

*Conspiracy '87*

**POCKET  
PROGRAMME**

Conference Centre  
& Metropole Hotel  
**BRIGHTON,**

45TH  
WORLD  
SCIENCE  
FICTION  
CONVENTION

**27 AUG.-1 SEPT. 1987**



**CONSPIRACY  
THEORIES**

# Conspiracy Theories

edited by Chris Evans

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*Conspiracy Theories* (November 1987), edited by Chris Evans, was  
a 50pp chapbook discussing the presence of Author Services Inc  
and related manifestations of L. Ron Hubbard at Conspiracy '87,  
the 1987 World SF Convention held in Brighton, England.

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\* Starred contributors prefer not to have their essays reproduced in digital editions of *Conspiracy Theories*.

# Introduction

## Chris Evans

It's ten years since I started attending British sf conventions. Gossip, disgruntlement and ill-will seem to be an integral part of them, with the latest juicy scandal often taking pride of place as a topic of informal conversation. Never, though, I have experienced one so controversial as Conspiracy '87, the 45th World Science Fiction Convention. And never has that controversy been so closely focused on a single feature of the convention, in this case the presence of New Era and Bridge Publications – respectively the British and American publishers of L. Ron Hubbard's ten-volume novel *Mission Earth* – and the Writers of the Future programme, which is sponsored by them and which carries Hubbard's name as its patron.

To say that the public profile of these organizations at Conspiracy '87 created unease and resentment in significant sections of the attendees would be an understatement; by the end of that long bank holiday weekend in Brighton, moral outrage had reached fever pitch. It was at this point that I, as tired and emotional as anyone else, decided that opinions should be canvassed, facts gathered and articles solicited for a publication intended to explore the issues underlying the unease. These issues are, I feel, larger than those which usually underlie the internecine squabbling that often besets the sf community.

The individual articles which follow will go into the various details of the controversy and draw their own conclusions. I should, however, explain briefly why I felt especially pressed to compile this publication. The chief reason was guilt. In the run-up to the convention, I was asked if I would be interested in participating as an sf author at the Writers of the Future stand, doing a session or two at their desk in order to offer information and advice to new writers. At first I was reluctant, knowing that Writers of the Future was closely associated with L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology. About Scientology itself I knew (and know) little. Some years before I had read Dr Christopher Evans's *Cults of Unreason* and John Sladek's *The New Apocrypha*, and there were also intermittent articles in the national press – none of which presented the movement or the activities of its adherents in a

favourable light. However, I was told that the Writers of the Future programme was strictly separate from Scientology, and I was also offered £100 for my services. It was this – primarily the money – which persuaded me to participate. I thought no more about it until the convention itself.

Neither I, nor I believe anyone else at all at Conspiracy '87, ultimately realized how much public presence New Era/Bridge/Writers of the Future would have at the convention. By the Friday or Saturday, friends and acquaintances from both sides of the Atlantic whose opinions I respected had begun to tell me in no uncertain terms that I should have nothing to do with Writers of the Future. It was scarcely a question of my reputation suffering since it's fair to say that of all the writers who have participated in the programme, I am the least well known to a mass audience. (During my one-hour stint at the Writers of the Future desk, the only person who came to the desk was Ian Watson, who was looking for his family.) It was more a question that *anyone* who was involved with WOTF would have their motives questioned and their integrity compromised.

Since then, the arguments have raged to and fro in my mind. Two weeks after the convention, in response to a request from Steve Green for my views on the controversy, and before most of the articles here had been received, I wrote: "if any other publishing company had so blatantly used a convention to promote their books and authors they would have caused a stir. The fact that Bridge/New Era already had, whether they liked it or not, an unsavoury reputation in the field, only makes matters worse. I regret my association with Writers of the Future and have no intention of supporting it again."

I now feel that this judgement was rather hasty; but more than that, I regret any expression of moral queasiness which is surely hypocritical given my less than elevated motives for originally participating in the programme, however invisibly. Nevertheless, there plainly remain legitimate areas for concern in all this, and *Conspiracy Theories* is intended to open up the debate. It does not, as will be seen, always provide answers to the areas of dispute and controversy, even those with a firm basis in facts.

I've tried, in the time available, to get as wide a range of opinions as possible, and I'm grateful to all contributors for undertaking the kind of unpaid work which is so much a hallmark of the sf community and gives evidence of that community's continuing commitment to open debate. As far as possible, I've also tried to let the articles speak for themselves. Where it has been necessary to seek out extra facts to fill gaps or answer queries, I've

tried to do so, and all my insertions are prefaced with the initials **CE**. Inevitably there's a great deal of overlap in some of the articles, and also many cases in which facts or perspectives are at variance, even from people who take the same "side" in the argument. I've made little attempt to eliminate redundancies or reconcile differences since people's *perceptions* of what was happening at the convention are central to the way in which the controversy arose. They are also sometimes all we have in cases where the facts remain elusive or unknowable.

I apologize in advance for the density of type on the page which may not be easy on some readers's eyes; considerations of cost made it essential that I minimize the page count in order to maximize the print run. A number of people sent money to help finance this publication. You know who you are. Thanks very much.

CHRIS EVANS  
October 1987

# Strange Vibrations

## Dave Langford

The most controversial item on the Conspiracy '87 fan programme was a tendentiously titled panel: “Why Have The Americans Hijacked The Worldcon?” Several spoof versions of the panel name were soon going the rounds, the most durable and most productive of glum nods being, “Why Has L. RON HUBBARD Hijacked The Worldcon?”

How was it that a World SF Convention held in Britain, where Hubbard has never been taken seriously, became so saturated with hype for this essentially minor author? And how, conversely, did the biggest publicity operation ever seen in British SF fall so flat on its face?

Let's go back a few years. I have a rather peculiar relationship with Hubbard's later works: reporting on or reviewing them is somehow never simple. *Battlefield Earth* has a tortuous publishing history, with St Martin's Press (USA) dropping it despite alleged huge sales, and New English Library (UK) taking the very unusual step of cancelling publication after they'd circulated proofs to reviewers. Mildly interesting items for an SF newsletter? When I reported NEL's change of mind in [Ansible](#), there were surprisingly strong reactions from people who went on about evil, prejudiced Langford running down a fine book just because he hated Scientology. [1]

“But,” I protested, “I carefully didn't say anything about the book's content, because I haven't yet read it...”

“Aha! He admits it!” was the approximate response from one source. “He doesn't even read books before attacking them!”

In due course *Battlefield Earth* crashed through the letter box, and I made a point of reading every word – expecting a fast-moving piece of trashy fun, along the lines of Hubbard's early stuff. I was deeply disappointed by the glacial pace, the windy vacuity, the bone-rattling clichés, the scientific codswallop, the self-congratulatory “this is *real* SF” introduction, etc. I said as much in a partly humorous, knockabout review: and again there were complaints that this was all a display of wicked anti-Scientological prejudice.

Other negative reviews I've written have provoked people to tell me that I'm too “mainstream” to enjoy escapism, too fond of fun to appreciate total

humourlessness, or too lowbrow to swing with post-structuralism. Only with Hubbard was my critical integrity at once challenged. (It could be cattily suggested that to some at least of his supporters, Hubbard's wonderfulness is such an article of faith that no other reaction is possible. [2]) I developed what you might call a mild, informed prejudice: that Hubbard meant trouble.

This was slightly reinforced at the 1984 British Easter SF Convention, when Fred Harris of Author Services Inc (an organization with seemingly limitless funds for the promotion of L. RON HUBBARD) took me very seriously aside and asked searching questions about the depth of my supposed Scientology prejudice ... a strangely off-key thing for a publicist to do. Later, having presumably discovered that that unfavourable Hubbard review was one of the several from which I'd cobbled together my talk for that very convention [3], he actually rang from Los Angeles and insisted on knowing why I hadn't liked the book. Again, off-key. Trouble?

I didn't feel worried. *Battlefield Earth* had been such a let-down that (as with a few other authors) I'd already decided I wouldn't bother reading any future works by Hubbard. No reviews; no trouble.

Until Conspiracy '87, the 45th World SF Convention....

"Oh God!" I kept hearing fans say as they discovered [the pocket programme book](#) – L. RON HUBBARD's Pocket Programme of the Future, as many insisted on calling it. The sponsored cover picture came from *The Invaders Plan*, first of a posthumous, ten-book Hubbard series. "Image of fascism," was frequently muttered (a big green fist with a spiked bracelet, clenched around the Earth); but what irritated was that it looked so cheap, so unstylish, a symbol of all that's old and hackneyed and bad about SF – as opposed to Jim Burns's lovely and very 1980s Souvenir Book cover. And one couldn't get away from this naff thing for the five days of the Worldcon.

A minor irritation, perhaps, but a constant one.

Then there was *L. RON HUBBARD'S* (in very big letters) *Writers of the Future Contest*: a flyer riding with Conspiracy Progress Report 4, five full pages in the infamous pocket programme, an enclosure full of "name" authors poised to dispense wisdom from the best spot in the Dealers' Room (next to the bar entrance), and posters without number.

Here one's reactions are more confused, since at first glance it surely must be a good idea to encourage new authors. Yet the young authors were such a tiny part of the scene. We had the omni-dominant banners of HUBBARD and HUBBARD and HUBBARD again, and beneath this holy

name the archangels and angels, the thrones and dominations and powers – established living authors who for one reason or another had lent their names and images, and who were endlessly touted as endorsing it all, and somehow through a shimmer of publicity the chief though never stated message seemed to be that they’re endorsing L. RON HUBBARD, good old L. RON HUBBARD himself, grand master of everything, rehabilitated at last! While as for the aspiring writers of the future, the ostensible *raison d’etre* of the whole circus ... amidst all the self-congratulatory glitter and hype they faded to invisibility.

Ah, Langford, you’re just prejudiced. But it’s an ambiguous business. Will the patronage and the established luminaries add lustre to the name of Hubbard; or will that name (hardly in the past an entrée to the topmost ranks of SF, or anywhere else) ultimately diminish those who march under it as well-meaning mercenaries?

Meanwhile, the constant repetition of L. RON HUBBARD all over the convention did somehow chafe. It was a question of taste. Wall-to-wall publicity on this scale (especially for someone we cannot take seriously as a writer) is alien to the frugal British. Perhaps one should grit one’s teeth. It is just the American Way.

After what the fans called L. RON HUBBARD’S Masquerade (at which, I was told by anguished watchers, endless costumes were announced as competing in the category sponsored by New Era and Bridge [\[4\]](#), thanks to L. RON HUBBARD), I met Ross Pavlac. He had chaired the 1982 Chicago Worldcon and had felt pretty bad about the Hubbard crew’s attempts to buy the whole event for *Battlefield Earth* publicity. He also passed disparaging remarks about similar mega-publicity efforts by Lucasfilms. He had, he said, never seen anything like the Author Services/New Era/L. RON HUBBARD “takeover” (his word) of a convention’s image. He was surprised and dismayed that the British had accepted an operation so much more blatant than the equivalent Author Services performances in America.

Many of the British had also been surprised and dismayed. The irritation level went up another degree or so, but by and large I stayed out of the way: in the fan suite, doing my bonhomous duty as a fan guest. This included listening to an awful lot of rude jokes and bitchy remarks about Writers of the Future and L. RON HUBBARD. The relentless over-publicization had so far succeeded in converting Hubbard from a minor curiosity into a fair-sized annoyance. Great work, Author Services Inc.

Came the Hugo ceremony ... and here my viewpoint is very much more personal. I was nominated for a couple of Hugos, and sat in the front row telling myself I was going to be very cool and calm about it. One shouldn't take awards *that* seriously. So there I was coated in clammy sweat, twitching a little as spurts of adrenalin hit the bloodstream, forcing myself to breathe from time to time: and suddenly everything halted.

Why was famous SF person Algis Budrys standing up there, droning on about how wonderful it was that that fine fellow Ramsey Campbell had signed up for the next wave of expansion of L. RON HUBBARD'S bloody Writers of the Future? Was he never going to *stop*? Why had the committee let him up there at all?

(A good question; clearly the convention committee had to some extent lost control. [5] It was later asserted that Mr Budrys did promise beforehand *not* to drag in the name of L. RON HUBBARD, nor that of New Era, nor to go on for more than a few sentences. But I believe he has a different version of events.)

