats, Socialists, or anyone else.

The following motion was made:

That the name "Michelism" be changed to something more suitable in connotation.

This motion was at first defeated, then reconsidered, and finally carried.

The following motion was also carried:

That a committee be formed with Michel as chairman to consider changing the name "Michelism."

The organization, "The Association for Democracy in Science Fiction Fandom," was discussed after "Michelism." The meeting agreed that this organization is needed in fandom.

A motion was carried:

That Kyle be delegated to prepare the foundations of the "Association for Democracy in Science Fiction Fandom."

The meeting was adjourned, the time being 6:35 PM.