It having thus been established that this was L. RON HUBBARD'S Hugo Ceremony, the presentations went on much as usual: except that Algis Budrys's words of hype had been the last straw for many fans who already felt – with what justice I do not know, since I have no intention of reading it [6] – that the Hugos' credibility had been damaged by the debated presence of Hubbard's *Black Genesis* on the novel shortlist. When Gene Wolfe read out the name of that nominee, large sections of the audience booed. (“Shame on you,” said Wolfe; with, some observers insisted, a twinkle in his eye.)

From a name that fans merely made bitchy jokes about, Author Services Inc had now promoted L. RON HUBBARD to the point where he was openly booed at the Worldcon's major event. There's publicity for you.

I suppose I should have smelt a rat when after posing with the other Hugo winners for innumerable photographs right there in the main hall, the word went round about an “official” photo call. Up, up, up; and it was the Skyline Restaurant, with a beaming Fred Harris welcoming us to the New Era party and saying – to me, personally – something about how glad he was that I'd “come in out of the fog at last”. This nearly drove me straight back out again, but I am a fairly polite little fan and tagged along after Brian Aldiss....

Looking round at the saturation level of L. RON HUBBARD publicity in this inner sanctum, Brian said something like, “My God, we've just won the L. RON HUBBARD Awards, formerly the Hugos!”

Possibly as an after-effect of the recent adrenalin rush, I thought this excruciatingly funny. So, later, when I'd had a camera pointed at me by some extremely clean-cut young men, I plagiarized the line as a wry parting joke which (I dimly thought) couldn't possibly give offence, even here. The effect was curiously disturbing. The former smiles became fixed and glassy, the local temperature seemed to drop several degrees, and I was told in very level tones to "Take it easy ... take it easy ... have a nice party."

After I'd left, it occurred to me that I couldn't imagine getting anything like that reaction by making a joke (even a much ruder one) about any other author at a party run by any other publisher I know. Again: there *is* something different about the L. RON HUBBARD crowd. The tiniest snigger at any of their doings merely indicates that the person responsible is suspect – a troublemaker.

Of course I may be exaggerating minutiae observed in the feverish aftermath of the Hugo presentations. But the little ratchet of tension and irritation had clicked up another notch ... especially when the world came back into clear focus and I started to feel I'd been manipulated. The "official photo call" ruse had sucked up my own small moment of glory into that omnipresent publicity machine.

By the final day, Monday, it seemed that a large number of fans had become similarly, cumulatively bothered by the grotesque scale of the L. RON HUBBARD promotions. They were still joking, but with much nastier overtones. Algis Budrys had helped tip the balance, with his tedious remarks usurping prime time at the Convention's "central event". Yes, I actually heard the phrases "central event" and "major event" in this context, from fans whose normal reaction to the Hugos is a giggle. Annoyance has reached a remarkable level when it overcomes the British pose of Total Cool about such things. American fans and professionals were likewise muttering in corners. Appalling anecdotes were swapped ("Did you know that when X was President of SFWA he got a call from Author Services Inc asking how much it would cost to buy L. RON HUBBARD a SFWA Grand Master award?"): however exaggerated or fictitious, they revealed the temper of the convention by the readiness with which they were believed.

I don't think Author Services ever quite comprehended the Brits' snobbish preference for understatement, subtlety and humour in advertising. Certainly their Conspiracy '87 splurge was utterly devoid of all three. Perhaps, in the end, Fred Harris did begin to see what went wrong.

This brings us to the infamous SFWA party on Monday night – with apologies again to mine host, Ian Watson. I have nothing to be proud of. My only excuses for becoming extremely off-sober were release of tension (I’d finally got through my last and most worrying programme item) and trying to keep up with Bob Shaw. It is not my normal practice, however provoked by people droning on about him, to pronounce distinctly and publicly the words “Oh, fuck L. RON HUBBARD!”

This led to a brief and mutually rewarding exchange of hurled drinks with Fred Harris (he had first go, but my glass was *much* fuller), and rather embarrassingly to fulsome congratulations from innumerable fans, authors, editors and agents throughout the rest of the week. Their response might indicate Author Services’ popularity, but I think they all missed the point.

That night, smiling Fred Harris finally lost his own cool. (Interested bystanders tell me that amongst the phrases he gabbled and I didn’t quite catch were, “You’re all washed up, Langford!” and “You’ll never work in this field again!”) At the risk of repeating myself, I note that it’s an unexpected reaction from a professional publicist who must once or twice before have heard some unflattering words about his late client. Again, things are *different* in Hubbard country. But consider ...

For five days his organization, fuelled by the limitless coffers of wherever, had hurled vast gobs of money at British fandom to glorify L. RON HUBBARD; and by the end of it all, Hubbard’s name was just a bad joke.

Even the vaguely charitable, “public service” flavour of the basic Writers of the Future idea seemed at the time to go sour – thrown into a new light, by relentless over-exposure of THAT NAME, as another though subtler aspect of this attempt to buy posthumous SF acceptance at any price.

I think that at the close of *Conspiracy*, picking up the vibrations from all around him, Fred Harris realized this ... and almost, one can sympathize.

Meanwhile, I rather suspect that I’ve blown my last chance to become a Writer of the Future. To be honest, each contact with Author Services and its doings has left me feeling increasingly negative about them and the things they promote: without being a particularly sensitive person, I kept running into these alien reactions, the false notes mentioned above. [7]

Why? Fandom, ever ready to leap to conclusions, offers an easy answer: “Ah, they’re all Scientologists, so any criticism of Hubbard sets them off because it’s blasphemy.” I wouldn’t know. (Though paranoid defensiveness

does certainly seem characteristic of the Scientology organization.) There are other possibilities. The Author Services Inc people might have a huge chip on their collective shoulder because they know their efforts are liable to attract just this dismissal – or because they chafe at the repressed knowledge that their promotion of L. RON HUBBARD as a great writer is in the last analysis absurd.

Without needing to pick and choose between these or other causes for the organization's ways, I know I want nothing to do with Writers of the Future. As an author and critic, I value my independent judgement: with my sincerely held opinion of *Battlefield Earth* and my general inability to keep my big mouth shut, I cannot get involved with people who go icy-cold at the merest hint that this trash is not an SF masterpiece. Meanwhile, as a science fiction fan, I value my independent sense of humour. I refuse to accept that (as implied in certain Author Services reactions noted above) there are secrets of the universe, such as L. RON HUBBARD, about which one may not make jokes.

Prejudice? Yes indeed. In all these little ways, Author Services Inc has resolutely managed to prejudice me. Further misgivings arise from my quite honest efforts to research L. RON HUBBARD himself and find whether he's as black as he's painted. These researches consistently imply that the final line of Hubbard's *Times* obituary was a delicate understatement: "He was not a nice man."

If I were a beginning writer, I'd think more than twice before associating myself with that name.

## The Footnotes

1. Concerning prejudice ... There's plenty of weird and worrying reportage of Scientology to be had, the bitterest diatribes usually coming from ex-Scientologists. It's hard for laymen to decide how much has changed since the bad old days. Is Hubbard's dismayingly paranoid and misogynistic *Dianetics* (1950) still a central text, or have things – as one hopes – moved on a bit? This isn't relevant to a critique of *Battlefield Earth*, but assumes some importance if you take the not uncommon view that Hubbard's name smells and the sole purpose of Author Services Inc is to sanitize it.
2. "It is in the uncompromisingness with which dogma is held and not in

the dogma or want of dogma that the danger lies.” – Samuel Butler, 1902.

3. “The Dragonhiker’s Guide to Battlefield Covenant at Dune’s Edge: Odyssey Two”, published in Dave Wood’s fanzine *Xyster* (1984) and most recently reprinted in the Langford booklet *Platen Stories*, a collection of articles published by Conspiracy ’87. [1997: also *Let’s Hear It For The Deaf Man* (NESFA Press, 1992) and its expansion *The Silence of the Langford* (NESFA Press, 1996).]
4. New Era Publications UK Ltd is the publishing house responsible for the Hubbard “dekalogy” (the term “vanity press” is being strenuously resisted in this article) and the Writers of the Future anthologies. The Bridge imprint is the American equivalent. • By a funny coincidence, New Era also publishes such works as Hubbard’s *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, for which I have just received a new stack of sales literature. The historically-minded may remember that Dianetics was the early name for what become Scientology. • By another funny coincidence, many fans reported being approached on the Brighton seafront by people with clipboards, who asked questions about whether one was satisfied with one’s present self, and whether one had heard of Dianetics.... • A note on scale: it is not unknown for Masquerade categories to be sponsored, or for flyers to go out with progress reports, or for multi-page ads to appear in convention publications, or for shiny four-colour pocket programme covers to be paid for, or for Dealers’ Room stands to be hired, or for SF events to be papered with glossy promotional literature, or for lavish parties to be thrown. But doing all these things and more does smack of excess.
5. Thanks to the combination of a lack of sponsorship co-ordination, the usual deadly fear of making a loss, and at least one disaster late in the day (previous arrangements for the Pocket Programme cover had fallen through), even the Conspiracy ’87 committee found itself dismayed by the huge preponderance of L. RON HUBBARD advertising. Presumably it’s difficult to say No when the representative of an outfit which has pumped large sums of money into the Worldcon asks for permission to make a “harmless” announcement. • The convention, I gather, just about broke even. • The committee did manage to resist a pre-convention attempt to arrange for the paid circularization of all members with flyers urging them to vote *Black Genesis* a Hugo ... but obviously it’s possible

to point the finger of censure at them for accepting (by some accounts, canvassing for) the overpublicization. Since everyone seems to agree that the publicity splurge went beyond excess into counterproductive overkill, one wonders how and why Author Services professionals allowed themselves to be lured on to their doom.

6. What I've been reading is Russell Miller's *Bare-Faced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard* – a fascinating book which incidentally reveals that I'm not the only one to find Hubbard's latest works uninviting. "A.E.van Vogt, whose endorsement of [*Battlefield Earth*] appeared prominently on the cover, later confessed that he had been daunted by its size and had not actually bothered to read it."
7. I have omitted a minor encounter or two, in which politesse prevailed and that odd, characteristic sense of strain was (though present) less tersely describable.

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For uniformity with the rest of *Conspiracy Theories*, this contribution omits the later addenda added by David Langford to [his existing online version of the essay](#).

# Sympathy for the Devil

## Stephen Jones

“An Apology for the Devil: It must be remembered that we have only heard one side of the case. God has written all the books.” – Samuel Butler (1835-1902)

The above epigraph perhaps serves best to summarize the science fiction community’s current hostility to L. Ron Hubbard’s publishers, in the wake of Conspiracy ’87. SF fandom has always enjoyed a lively feud, and here it appears to have one of its own making, based on innuendo and ignorance.

I come neither to bury these publishers, nor to praise them; but instead I find myself in the unenviable role of moderator, attempting to present the facts – as I know them – in a concise and unprejudiced manner.

Possibly more than anyone else in the SF field, I was personally involved with the roles played by New Era and Bridge Publications throughout the 45th World Science Fiction Convention. For three months up to and including the Brighton gathering, I was employed by New Era as a freelance promotion and publicity consultant, and much of their high-profile presence at the convention was a direct result of my knowledge and suggestions. The work I did for New Era is no different to what I do for any other publisher, and I believe the resultant bad feeling generated can be blamed equally on the Bridge representatives and the Conspiracy steering committee.

But before I discuss the convention, let me briefly outline my attitude and earlier involvement with New Era: For several years now I have been readily accepting advertising from this publisher on a wide range of magazines I’ve been involved with. I am not naive, nor do I consider myself stupid: Like many of you, I assume that if you check deeply enough, you’ll discover that the publishers of Hubbard’s *Mission Earth* dekalogy and sponsors of the Writers of the Future contest are financed by the controversial Church of Scientology. I do not know this for a fact, but I take it for granted. I am also aware of how evil this cult is portrayed in America, and the stories surrounding them are often both unpleasant and frightening (ask L. Sprague and Catherine de Camp or even Toby Roxburgh sometime about their

experiences at the hands of Scientologists....)

Scientology, like any other cult or fanatical religion, can be a dangerous influence, and if you are willing to shake hands with the Devil, then you must be prepared to accept the consequences.... I decided to take their money. They have plenty of it, and if it can be used to support a magazine, enhance a convention, or give impetus to a writer's career, then I believe that is money well spent. Of course this is ultimately a moral decision, and I can justifiably be accused of complacency; however, you don't have to buy the books or drink the free wine – that is always the choice of the individual.

I have little respect for Hubbard's space-opera novels (although they *are* perennial best-sellers, as a glance at any *Locus* list will testify), but the Writers of the Future contest remains a worthwhile endeavour that deserves the continued support of the entire SF community.

Hubbard apparently said that the contest was his legacy to the field that had nurtured him as a young pulp writer during the late 1930s and early '40s. There is no denying that it is a brilliant concept, and to date it has been phenomenally successful, with a new generation of SF and fantasy writers emerging from its ranks – Karen Joy Fowler, Leonard Carpenter, Dean Wesley Smith, Martha Soukup, Kim Antieau and Doug Beason, to name only a few.

And there are others who share my enthusiasm for the Writers of the Future contest: Hubbard specified that all the judges had to be professional writers, and these have included Algis Budrys, Robert Silverberg, Gene Wolfe, Anne McCaffrey, Frederik Pohl and Ramsey Campbell amongst others – all people I know and respect, and who no doubt had to make their own moral judgement when asked to support the contest.

Earlier this year I was asked by New Era's Robert Springall to help organize a short publicity tour for Gene Wolfe, who was here to promote Writers of the Future. I readily agreed. Despite the very short notice, we set up a series of interviews, a signing at Forbidden Planet and a small reception. Gene enjoyed his stay, nobody complained, and Robert seemed pleased with the results.

I was therefore not too surprised when he approached me again a couple of months later for help and advice in creating a strong profile for the Writers of the Future contest at Conspiracy. It turned out to be an interesting challenge: New Era and Bridge had a reasonably large budget but, despite popular belief, they did not possess unlimited funds with which to buy

respectability from SF fandom. They also realize that it has to be earned.

The first promotional idea I came up with was enthusiastically received but later had to be abandoned as being too grandiose for the time and money available. Consequently, we decided to extend the Writers of the Future workshops to Britain in 1988. Robert Springall and I initially discussed the basic problems involved in organizing such gatherings, and then I approached Lisa Tuttle (whose experience and expertise with writers' workshops was well-known to me) and asked her to oversee the entire programme on behalf of new Era.

Here was an opportunity for the Writers of the Future contest to make a significant contribution to British science fiction, to develop and nurture the skills of young writers in this country into the 1990s and beyond. It was an audacious concept, and Lisa needed convincing. But finally, in return for a promise that she would control the syllabus and choose the professionals she wanted to work with her, Lisa agreed to become involved.

With the idea of British workshops successfully launched, we next had to decide how to promote them at Conspiracy: New Era and Bridge were already one of the convention's largest sponsors, but Robert wanted original and effective methods of getting their name across to more than 5000 members.

Firstly, we designed a Writers of the Future stand; a closed-in environment where, throughout the convention, fans and especially would-be authors could meet professional writers at set times and discuss techniques and story ideas in comfortable surroundings. In conjunction with the stand, we created a Writers Starter Pack – a useful free folder, containing an introductory press release, an essay on how to lay-out manuscripts by Lisa, articles on writing fiction by Algis Budrys and L. Ron Hubbard, information about the contest and forthcoming workshops, and a comprehensive market report listing magazine and book publishers both here and in America.

After moving from a near-deserted exhibition area to a more central concourse, the stand proved to be a remarkable success, with hundreds of people discussing their work with published writers and taking away Starter Packs. Media attention was also extensive, and I don't believe that anyone was particularly offended by this worthwhile attempt to develop the skills of budding authors.

However, problems had already arisen regarding the proposed British workshops. From what I can gather, representatives from the American-based

Bridge Publications approached Lisa Tuttle and began to detail, in no uncertain terms, how she should organize an “official” Writers of the Future workshop and the various doctrines that should be employed. As this approach directly contradicted everything New Era had promised her, Lisa consequently resigned from the programme, as did a number of her professional colleagues. However, the British workshops are still set to start in 1988 with, I believe, Algis Budrys now in charge.

There were also problems with New Era’s more commercially-orientated projects: Following consultations with the convention committee, the publisher agreed to “sponsor” [the Conspiracy ’87 Pocket Programme](#). In return for covering the print and design costs, New Era could use the booklet exclusively to advertise the Writers of the Future contest, exhibition stand and planned UK workshops. For the full-colour cover I suggested they reprint the beautiful wrap-around painting of the “butterfly woman” by Frank Frazetta, used as the cover for *Writers of the Future, Volume III*. This is Frazetta’s first science fiction painting for many years, and Robert Springall had already organized the colour separations when the convention committee decided to ban the painting, under the pretext that it was “sexist”. This decision was clearly ludicrous in light of some of the masquerade costumes and paintings in the art show, and the Frazetta illustration itself was used to maximum effect on the exhibition stand; however, I have been told that at least a couple of the committee members threatened to resign if the painting appeared on the cover of the booklet.

Given a limited deadline, New Era was forced to acquiesce to the demands of the committee, and the compromise agreed on by both parties depicted the Earth in the grip of a studded, militaristic fist – surely an offensive and potentially inflammatory image that could hardly be considered an improvement?

The committee also slighted New Era and Bridge representatives when they arrived for the masquerade (an event to which they had donated a great deal of money) only to discover that no seating had been reserved for them – a situation which was swiftly rectified by the organizers.

Yet, undoubtedly, the convention committee’s biggest blunder was to allow Algis Budrys to speak at the beginning of the Hugo Awards ceremony; I was as offended as the rest of the audience by Budrys’s ill-judged, blatantly opportunistic speech, ostensibly designed to introduce Ramsey Campbell as the latest Writers of the Future judge, but which carried on as a rallying cry

for L. Ron Hubbard and his ideology. No wonder that master of ceremonies Peter Nicholls was upset and angered by this outburst.

According to convention chairman Malcolm Edwards, the committee had agreed to allow Budrys to say a few words, but had also given the writer certain instructions which he chose to ignore. However, as no other publisher was allowed to make a promotional address as part of the Hugo ceremony, why did the organizers feel justified in extending this special prerogative to Budrys?

Following the awards presentation, New Era and Bridge had agreed to host the “official” Winners Party against the backdrop of the fireworks display. With the committee’s agreement, they set up an attractive photographic area in the Brighton Centre’s Skyline Restaurant, and invitations were distributed amongst attending professionals, journalists and photographers. Champagne was available for the winners, with free wine and food for the other guests.

This party was a great success, with the room soon filled to overflowing. After the fans had taken their photographs downstairs, the Hugo winners were ushered into the restaurant, where they posed for photographers and waited to be interviewed. Once again, despite rumours to the contrary, the photographic area had a neutral backdrop and no journalists were turned away at the door. There were certainly no complaints to the press room the following day.

Sometime around the middle of the weekend I became aware of a small, but growing, anti-Hubbard/Scientology movement within the convention. The booing during the Hugo ceremony when *Black Genesis* was nominated was perhaps expected (although Gene Wolfe’s comment “Shame on you” was precisely the right response), but even more offensive was a piece of poorly-photocopied propaganda circulated on toilet walls. Not only did the individuals responsible appear to have access to unlimited xerox facilities, but their spelling was terrible!

I wasn’t around for the now well-publicized wine-throwing fracas between Dave Langford and Bridge’s Fred Harris, but even from the conflicting reports from eye-witnesses, such behaviour does neither individual much credit.

With disproportionate stories circulating on both sides of the Atlantic, both New Era and Bridge are justifiably perplexed at the acrimony their presence at Conspiracy seems to have provoked amongst some sections of the

SF community. There is little doubt in my mind that the American publishers misjudged their approach to individuals and tarnished the image they had created for themselves, while the convention committee showed a total lack of responsibility in the level of sponsorship they courted from Hubbard's publishers. Perhaps even sadder for me is the way that some individuals, initially willing to align themselves with the Writers of the Future workshops, have been at the forefront of those casting the first stones....

If the SF field wants to stem the growing influence of New Era and Bridge (as has been suggested to me), then it must come up with a viable alternative – simply ignoring them would not achieve any real effect. It's time that the major British genre publishing houses – Futura, Grafton, Gollancz, Transworld, etc. – worked together to give a small part of their profits back to the science fiction community, rather than squandering money on lavish publicity parties for a select few, such as they did at Conspiracy.

Whatever your opinion of L. Ron Hubbard's talent, the worth of the Writers of the Future contest, or the suspected links with Scientology, you cannot deny that New Era and Bridge Publications attempted – quite successfully in my opinion – to make Conspiracy '87 a more enjoyable convention for everyone concerned. That can't be a bad thing. And remember, if they had really *wanted* to buy a Hugo Award for *Black Genesis* with multiple voting ballots, they easily *could* have....

In the final analysis, we must all consult our own conscience in our dealings with these publishers. Yet, for the time being at least, I'll continue to drink their wine and support their endeavours to bring talented new people into the field. However, to mis-quote George Bernard Shaw:

“Is the Devil to have all the best writers as well as all the good tunes?”

Think about it....

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# After the Party

## Chris Donaldson

For me, the whole New Era/L. Ron Hubbard/Writers of the Future saga began a long, long time ago, in a country far, far away....

I was in Australia, high on the excitement of being at my first Worldcon, and full of the excitement of bidding for *our* Worldcon. The parties we gave each night of the convention were fun but exhausting (they ran till 4am) and we were all still a little jetlagged from the journey. One of the main committee jobs there (apart from serving on the site selection desk, seeing how the convention was run, getting to know people and organizing the best parties in Melbourne) was checking out the other parties. With Malcolm as chair we were all able to get into the closed parties. And the best of them was the New Era permanent party.

I admit that I was both naive and ignorant. I had never before heard of either New Era or L. Ron Hubbard, but then Hubbard's is not the type of SF that I read. Fred Harris seemed a nice guy – who doesn't when they're hosting a party with lots of free food and drink?

My next encounter with the whole tribe was in Atlanta. By this time I had heard of Scientology and Dianetics, but it all seemed a very long way from SF. Especially when, true to form, the New Era parties were about the best at the convention. Then, suddenly, one night, the New Era party became the Bridge party, but it really made no difference – there was more champagne than there had been before, and the buffet was a little better, but the same people were there and it was all good fun.

This was where I first met Algis Budrys. I had lunch with him and Fred Harris to talk about a British version of Writers of the Future. It didn't seem at all untoward at the time – everyone was taken out to lunch quite a lot, and Fred seemed very friendly. He even remembered my name and a fair bit about me; I was really impressed by his brilliant memory. I'd also spent some time talking to finalists in the Writers of the Future contest, and they seemed OK. So I was very receptive to the idea of a British version of the contest – or, at least, a British version of the Writers of the Future Workshop.

I was asked to suggest a venue for this workshop, and eventually I came

up with the idea of the Dickens House Museum, a charity which I knew could do with any extra money. The Americans loved the idea of a writers' workshop taking place in the olde worlde charm of the very house where Dickens once lived and wrote. I arranged everything for them – went along and offered money to the curator, who was delighted, and liaised with Fred in America. For all of this, which took a fair bit of time, I was (*mea culpa*) offered “something wonderful” by Fred. This turned out to be £200, for which I was very grateful (and half of which was stolen from me at the con. The wages of sin ...?). I've been asking myself since if this is the source of the rumour that all the Conspiracy committee were paid large amounts of money by New Era.

At the same time as I was in contact with Fred about the workshop, Ian Sorensen was trying to get sponsorship for the convention. In case anyone out there wonders why we needed this, just remind yourself that there were more programmed hours at the Worldcon than there were at the Edinburgh Festival. And all of this costs money – not to pay people to do things, but to hire the sound systems, the tech/ops equipment, the staging, the lighting, and so on. All of these “unseen” unglamorous expensive pieces of equipment are what make the convention audible and visible to the attendees. Then there's the cost of printing and mailing out the Progress Reports and the Programme Book and the Pocket Programme, and then there's the cost of the guests of honour and of the programme itself, the fireworks, the films, and so on. There will be a published breakdown of the costs of it all as soon as we have them. At the moment we still don't know if we've broken even, though we do hope so. One thing is, however, clear: Without any sponsorship at all, we would definitely have made a loss.

Big conventions are necessarily expensive, and I don't think we were extravagant in what we did. Before we approached any American publishers for sponsorship, we tried all the British ones. They were quite willing to give us books for prizes, or books for auction, but, despite several initial shows of interest and even the odd promise or two, not one of the British publishers sponsored us. They have meagre promotional budgets, and they spent what little they had in hosting the traditional Worldcon parties.

And then Fred Harris offered us sponsorship. The details were a little complex, but in the end New Era paid us £3350 in cash (all of which went into the convention) and in addition paid the printer for the colour cover of the [Pocket Programme](#) so that the total sum was about £5000. As I said

above, without this money we would probably either have had to declare ourselves bankrupt or cut out several events – perhaps the running of all the Hugo nominated films, perhaps the fireworks, who knows? At the time, the money seemed a lifesaver: it enabled us to carry on and do what we had planned to do. We accepted it gratefully. Then the problems began.

About two weeks before the convention, Rob Jackson, in charge of Publications, phoned Paul [Oldroyd] to say that New Era would be sending the artwork for the Pocket Programme cover straight to the printers. Rob said he hadn't seen the artwork, but that it was the first Frank Frazetta cover in years, the cover used on the new *Writers of the Future* anthology. Knowing my views on semi-naked women on SF covers, Paul had me speak to Rob, and I said that I felt the whole committee should have a chance to agree on this cover. After a lot of phone calls, we all agreed that we did not want on the cover of the Pocket Programme a piece of artwork which we considered both sexist and degrading. It would have been contrary to the spirit of the convention, we felt, and to the way in which we had approached artwork and programming.

After a lot of discussions with New Era, during which they seriously considered removing their sponsorship, we stuck to our guns. Eventually we were offered another cover which was not sexist. Once again, no one on the committee actually saw the cover before it went to print, though Robert Springall did tell Rob Jackson that it was the cover of L. Ron Hubbard's *The Invaders Plan*, the first novel in the "Mission Earth" dekalogy.

Well, you've seen it. It certainly wasn't sexist – merely violent and oppressive, and I personally regret its choice. But there was so little time – something like two days was the maximum time we had to decide on our position and have New Era come up with more camera-ready screened artwork. Somehow, erroneously now I think, it seemed a better alternative.

Budrys was in the country by this time, and he invited Paul and me to dinner, along with Steve Jones, Ian Watson, Neil Gaiman and a host of others. I was paid my £200 and delightedly spent some of it on a bottle of perfume and a bottle of scotch. And then ... off to Brighton.

Apparently the workshop had gone well, and I was pleased that my choice of venue had proved acceptable. Now Budrys was talking about holding another one. The first had been arranged in a rush, he said, and he wanted to get a new workshop leader with a feel for Britain. And then there was the question of a British judge for the Writers of the Future contest. This

all seemed positive at the time, and in a sense still does. Budrys wanted to make an announcement about these two things during the convention, and he asked for a few moments before the Hugo ceremony to do this. We (the committee in our daily meeting) were a little wary since it didn't seem to us to be the best time to make such an announcement. So we offered the alternative of the Masquerade, where Budrys was to be one of the judges and New Era were sponsoring one of the categories. But this wasn't felt to be the correct venue for the announcement. What was needed, we were told, was an event which would draw all the people interested in SF and not just those who were interested in costume.

We debated this and decided it wasn't an unreasonable request. Peter Nicholls, the MC for the Hugo ceremony, said that he was uncomfortable with the idea since it might appear to suggest that New Era was in some way connected with the Hugos – it may in fact look a little like an advertisement for New Era. To avoid this impression, two things were done. Firstly, Mike Christie, one of my two deputies at the convention (Peter himself being the other), volunteered to speak to Budrys and find out exactly what he wanted to say. Secondly, the committee decided that we could come up with one or two other announcements before the Hugos in addition to Budrys's so that it would look like there were a number of items of information to be imparted to a large audience.

In the event, both Mike and I spoke to Budrys about his announcement. He said to each of us that his specific role was to dissociate Writers of the Future from the Church of Scientology and from the rest of the Hubbard empire. He also said that he wouldn't mention anything about the rest of Hubbard's publishing business or about Scientology, except to say that he and Writers of the Future were totally separate from them. He was so convincing that I recall saying how pleased I was to hear it, as I was concerned that a writer and reviewer of his stature should be connected with something that others had told me was shabby. He again reiterated that he and Writers of the Future had no connection with New Era or Bridge Publications except for the fact that they published the Writers of the Future anthologies.

When Mike and I reported this back to Peter, he was quite happy to have Budrys make the announcement and for us not to put in any of our spurious notices in addition. Given this background, you can imagine my surprise and horror when Budrys went up on stage and stated that he had been asked by

the committee to make the announcement. This is not true: we were approached by him, and only after long, debate did we agree.

After that came the post-Hugo party. Yes, we knew it was happening. The whole committee had been invited, but there never had been any suggestion that this was an “Official” party – it was merely one of the many publishers’ parties held at the convention. Again, I was naively astonished to find that the Hugo winners had been reluctantly drawn there and photographed. We had arranged for photos to be taken in the arena, a nice neutral area. We had not been informed that New Era would take more pictures at their party, though, looking back, perhaps we should have expected it.

So, after the party, what do I think about it all? I suppose I feel that we were naive. But at no stage did we realize that we would get *no* other sponsorship at all, and so it wasn’t apparent until the convention itself that New Era would stand out as much as they did. Perhaps if we had increased the cost of an attending membership we might have been able to do without any sponsorship at all, but that seemed no answer to the financial problems we were having. I can’t see any easy solution to the dilemma. In one way, though, I’m glad we did what we did. It can act as a warning to others, who will not be as foolish or naively trusting as we were.

(This article is based on my personal recollections, and does not necessarily express the views of the Conspiracy ’87 Committee as a whole.)

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# Rumour, Fear and the Madness of Crowds

## Lisa Tuttle

“... irrespective of the form of the outbreak, *all* hysterical manifestations have one outstanding characteristic which links them together – they occur as the result of suggestion in highly suggestible individuals ... it should be emphasized that the hysteric, whether individual or *en masse*, is not a fraud or a malingerer ... those who ‘see’ flying saucers or Martian invaders do see something and are honestly convinced of the authenticity of their observations. What is real psychologically is real to the observer. By bearing this principle in mind, our laughter at the antics of our fellow men who are in the grip of mass hysteria will be tempered with sympathy as we read of those all too human individuals who people the pages to follow.” [\[1\]](#)

Let’s imagine there’s a man who has made his fortune by publishing a loathsome magazine. It promotes an image of women as victims, it sexualizes violence, it is an incitement to sexual hatred. It makes the world a more dangerous and less happy place. Then he takes some of this money and publishes another magazine concerned with science and popular culture and which is careful to avoid controversial and potentially offensive topics. It might be going too far to say this second magazine actually makes the world a *better* place, but it provides entertainment and information for its readers, and enables a number of writers to keep on writing for a living. Should someone politically and emotionally and morally opposed to magazine number one also boycott magazine number two? Will a writer who allows her work to be published in the pages of magazine number two be supporting an evil empire?

“In January 1946, Mead’s fellow anthropologist Ashley Montagu wrote to ask whether she shared his concern that the Viking Fund, which annually gave some two million dollars for anthropological research, consisted of money that came from the ‘well-known Nazi

sympathizer Axel Wenner-Gren'. Mead replied, 'To say that because money has been badly come by it should not be used for a good cause seems highly sentimental. Perhaps all the more because it has been badly come by it should be used for a good cause. Because the man who made the money oppressed the poor, fought labour unions, baited reds, fought the federal government, supported child labor, persecuted minorities/attended lynchings, etc., seems pretty irrelevant, and if his money finally goes to good causes instead of evil causes, that is a triumph for society, and possibly even for his conscience.'" [2]

If sponsorship is to be accepted at all, it seems to me that the attempt to sift out the "clean" from the "tainted" money is doomed from the start. People who spend their lives doing good deeds – or even doing no harm – are not usually the ones who make the most money. For better or worse, I am a professional writer. That's how I earn my money. I love being published by The Women's Press, but they are not my only publishers, and I am not always in such accord with the aims and principles of the people who pay me. No doubt there are those who think this wrong of me, and there are those (I do admire them) who never compromise the purity of their vision or their bank balance.

*"Maria made a list of things she would never do. She would never: walk through the Sands or Caesar's alone after midnight. She would never: ball at a party, do S-M unless she wanted to, borrow furs from Abe Lipsey, deal. She would never: carry a Yorkshire in Beverly Hills."* [3]

We all have our limits and our lists, the things we won't do, the things we'll compromise on, the things we don't even perceive as compromises; we have our different rankings of bad, worse, worst, untouchable ... Some people I know believe – as they told me at Brighton – that L. Ron Hubbard was "worse than Hitler," and that Scientology is a vast and evil conspiracy, so dangerous that no involvement with New Era should even be considered. "I don't want to tell you what to do, but you shouldn't get involved with those people. They are dangerous. They are lower than Nazis," said someone whom (even paranoids have enemies!) I will not name. Of his passionate conviction there could be no doubt. But was he right? And if he was right about the general bad character of Scientologists, does it then follow that we

should not only refuse to have anything to do with New Era/Bridge Publications and their Writers of the Future contest, but that we should – as two other fans said to me – “drive them out of the field”?

What are we talking about here? “Drive them out of the field.” Are we talking about making science fiction safe for democracy? Are we talking about overthrowing an evil empire? Are we talking about a nasty expression of prejudice? Let’s keep science fiction pure? “Drive them out of the field.” Who are we talking about? The Church of Scientology? Individual Scientologists? Employees of Bridge and New Era? Winners of the Writers of the Future competitions? A dead science fiction writer? All of the above, and if you want to be in fandom you’ll have to take an oath that you are not now and have never been a Scientologist, nor an L. Ron Hubbard fan ...?

I heard quite a bit of bizarre and hysterical fantasizing about what would happen if New Era was allowed to “take over” the SF field – although for me, today, this has been eclipsed by Linda Bellos’s prediction that unchecked Thatcherism will lead to gas chambers for gays, lesbians and unemployed black people in seven to ten years time. She sounded so calm when she said it, too – for the second time, on the lunch-time news. Like it was too inevitable even to get excited about. Which I found more disturbing than my paranoid friend’s rolling eyes as he howled, “Just you try to get away from them now! See if they let you! Just try!”

Well, I did try, and guess what? They let me.

My involvement with New Era stems from July 1987 when I came to an informal agreement with Robert Springall about setting up and teaching a series of Writers of the Future workshops; I taught at Arvon once, and I liked the idea of getting paid to do something like that again. It seemed I could do pretty much as I wanted – as long as it didn’t get too expensive – and I’d never heard anything negative or suspicious about the Writers of the Future contest. There is certainly a felt need among new writers for more markets and for feedback; Writers of the Future seemed to be answering that, and I was certain there would be a clamouring market for the workshops – whoever taught them, and whoever sponsored them.

The idea of publishers sponsoring workshops is not such an odd thing – indeed, it would seem to be in their interest to encourage and develop writers of the future. But they don’t, usually. Magazines sometimes have competitions; publishers have been known to sponsor events which encourage reading and writing. It’s not about immediate profits, but it can be

even more valuable in the long run. I presume that this, not sheer altruism, is behind New Era's involvement in contests, workshops and conventions. Other people suspect some darker motive. Why no rumours about Gollancz – highly visible, with their advertising balloon flying above the hotel, and their SF editor on the convention committee, not to mention authors on the Hugo ballot! – “hijacking” the convention? A representative from The Women's Press was annoyed by the way the British publishers' party (which The Women's Press, among others, had sponsored) at the Corn Exchange on Sunday evening was constantly referred to – even by a Women's Press author! – as “the Gollancz party” – but she saw in this no threat to the purity of the field, no dire warning of imminent take-over; it didn't even occur to her that Gollancz might be trying to cut out the other publishers by spreading a rumour that it was “their” party. I was later told, by a wide-eyed member of the very committee which had originally solicited funds from New Era, that New Era was spreading a rumour that they had sponsored the fireworks. I never heard this rumour; I only heard the rumour that there was a rumour. Indeed, all the rumours that I heard – and all the reckless, rude and stupid speculation about who'd been “bought” and who'd been “brain-washed” – came from people who had nothing at all to do with New Era.

None of these rumours, none of the hysteria I've encountered has convinced me that New Era should be run out of the field. I respect anyone who, for reasons of conscience, doesn't want his or her name linked with that of L. Ron Hubbard – whether that's because they think he was a rotten science fiction writer, or an evil genius – but I think there's a big difference between such a personal decision and the conclusions that everyone ought to feel the same way. I don't think Writers of the Future comprises a clear and present danger to SF any more than I believe that the Tories (despite them though I do) are about to start murdering lesbians and gays. The *only* intimidation, the only madness, the only attempts at indoctrination or persuasion I've encountered since this whole thing began has come not from anyone at New Era, but from uninvolved outsiders telling me Writers of the Future was a wicked plot, and I'd be in big trouble if I didn't get out.

I am no longer involved with Writers of the Future, not because anyone convinced me with logical argument (which was thin on the ground), but because I learned that the Writers of the Future workshops had a lot more to do with the ideas of L. Ron Hubbard and Algis Budrys about writing than with anything I myself might think about the subject. When I met Algis

Budrys, who set up the Writers of the Future workshops in the US, he told me that, far from having the freedom to set up my own sort of workshop, I would be expected to learn what he called “the technology” which he developed for the course – based on the writings of L. Ron Hubbard.

(No, no, not Dianetics! Hubbard wrote articles about writing, for writers’ magazines, back in the 1940s.)

Budrys told me, a few days before the Worldcon, that anything with the name “Writers of the Future” had to be authorized and approved by him. If I wanted to teach the workshops in Britain, I would first have to be his apprentice.

Well, I’m not interested in that. I’m not interested in teaching people how to write like L. Ron Hubbard, or, for that matter, like any other brand-name author. Neither brainwashing nor tainted money comes into it, and my decision is no comment on the effectiveness of the course, which, from all I’ve heard (I have three friends who took Budrys’s course and found it a valuable experience) is considerable. But teaching someone else’s method is not for me. I prefer my own half-baked theories about how to encourage creativity. So I’m going back to Arvon next year, with Iain Banks and M. John Harrison. And after we have conclusively demonstrated that writing cannot be taught, we may restore the shattered egos of our students by founding a new religion. You can start working on your rumours about it now. And if I’m to be driven out of the field, could it be in a red Jaguar, please?

## **Notes on Quotes**

Quotations from: [1] *Rumor, Fear and the Madness of Crowds* by J.P. Chaplin, New York: Ballantine, 1959; [2] *Margaret Mead: A Life* by Jane Howard, New York: Fawcett Crest, 1985; [3] *Play it as it Lays* by Joan Didion, New York: Bantam, 1971).

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# **A Lot of Fog**

## **Ian Watson**

My own first contact with New Era was when I realized that I hadn't enough sponsorship money for the SFWA hospitality room which I was organizing at Brighton – owing to the lunatic corkage charges and iron security fist of the hotels. So, approaching the eleventh hour, I phoned around other UK publishers whom I hadn't already solicited money from, and cried, "Help!" Robert Springall kindly carved £200 out of his own New Era budget to support the SFWA room. He didn't ask for any publicity or for any Hubbard/Writers of the Future promotional material to be on hand in the SFWA room, whatever.

Lisa Tuttle had already asked, on behalf of New Era, if I would be one of the writers who spent a couple of hours at the WOTF stand simply to advise any novice writers who came to meet a professional and ask for advice; and I'd agreed, for the offered fee.

When talking to Robert on the phone about the SFWA funding problems, he asked if I would be a tutor along with Algis Budrys for the WOTF workshop preceding the convention, held in Charles Dickens House in Doughty Street; and I accepted. At the workshop Algis emphasized that the WOTF programme was being run absolutely separate from any Scientology connexion, and that none of the participants would ever be contacted by the other side of the Hubbard organization. As opposed to other writing workshops where all participants chip in with their penn'orth, this one was based on a structured manual abstracted from Hubbard's own essays on how to write stories (published in the 1930s in U.S. writers' magazines), plus Algis's own practical experience, and whatever I chose to in-put from my own point of view.

Regarding the Hubbard (pre-Scientology) bedrock of the workshop: based on Hubbard's experience as a pulp writer, Algis asked participants to suspend their disbelief and simply try the method out as a discipline. Go away afterwards and ignore it, if you choose, but maybe you'll have picked up something useful about how to structure stories that sell. Nothing malign going on here. One may or may not want to utilize Hubbard's story methods

on an experimental basis – as *guest* tutor I wasn't asked to push them – but I can't see the rationale of these WOTF-sponsored workshops without that basis; nor can I see the generation of Hubbard clones as the outcome. True, the person who *leads* such workshops is obliged to stick to the manual, and prove that they have stuck to the manual (by the initials of the “students” against each item in their copies), but this isn't quite the same as signing one's soul over in blood; nor is *Mission Earth* a set text.

Nothing malign about the WOTF stand at Brighton, either. The points at issue, as I see it – the suspicion of an invasion of the SF heartland by a well-heeled, sinister organization – pivot upon three events. One is the sheer presence on the Hugo ballot of *Black Genesis*. Though this would be time-consuming (and I don't know how practical it is) I would be interested to know how many of the people who nominated the Hubbard novel in the first place are identifiable as known SF fans and/or regular convention attendees. If this is too onerous or impossible a bit of research, then: Did all those who nominated *BG* in the first place merely have supporting memberships – suggesting that the only reason for buying the membership was to nominate *BG*? Furthermore, how many of the people who nominated *BG* only nominated *BG* and nothing else? If we could discover this information from Paul Kincaid then we might have an indicator of whether *BG* was in fact “bought” on to the ballot. Until we know, it does remain possible that legitimate fans actually did nominate and vote for the book. Surprising, perhaps, but always possible. I think one should avoid a witch-hunt based on surmise. Conspiracy '87 should be asked to provide as detailed an analysis as possible of the nominations and final votes for *BG* along the lines I'm suggesting – not just a bald statistical analysis of the progressive arithmetic of the Australian voting procedure as published in *Locus*. Since a good deal of controversy has been stirred up, and since the Hugos should be “sacrosanct”, I believe this should be done. Let's have some concrete factual evidence.

The next point at issue is Algis Budrys's use of his keynoting of the Hugo ceremony as a commercial for WOTF and Hubbard. This was a Bad Idea. Question: when Conspiracy accepted a lot of money from New Era to completely pay for the programme book, was there a quid pro quo that Algis Budrys, as masthead of WOTF, would keynote the ceremony? Or was he invited to do this simply because it was the first time he had been able to travel abroad, and thus as a nice gesture? – which, alas, he misused, in my

view and in the view of many people present. Equally, did Algis do so sinisterly (when he is so emphatic about keeping WOTF decoupled from the other side of Hubbard) or was he motivated by sheer gratitude to the WOTF programme which has given him a considerable role in fostering new talents such as this year's Campbell Award winner, Karen Joy Fowler, and which has also given him a lifeline to conventions, and in this case brought him abroad at long long last out of his Lithuanian confinement within the borders of the U.S.A. An emotional moment, then. Did he just goof?

I hear that Scientologists were approaching fans on the sea front, though not in the hotels, with a view to recruitment. Last time I was in Brighton, pre-WOTF and *Mission Earth*, I recall being approached by a Scientology scout in the street; no connexion, on that occasion, with SF whatever. Is there a Scientology base operating in Brighton? Did Scientologists ship themselves in specifically to target fans, or not? If the approaches that were made to fans were routine and random ones, do we blame New Era/WOTF for these? Could we expect New Era/WOTF to have told resident Scientologists to take a holiday elsewhere during the convention, if in fact New Era/WOTF are not in direct cahoots with the mainline Scientologists?

Finally there's the matter of the Hugo winners photo session at Brighton, which I hear of as being "hijacked" by New Era. I don't know the ins and outs of this at all (though I'm aware that some photographers were apparently excluded), but in this instance I'd like to know from the Conspiracy organizers why the venue was being chopped and changed at the last moment (various notes to this effect were passed to Peter Nicholls during the course of the ceremony itself) and at whose initiative? I'd be a bit wary of blaming New Era for circumstances which New Era was actually invited to set up – and then by extension crying, "This is exactly how Scientologists behave!" New Era is *likely* to use the opportunities to advertise Hubbard and WOTF, where the ghost of Hubbard acts as a patron to upcoming writers. (Though in the case of the SFWA room, New Era didn't make the slightest attempt to exploit their shared sponsorship, like some invasive virus.) And New Era has ample money, from we-know-where, though apparently with binding guidelines not to let Scientology and SF interpenetrate. But what would we expect New Era to do, other than to promote Hubbard as author and Hubbard as patron of talent. Keep quiet about him? Murmur embarrassedly, "Here's a few thousand quid, but let's not mention Hubbard, hmm?" And are we to regard New Era's money as being "laundered", as I've

heard said? As well as being a Scientologist, Hubbard was an actual SF writer, and eleven giant novels (whatever we think of their quality) say that he *still was*. Rather an energetic laundry exercise, this. We surely know the saying about something making a good servant but a bad master. So, as regards the whole photo session, how much rope was New Era given, and by whom? Before hanging them, let's know all the actual facts from the Conspiracy committee. Meanwhile there's a lot of fog about.

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# Notes 1

## Chris Evans

### Following [Ian Watson](#)

**CE:** Ian's queries about Algis Budrys's speech and the Hugo winners' photo session are addressed elsewhere. On the matter of Scientologists on the streets of Brighton, it's worth pointing out that Scientology's British headquarters is in East Grinstead, about halfway between Brighton and London. According to at least one local resident, it's not unusual to see Scientologists canvassing people on the streets there.

I contacted Paul Kincaid, the administrator of the Hugo Awards, about the Hugo nominations. Unfortunately he had disposed of all the nominating ballots and final ballots a week previously, and so wasn't able to give precise figures. He had this to say:

“At least fifty per cent of the nominations for *Black Genesis* came from people taking out supporting membership with their nominations. A large number of these came from people in Britain whom I've never heard of in any sort of fannish context, either before or since the convention. A lot of the nominations from people in Britain came on photocopied ballots with Robert Springall's name written on the bottom. It is within the rules to photocopy ballots and circulate them, providing that the person who has done the photocopying puts his or her name on the bottom. The people who nominated *Black Genesis* either did not nominate anything else or nominated other Hubbard novels or books by writers connected with the Writers of the Future competition such as Gene Wolfe and Robert Silverberg. I didn't make any record of this, but my impression was that a large number of people who took out supporting memberships to nominate Hubbard's book didn't actually vote in the final ballot. Most of the supporting memberships that were taken out for the convention were taken out by people who nominated *Black Genesis* or other Hubbard books.”

### Introducing [Algis Budrys](#)

**CE:** As a result of the controversy at the Worldcon, the committee of Mexicon III, which is planning to hold a convention somewhere in the Midlands in Whitsun 1989, decided to withdraw their Guest of Honour invitation to Algis Budrys. On hearing of this, Budrys contacted Greg Pickersgill, and, after talking to him, wrote him a letter giving his version of the events at Conspiracy.

With Greg's agreement, he later contacted me and sent a slightly cut version for use in *Conspiracy Theories*, and I'm grateful to both. In his covering letter, Budrys says, "I have retained the spellings I invented for the names of some people whose names I have since seen in print. No slight was or is intended. I can fully understand concern based on appearances. What follows is what I think are the facts behind the appearances, to the extent that I've thus far been able to determine the facts."

# A Letter

## Algis Budrys

By way of preface:

At the Worldcon I represented Writers of The Future, a distinct entity, and only WOTF, The only other thing I ever represent anywhere is Algis Budrys, I have a freelance contract with Bridge Publications to edit the annual anthology, and there my connection with Bridge, or New Era, ends.

Actually, Bridge *does* sponsor the Contest now, but by WOTF policy they simply provide the funding and have agreed they have no say in what we do. My responsibilities include maintaining WOTF as a clearcut entity.

That's on the instructions of L. Ron Hubbard to the WOTF administration when he set up the Contest and when it began to grow into a program including the anthology, workshops, and other potential features. As it happens, that was what I was going to insist on when originally considering the pros and cons of coming aboard, but insistence proved needless.

Having gone to considerable lengths to successfully make these things clear in the USA, I arrived in the UK naively unaware of any need to defend myself against efforts to connect me with New Era in any way except that they publish the UK edition of the WOTF book. (New Era is not a subsidiary of Bridge, as so many seem to think.)

New Era chose to promote WOTF at the con, rather than Mission Earth, and so I came to England. Because New Era's edition of *WOTF III* won't be ready until late October, they imported some Bridge copies and put their own bookplate in. Somewhere in there, perhaps by spontaneous generation, there came into being a confusing New Era/Bridge pseudo-entity which has very little existence in fact.

I became aware of some unhappiness about New Era/Bridge early in my stay at Brighton, of course. But I didn't at first think it had anything to do with me or WOTF. I didn't realize the full extent of what was happening until a week after the con, so you can imagine how innocently happy I was, I had just directed a successful writing workshop in London, and the experience had been entirely pleasant and fruitful. Then, at the con, I had moderated a very heavily attended panel on the WOTF program in general. As in the

USA, response to WOTF was excellent ... in fact, if anything it appeared even more desirable there than it does over here.

Not a voice in the crowded panel audience had been raised in sharp question or objection as the panel proceeded, and afterward WOTF novice-writers' starter-packs were being picked up at the New Era booth in great numbers, Over 900 of these giveaways were given away during the con, many novice writers had sat and talked with me and other pro writers in the booth, and in general it appeared to me that I was the usual good person I enjoy being, and that WOTF was a good thing in fannish eyes. I like it when WOTF is well-received; a lot of the sweat in it is mine, and Karen Joy Fowler's Campbell Award is, I hope, not the last of the proofs of its worth to the SF community.

Now that things have been cast in a very bad light, I've joined with the WOTF administration in an effort to reconstruct what happened. I can't say We Have Gotten to The Bottom of It as yet, but here it is so far:

New Era wants to get along well with fandom, but is very new to it, Conscious of its limited experience and casting about for ways to be a good neighbor at the worldcon, New Era had hired Steve Jones. He was to liaise between it and the con committee, and to draft news releases and ad copy as appropriate.

Over the period preceding the con date, through this connection New Era received a series of suggestions to sponsor various segments. The principal ones were a portion of the masquerade, a post-Hugo party, and advertising in the pocket program book. It's my understanding that this eventually added up to L 5000 income to the con what with one thing and the next and the next. In view of the fact that Malcolm Edwards has told me the con was still in the red as it opened, whatever one may think of what was done and how it was done, New Era was of significant help, and undoubtedly provided a sense of reassurance to the con treasury during the weeks preceding Brighton.

One form of advertising suggested to New Era was taking the cover of the program book. For that purpose, New Era submitted the cover of *Writers of The Future Vol. III*, a Frank Frazetta painting which has everywhere been considered a significant piece of new SF art, and which was reproduced in the decor of the New Era booth, as distinguished from any Mission Earth artwork. I think it's possible New Era regards WOTF as more institutional than commercial; if so, that's some clue to what face they were hoping to

present to UK fandom. That interpretation would be consistent with the tone and nature of their advertising inside the program, their creation of the “starter pack,” and their heavy emphasis on a forthcoming UK workshop schedule.

The con committee rejected the Frazetta painting as “sexist.” New Era, somewhat baffled by this characterization (as am I, to this day), and up against a very tight deadline at that point, then submitted the artwork from *Mission Earth: Vol. I*, which the committee accepted.

I get a slight *frisson* from realizing that this series of inadvertences is what led to the “overwhelming” injection of *Mission Earth* into New Era’s graphics at the con. Even so, the [pocket program cover](#) is not based on *Black Genesis*, and inside the booklet is a New Era ad congratulating *all* the nominees in the Novels category.

It is also apparently a fact that New Era was astonished to discover no other publisher had advertised in the pocket program book. They had received a rather different impression, I believe. Be that however it was, the Conspiracy pocket program was waved around at NASFIC the following weekend and commended for setting an example of excellent publisher support for a con. So it’s where you’re standing in relation to which way the horse is pointed, I suppose.

Leaving that and going on toward the next, it is apparently a fact that the committee, or some other verticalized portion of it, deliberately chose to combine the post-Hugo photo session with the New Era party. The motive of the committee there, I suppose, was to save the outlay of holding one at its own expense.

The participation of the committee is made official by Peter Nicholls’ specifically directing Hugo-winners to the venue of the Bridge party for the official photo session. For its part, New Era created a special photographing area and a photo backdrop (on which more later). That portion of the committee and New Era were clearly cooperating. There was no reason the committee couldn’t have set up a separate photo area downstairs and *then* sent the winners up to the New Era venue.

I don’t understand the assertions that New Era then barred photographers or anyone else who would be permitted into civilized company. This is one of the things I’m still looking into, since I’ve been given conflicting versions of New Era’s actions at the door. But if New Era wanted to somehow “capture” the winners, why would it do that *and* take

steps to eliminate witnesses to such a triumph?

Another instance of things appearing one way, while being another, occurred in connection with the masquerade sponsorship. Apparently a number of people, including committee members, are unhappy with New Era-Bridge's supposed role in that. On the other hand, the costumers themselves, including Ann Page, were graciously grateful for the sponsorship, and asked me to reaffirm future interest, and so forth, on the occasion of my serving as a masquerade judge.

Serving as a masquerade judge, on the third hand, proved an enormously embarrassing task. I later asked Ann Page (1) whether New Era had insisted on the seemingly incessant repetitions of "... and in the Bridge-New Era category ...," rather than "in the media-recreation category ...," She told me it was her idea. I then asked her, in view of a mid-event repetition of her opening announcement of gratitude to "New Era-Bridge," (2), whether anyone at New Era had pressured her to do *that*, and, again, she said it was her idea. It seems Robert Springall, the New Era representative Ann was accustomed to dealing with, hadn't gotten into the hall in time to hear the opening announcement, and she'd quite voluntarily thought it the polite thing to repeat it when he could hear it.

In short, for whatever reason, Ann Page and her assistants originated not only as many announcements of gratitude as anyone could possibly desire but out of the goodness of their hearts added at least one more. Meanwhile, other committee members (but not those connected with the masquerade) were becoming increasingly resentful of what they took to be evidence of "pressure" from New Era. I find it hard to believe that Ann would have acted quite the way she did, or that the resentment would be founded on quite the same allegations, if the people at the tops of subcommittees had had a structure for communicating with each other.

On the matter of what happened at the Hugos:

I had been asking Chris Donaldson whether I might make an announcement to the assembled multitude, pre-Awards, about the extension of the Contest into 1988, the addition of Ramsey Campbell to the panel of Judges, and the forthcoming U.K. WOTF workshop program. I was motivated by a desire to get the word out to the widest possible audience from all over the world as soon as possible. The WOTF administration had just given me permission to do all these things, and the official Contest year was ending September 30. It seemed clear to me that there was plenty of

WOTF interest among the con attendees, and inasmuch as there are often bits of extraneous business and “special announcements” at such con events while the audience is stirring restlessly in its seats, I could stand up, speak my piece, and sit down, waiting to accept Bob Reed’s Campbell Award for him should he win it.

Chris had demurred, and I was thinking over alternate ways of getting out the good word efficiently when, on the afternoon before the Hugos, Mike Christie came to me as the representative of the con committee and said the committee now urgently wanted me to make the announcement, and just before the Hugos.

The reason Mike gave for this drastic upscaling of committee attitude on the matter was that the committee had become aware of an anti-Hubbard “samizdat” publication betokening a mounting resentment. They were now hoping that if good old Ajay stood up before the Hugos and mentioned WOTF, a good work, it might help moderate some extremist behavior.

I agreed like a shot, which shows you the worth of my reputation for sagacity. But there’s some background to this:

Weeks before, when *Black Genesis* was placed on the Hugo final ballot, I was consulted, in my wisdom, by Author Services, Inc., Hubbard’s literary agents. This was in view of Charles Platt’s “modest proposal,” a few years earlier, that “the Scientologists” could buy a Hugo simply by packing a convention membership. My sage advice was that ASI, through Fred Harris, contact Paul Kinkaid and ask him if he had seen any irregularities in the nominating procedure. If he hadn’t, I suggested, ASI should then leave the book on the ballot, presume it was an honest nomination, and let the chips fall where they might. Hubbard is an SF author whose standing predates even Heinlein’s, he is the author of classics in science fiction and fantasy, and *Mission Earth* is being read by a very large number of people who like it. It might not be conventionally smart to leave the book on; on the other hand, this is a legitimate candidate and what’s being said by withdrawing it? What in fact is being indicated by a climate in which we are even discussing its possible withdrawal?

True, there are plenty of people who can tell you, in believable detail, how Bridge’s *Mission Earth* sales were accomplished. I think I am at least as well situated to appraise Bridge’s marketing techniques as anyone in fandom, and I am not too bad on the circumstantial facts of how books are sold elsewhere, either, Bridge works harder, and smarter, probably because it has

no old bisons on staff who know how to do it forty years ago. And, finally, since marketing of any sort is only good for starting word-of-mouth, the sales figures convince me there is strong reader-appeal in the work.

Kinkaid responded appropriately, ASI did not withdraw the book, so in a way *It's All My Fault*. This would be funny, if over the time since that decision was reached, I hadn't been approached on some occasions by various SMOFs in the U.S. and had it explained to me, in detail and with great concern, exactly how "the Scientologists" had swung the nomination. None of the stories agreed, but they were all highly circumstantial.

(NB, on the day before the Hugos, Paul Kinkaid had additionally sent me an assurance in writing, I passed it on to Fred Harris, inasmuch as I had gotten him into this.)

However, comes a time when you're damned if you do and damned if you don't, and so the book stayed on the ballot, and I stood up before the Hugos. When I later said to Peter Nicholls "Hey, weren't there to be some other announcements after mine, to clearly separate it all from the Hugos?" Nicholls, last seen by me as the Awards MC, said he'd "heard something about some such plan, yes." This came as a surprise to a very highly placed con committee member sitting at the same table, who had just finished telling me my pre-Hugo announcement was all a surprise to him and a very unfortunate not to say shocking, improper and unheard-of act. I have apparently not been to many cons, nor sat and toyed with my rubber chicken while the head table got its desert and various fore-runners worked the microphone to cover for them.

I have heard a number of versions of what I actually said, and various characterizations of those versions. I've asked Malcolm to review the tape of my announcement.

The emerging story that I "broke promises" to the committee appears to have no foundation in fact. The only promise I had offered was to be brief. I have problems being brief, sometimes, but I think I pulled it off on that occasion, and lumbered down from the platform, unaware of any unrest in the audience, not at all sure I had done anything for New Era or Bridge, but still deluded into thinking that an announcement on WOTF had met with a friendly reception. Then, shortly thereafter, Paul Kinkaid came to me and asked me to substitute for the short-story awards presenters. I took that as yet another sign that nobody was upset with me or WOTF, and cheerily agreed. When I went up and did it, I got a good laugh or two, and drew no flung

tomatoes. I thought I had helped the committee while enjoying an honor.

I can't understand why Paul came to me in the first place, after my supposedly horrid "gaffe" pre-Hugo, or why some other committee member didn't stop him and suggest an alternate substitute presenter.

I now notice news stories declaring my pre-Hugo thing was interrupted by catcalls and I snapped "Shame on you" to the audience. To my best recollection neither of *my* appearances at the Hugo podium were marked by any demonstrations of hostility. But I'm clearly not the best judge of such matters. I would like it if someone neutral listened to an audio tape of my announcement. I've been complimented for carefully not mentioning Hubbard by name even once, derogated for endless re-iterations of the same Name, Charles Platt reports yet another version "from notes," etc. Perhaps I only remember what I intended to say, including yet another ill-advised attempt to take some of the masquerade sting out from under my own skin and I suppose most other people's. But I have the feeling that by now it might not make any difference if I'd simply stood up and recited Magna Carta.

I've also been told that New Era barred press and friends of Hugo winners from "its" party, that winners were made to stand in front of large Mission Earth placards to be photographed, and so forth. Robert Springall has sworn up and down to me that he barred no one, but of course he's also the chap who let the party run out of free booze early, so who's to say. But the only placard in the entire room said "Conspiracy '87 Hugo Winners" and nothing else. It was designed and prepared by New Era to be a wholly generic photo-backdrop featuring the Conspiracy '87 logo, and was then donated to the con at the request of yet another committee member.

I feel safe in saying that no one anywhere can produce a photograph taken on that occasion which shows any other placard, background or fore. And considering the number of flashguns that were fired, such a photograph would exist if it were possible. There *was* a table with some Mission Earth copies, well off to one side, which, considering what the party cost New Era, and what it's gotten for it, seems like a very mild return.

I also hear wonderful stories about a Dave Langford/Harris incident, and have at least a score of credible eye-witness accounts proving that alternate worlds are as common as dirt at 2:00 am. Dave Hartwell tells me he has a photo of Fred Harris and Dave Langford standing together, grinning into the camera and clearly somewhat wetted down. I wasn't there, or I'd be yet another eye-witness.

I have been told that Dave was distraught that his Hugos (which I think richly merited), were “tainted” by being awarded at “the convention the Scientologists bought.” If those are his true feelings, I’m distressed for him as a fellow aspirant to the Hugo. Attending the Awards, I was struck, however, by the notably genuine warm applause drawn by his nomination and then his wins. Too, the Hugos are conferred by a vote of the convention membership as tallied by a subcommittee headed by Paul Kinkaid.

If “the Scientologists” had wanted to buy the convention, I expect a more efficient and effective job would have been done, *Black Genesis* would not have come in behind No Award, and fandom would have been dealt a blow for which “we” could have been legitimately indicted.

In my view, New Era appears to have not been realizing that many of what it considered genial actions would reinforce a facile opinion about how “Scientology” behaves. New Era, a commercial enterprise – and therefore strictly separated from the Church – is a publishing company, and a successful one, though some experts can’t fathom how they can operate as they do and make money. I wouldn’t know – I’m just the editor of the best-selling SF anthology of all time, which experts here assured me was impossible, But that record, of course, is largely due to Bridge marketing, not New Era. The thought crosses my mind at this moment that Springall may have wanted to show the Yanks from Bridge how it’s done. I wouldn’t call that an evil or incomprehensible ambition.

Incidentally, the *only* Bridge representative at the con was Simone Welch, their US fandom hospitality liaison, who is Swiss-German and was stopping by on her way to NASFIC from a visit to relatives on the Continent.

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# Innocents Abroad

## Peter Nicholls

This piece is about what some people have seen, whether hysterically or not, as the scandal of New Era Publications' attempt to manipulate not just the Committee of the 1987 World Science Fiction Convention, but the Convention itself.

I don't think the sequence of events was just a storm in a teacup, though you can argue that there's a funny side to mass moral outrage. Still, I'm almost glad it happened. The paradox is that the fact of its happening will make it almost impossible for it to happen again, and that will be a good thing for science fiction.

There's some argument about exactly what did happen. I'm quite sure that what we witnessed was *not* an attempt by the Scientologists to take over science fiction. It was merely a tactless and in many ways inept attempt to glorify the memory of their late founder and leader, L. Ron Hubbard.

Here's a background summary, culled partly from my own research, and partly from information given to me and others by Algis Budrys at a lunch a week after the Convention, an enigmatic social event described elsewhere, I understand, by John Clute, who was also present.

Scientologists are not expert in the world of science fiction; they don't understand the way its family relationships work. Why should they? New Era Publications (in the U.K.) and Bridge Publications (in the U.S.A.) came into science fiction almost accidentally. They were originally small publishing companies (legally quite separate from the Church of Scientology) set up to publish the "textbooks" used by Scientologists. These were sold to disciples and potential disciples of Scientology at prices with a very generous profit margin built in. For this reason, these publishing companies were (and are) quite wealthy.

After L. Ron Hubbard began writing science fiction again towards the end of his life, many of his colleagues in Scientology were upset at what they considered the failure of St. Martin's Press to publicize *Battlefield Earth* (1983) properly. "Why not use our own publishing houses to publish our glorious leader's science fiction," one imagines one of them must have said,

“and publicize him much more widely.” You must remember that L. Ron Hubbard is known only dimly to Scientologists of today as a talented hack writer who published throughout the 1940s; they know him as a Guru. There is a very real sense in which Hubbard’s words, even if in the form of pulp fiction, are seen by them as holy. (It is perfectly possible that there is nobody in the upper echelons of Scientology qualified to say whether Hubbard’s recent fiction is “pulp” or not.)

You all know the results. Hubbard is dead now, but he left a legacy, so we are told, in the form of a “dekalogy” – a ten-volume novel – entitled *Mission Earth*. (It was volume two of the dekalogy, *Black Genesis*, that was nominated for the 1987 Hugo Award for best novel, placing sixth after “No Award”.) I don’t want to get involved in suppositions as to whether or not Hubbard is the actual author of the dekalogy; personally it seems to me entirely possible. My point is this: it is very important to New Era and Bridge that the dekalogy should be, and be seen to be, a commercial success; it would, in a way, be a public vindication of their Guru’s genius, a genius which they consider to have had inadequate recognition outside the world of Scientology.

The campaign launched to publicize *Mission Earth* is probably unique in book publishing. Some of the techniques used, including convention and bookfair stands with scantily clad nubile women in attendance, seem to have been borrowed from the motor trade. But the real uniqueness is in the sheer scale of the publicity. An informed guess as to the cost of the campaign, which has included major advertisements in the national press and elsewhere, would be difficult to make; over one million dollars would be a wild guess. It seems likely that despite the mild commercial success of the books, much more money has been spent on selling them than has been made from selling them.

The fact that the books are rambling and ill-written, and apparently not edited at all, would not have endeared them to any but the least demanding of fans. But it is the overall techniques used in advertising them that have created a major backlash effect in science-fiction fandom. SF fans generally show much greater contempt for the books (witness the booing at the Hugo ceremony) than would have been the case if, for example, Hubbard had merely been an elderly ex sf-writer making an unspectacular comeback with a series of paperback originals.

Before Hubbard died, we are told, he said he wanted to do something for

the genre of science fiction to which he had once belonged and was now attempting to rejoin, and he set up the Writers of the Future competition as a way of encouraging young or previously unknown writers. As I understand it, he funded the competition himself in the first instance. It was only after his death that the Writers of the Future sponsorship was taken over by Bridge and New Era. With this sponsorship the Writers of the Future competition came to be publicized more obviously than before with techniques that combine American hardsell and American evangelism. And, of course, when the winning competition stories are published in book form, they are published by Bridge and New Era as “L. Ron Hubbard presents Writers of the Future”.

The result of this is that no matter how noble the motives of the sponsors, the judges and the entrants, the ultimate effect is (i) to show the founder of the Church of Scientology in a good light, at a time when the Scientologists, especially in the United States, have been coming under severe scrutiny, and (ii) to show the publishing houses set up to publish Scientology texts as idealistic patrons of the arts. In other words, the Writers of the Future programme has become, whether innocently or knowingly, a major weapon in a propaganda campaign.

Quite a few well known sf writers have become involved with the Writers of the Future competition (a British version is about to be launched) as judges and, in the case of Algis Budrys, editor. They include or have included Robert Silverberg, Theodore Sturgeon, Gene Wolfe, Roger Zelazny, Frederik Pohl and Gregory Benford. I know or knew them all, and I have absolutely no reason to believe that they support the programme for any other reason than a wish to help young writers along.

Rumours of fantastic salaries are false. One judge told me he was paid \$25 for each manuscript read and reported on, and while this is mildly generous, it is certainly no more than a top writer might expect to earn in other ways for the same effort and time spent. A judge who reported on, say, forty manuscripts, which would be quite a job, would earn \$1000, which is around £600 – the same as I would get, say, for 5000 words written for the *Washington Post* and *The Guardian*.

Nevertheless, by lending their prestige and their expertise to the programme, these judges (often visible at conventions with “minders” from Bridge and New Era) are, in my opinion, giving indirect moral support to the Scientologists. Some I have spoken to seem a little uneasy about this, and

unhappy about sharing platforms occasionally with their Scientology colleagues, while insisting at the same time that the programme is genuinely useful to neophyte writers. I do not know if any of the judges are themselves Scientologists, but I would guess probably not.

This brings me to the events prior to and at Conspiracy '87, a convention whose title took on unfortunate and unintended overtones. I observed from a moderately privileged perspective. I was not a Committee member myself, but I was an active assistant to Committee member Chris Donaldson in organizing the programme and general convention troubleshooting, and was thus well aware of what was happening administratively. Also, when Brian Aldiss, the toastmaster, dropped out as MC of the Hugo Award ceremony – because he had a book up for the Best Nonfiction award, which he won – I took over. I was not, however, the Hugo Award ceremony organizer. That was Glaswegian fan Vince Docherty.

I believe the Convention Committee made five errors, each of them understandable, and several apparently trivial, which taken together were compounded into a whole which was sadly greater than the sum of its parts. The result was genuine fury from a substantial percentage, it seemed, of fandom, though what the actual number of outraged persons was, out of the 6000-odd people who registered, I have no idea. Certainly well over a hundred people came to me personally and complained.

Fandom – or a highly visible part of it – was furious that their own integrity seemed compromised and up for sale. The science-fiction community values its independence and freedom from commercial pressures. It's a heterogenous community of course, ranging from tremulous aesthetes to beer-swilling thugs, from Trekkies in fancy dress to crazed computer hackers, but on some issues fannish consensus does miraculously occur. I don't think fandom would be too happy at *any* single film production company or publisher seeming to dominate or be in control of the proceedings of any convention. For example, California fans have taken active steps *not* to appear formally aligned with Lucasfilm, maker of the *Star Wars* movies. When the commercial body in question is widely perceived as being a front organization for a religious cult which is to say the least controversial, a cult that has been condemned by several judges from the bench, a cult which whether rightly or wrongly is perceived as being dangerous to cross, then there is bound to be trouble.

And that was the general perception: that Conspiracy '87, which was the

biggest event ever to represent British fandom, and one of the biggest ever to represent international fandom, had been made a tool of a publishing company which was itself a front organization for a religious cult. If fandom had been taken over by the Christians or the Jews there would have been bad feeling. Being taken over by the Scientologists was very much worse.

Well, in fact the Scientologists came nowhere near taking over Conspiracy '87. I can personally testify, for example, that only one programme item of several hundreds – the Writers of the Future panel – had any input whatsoever from New Era Publications. The trouble is that the areas in which New Era were active were all very high-profile. They wanted the maximum exposure to fandom, and they got it. They now probably regret getting it. I understand that several senior persons connected with Scientology are absolutely furious at what they regard as a tactless and ill-judged publicity campaign. (On the other hand, two people who are rumoured to think this way, Fred Harris and Algis Budrys, were surely in part to blame.)

The five errors which made it appear that New Era Publications had suborned the Committee were as follows:

(i) The cover of the official [Pocket Programme](#) was given over to an L. Ron Hubbard icon;

(ii) Tickets to the New Era party were distributed as part of the official convention greeting pack;

(iii) The masquerade (fancy dress competition to you and me) had several New Era sponsored prizes, much mentioned over the microphone;

(iv) Algis Budrys gave a speech on behalf of the Writers of the Future programme immediately prior to the Hugo Award ceremony, a speech assumed by many to be *part* of the official ceremony;

(v) The official photo-call for Hugo Award-winners was held at the New Era party.

Of these, numbers (i), (iv) and (v) did the most damage, but let's take all five in order:

(i) As I understand it, for many months before the Convention the Committee felt themselves to be under financial pressure. It is not possible in the U.K. to charge membership fees quite as high as those in the U.S.A., they believed, with any real prospect of getting enough "casual" supporters in, though the hard core of fandom would no doubt attend. Their budget would therefore be smaller than that of an American Worldcon.

Yet, at the same time, expectations of professionalism in World Conventions have gone a long way up over the past decade, and this kind of professionalism is expensive. The Committee were far from sure that there would be enough money to do the things they felt needed to be done, but they would not risk the limited company that was formed to run Conspiracy '87 going bankrupt. It would reflect very badly on British fandom, and anyway, would make life very difficult for the Committee members themselves. Several of them were already directors of other companies, and if Conspiracy '87 went bankrupt, these other directorships would be jeopardized.

In other words, Conspiracy '87 needed additional funds, and the obvious way of obtaining them was through sponsorships, which were most likely to come from publishing companies and from bookshops, as in the event they did. Among the companies that agreed to help sponsor Conspiracy '87 was New Era. I understand that the figure they offered was £5000. They asked in return that the programme should contain a panel item devoted to Writers of the Future, and suggested that the Pocket Programme should use a cover picture provided by New Era. With hindsight, the Committee could properly have said "yes" to the first, but should have refused the second condition.

It's actually a complicated story. Only a few days before the Pocket Programme was due to go to press (the timetable was completely inflexible) the proposed cover picture arrived. By Frank Frazetta, it featured a scantily clad female figure (it may have been naked, I can't remember). In any case, it threw the Committee into a complete turmoil. Several Committee members are active feminists, and most of them are supporters of the feminist movement. They decided that, at no matter what cost to the convention finances, they had to turn the cover picture down, as being offensive to womanhood. (A.J. Budrys told me the picture was meant to have a spiritual meaning; I must say its purely carnal qualities impressed me more than its metaphorical significance.)

A flurry of phonecalls and a threat by New Era to withdraw the cash was followed by a compromise. Would Conspiracy '87 accept a second, absolutely non-sexist picture? They would. It arrived just in time to go to the printers. None of the Committee, with the exception of Rob Jackson who was editor of the Pocket Programme, even saw it. [CE: Rob Jackson did not in fact see it either.]

In the event, of course, it proved much more upsetting than Frazetta's spiritual fairy creature with tits and a pubic mound would have done. It

depicted not only the highly identifiable cover of an L. Ron Hubbard book, but – more importantly – it depicted a mailed fist about to crush the world. This picture, too, seemed to have a metaphorical significance, and it didn't need an Algis Budrys to explicate it. The Scientologists, so the picture said quite clearly to a great many people who commented on it, were shown as having the whole globe in their ruthless grasp. Okay, this is melodrama, but the picture itself is melodramatic, and it is difficult to imagine a worse choice.

My judgement is that the Committee should not have accepted £5000 from New Era, on the grounds that they were not just any publishing company, but a publishing company that is a front organization for a cult. But they needed the money, and at least some of them argued that it would be unethical to make distinctions between publishers as to who was good enough to support science fiction and who wasn't. Also, they didn't see the picture until it was too late! Poor Rob Jackson, who did see it, was desperately pressed for time, and it seemed to him that the alternative was to have a Pocket Programme with no cover at all.

Far from being cynical or corrupt, the Committee showed itself clearly, by refusing the Frazetta cover, to have a strong ethical motivation. The trouble was, that having made an embarrassing ethical stand at the last minute but one, they were very much in the mood to accept an apparently less harmful compromise at the absolute last minute. With hindsight, it was a disastrous decision.

(ii) By putting invitations to a New Era party in the welcome pack, the Committee, it could be argued, made it seem as if the party had their official *imprimatur*. But didn't they also put in invitations to the Andromeda Books fan party? On its own the inclusion of the New Era party invitations was not a serious error, but in the context that later emerged, it was unfortunate.

(iii) I have no inside information at all about New Era's sponsorship of certain categories of prize at the masquerade. I do know that the masquerade audience was critical at the constant reiteration of the name "New Era" during the competition, and Anne Page the masquerade organizer sounded a bit embarrassed about it over the microphone. I see nothing wrong in events like the masquerade receiving commercial sponsorship, but I don't think *any* commercial company, be it Gollancz or Pizza Hut, should be allowed to have this kind of intrusive presence at a fun event like a fancy dress competition.

(iv) By the Sunday of Conspiracy, the anti New Era feeling was hotting

up. Chris Donaldson and others were hurt and upset at the various samizdat sheets alleging that the Scientologists had taken over control of Conspiracy that were being widely circulated on the Saturday. I think this may have been the first time the Committee realized the strength of feeling that New Era's various sponsorships had aroused.

On the Sunday morning, the Programme Committee, of which I was a member, met in one of the Committee suites. We were told that on the previous day Algis Budrys had approached the Committee to ask if he could speak for a few minutes before the Hugo ceremony on the Sunday night on behalf of the Writers of the Future programme. The Committee had agreed to this.

I was absolutely furious. I was feeling tired and aggressive anyway, after days of the rather thankless hard work that programme organizers have to do. (Largely consisting of placating angry American writers wholly unknown to me who *demand*ed to be put onto the programme at the last minute.) In the context of all the criticism that the Committee had come in for, it seemed to me that letting Budrys speak *as if he were actually a part of the Hugo ceremony*, which is the nearest thing in fandom to a High Mass, was suicidal. I was told that there was no alternative; the decision was made and was final.

I said I refused to appear on the platform as MC with Budrys there. Paul Oldroyd and Chris Donaldson, the two Committee members present, suggested a compromise. Budrys would speak first with the house lights up, and then I would do my bit only after he left the platform, and the music announcing the ceremony proper would be played only when Budrys had finished. I was still very angry, but I'd spent some time preparing my performance, such as it was, and I couldn't see any advantage to anyone if I simply refused to MC the ceremony with only hours in which to find an unready replacement. So I agreed.

I later learned that Mike Christie, another of the programme organizers and a thoroughly good fellow, was sufficiently disturbed by what I had said to go and buttonhole Budrys himself. Astonishingly, Budrys told Mike Christie that the main reason he wanted to speak was to make it quite clear to the vast audience that the Writers of the Future programme was administratively completely separate from the Church of Scientology, and that they dissociated themselves from Scientology. When I heard this (before the ceremony) I wasn't much placated. My feeling was that the Award ceremony was not the time or place for any kind of special pleading, no

matter how well intentioned. (I don't even like things like the Big Heart Award and the First Fandom Award being included in the ceremony, because they are not democratically awarded by fandom; indeed I understand that the entire judges' panel for the Big Heart Award consists of Forry Ackerman.)

Other disturbing things happened that afternoon. Suzy McKee Charnas asked to withdraw from the ceremony (she had been asked to present the award for best non-fiction) on the grounds that she had heard it rumoured that the fix was in, and that L. Ron Hubbard was going to get the award for best novel through a bloc vote of Scientologists. This was, of course, wholly false, but it suggests the kind of wild rumour flying about, and carrying with it sufficient fervour to convince at least one extremely intelligent person. I knew, as MC, that Hubbard had not won, and I had to break the rule of total confidentiality in order to reassure Suzy that she needn't worry. In the event she didn't show up on time to present the award anyway. And the ceremony itself, about which, by now, I was feeling extremely miserable?

Well, I suppose most of you were there. Budrys's speech was embarrassingly disastrous in almost every imaginable way. By personally thanking various Committee members, such as Chris Donaldson, he sought to make it clear that they were allies of New Era; this is just what the Committee didn't need, though some might argue that they deserved it. The promises made to Mike Christie, if promises they were, were broken. Far from dissociating Writers of the Future from Scientology, Budrys stressed the New Era connection and even lavished praise on both the generosity and the literary skills of L. Ron Hubbard. (Curiously, Budrys has total amnesia on this point; he believes he mentioned Hubbard not at all.)

The house lights, as I recall, were *not* left on. Certainly, the prevailing impression was that even the Hugo ceremony was now sponsored by Scientologists, with the complaisance of the organizers. There was much muttering. To make matters worse, Budrys was himself invited to present one of the awards; he was asked at the last minute to fill in for the Strugatsky brothers, who opted out because of language difficulties. I was not consulted on this until *after* Budrys was asked.

I really felt quite sick as the spotlight fell on me and I bounced on to the stage to do my bit. I thought that the booing as the novel title *Black Genesis* was read out was unfortunate but understandable (though one shouldn't interrupt a High Mass). However this was trivial. I truly believe there would have been a riot if Hubbard had won the Award. The evening would have

broken up in total disorder.

The unanswered question is: Why did the Committee allow this farce to take place? Well, the Committee are nearly all friends of mine, and I like them. Chris Donaldson has ethics at least as spectacular as those of the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, and is lovable with it. She simply isn't the person to sell out.

The thing is, though, that she didn't see it as selling out. In my view the Committee was conned. For example, before the Convention Budrys had taken Chris out to lunch, and convinced her that Writers of the Future was a programme of considerable purity, a programme that would do a great deal of good for young British writers at a time when the British magazine and anthology market has sunk to its possibly lowest state for five decades. Chris thought that a number of budding young writers she personally knew would benefit from the programme. She liked Budrys personally (as I do too) and trusted him (as I regret to say I think I don't, for reasons explained below). She felt, as did others, that allowing Budrys to speak before the entire massed Convention membership would be the best possible way of giving the Writers of the Future programme the publicity that it richly deserved. (I'm sorry, Chris, if I seem to be second-guessing you here; I know you'll tell me pretty sharply if I've got this all wrong.)

What I can vouch for personally is that after the ceremony Chris felt devastated and betrayed, and fell into a major depression.

I'm sorry to be running on like this, but I want to make one further point. I have since the 1950s had a very great respect for Budrys as a writer. *Rogue Moon*, *Who?* and *Michaelmas* are all minor sf classics. He has not had the recognition he deserved. I have corresponded with him, also. I felt, prior to *Conspiracy*, that he was an old friend who through some oversight I had never actually met.

I have met him now, and he's a nice man. I suppose him to be an honest man, but he is certainly obsessed with and passionate about the success of the Writers of the Future programme, a programme to which he has given up several years of his life. In the process, he has developed a much higher profile in the sf community, and travelled a great deal more, than previously. This must have been pleasant in many ways, and may partly explain his commitment to the programme, but there is certainly a lot of idealism in there too. I cannot see A.J. as a knave; I confess that I do see him as a dupe, which is why I do not altogether trust him. I think he has paid too high a price in

order to reach what he perceives as a good objective. Also, he is undoubtedly tactless.

The tactlessness is partly because of his perfectly genuine admiration for L. Ron Hubbard, at least for Hubbard in his role as a science-fiction writer of the 1940s. He sees nothing odd about giving the highest possible praise of Hubbard, who for him is one of the most influential and important writers of the period, and somehow the praise seems to spill over Hubbard generally, his later life as well as his earlier. (I think some earlier Hubbard, notably *Fear*, is extremely interesting, but I don't rate him nearly as high as Budrys does, either as writer or as influence.) For the record, although A.J. never said so in so many words, I don't think he believes Hubbard's recent "dekalogy" to be any good.

(v) During the Award Ceremony some of you may have observed bits of paper being pushed at me from the side of the stage. I don't know where they came from; presumably from the stage manager or one of her assistants. One asked me to make an announcement forbidding flash photography. Most of the others related to my being asked to announce the venue for the photo-call session for award-winners after the ceremony was complete. The first and last of these mutually contradictory messages gave the venue as the Starlight Room. The second gave some other venue, I can't remember which. None of them mentioned the New Era party.

*I did not then realize that the Starlight Room was the room in which the New Era party was scheduled to take place.* If I had remembered the wording on my own invitation to the party, and therefore realized what had happened, I'm not sure whether I would have read out the notice or not. Certainly, when I found out after the ceremony, I violently disapproved. Nor do I know who authorized this as the venue. Vince Docherty was the ceremony organizer, and it may have been him, but I don't know.

It was yet another disastrous decision. For one thing it made life difficult for photographers who were not asked to the party. I understand there is an argument about whether any photographers were not allowed in. Steve Jones (who unfortunately was Press Officer to both Conspiracy '87 and to New Era Publications – I don't know if this was known at the time to the Committee) says nobody was kept out. But I hear that Charlie Brown says he wasn't let in to take photographs for Locus.

Much more important, the Hugo photographs should not be connected to any commercial organization. It would be absolute death to the Hugos if they

came to be seen as connected in any way to any one publishing house. It would be even worse if New Era publicity material appeared in the background of the photographs, but even if it didn't, there's nothing to prevent them using the photographs with captions reading "The winners of the 1987 Hugo Awards have a celebratory champagne at the New Era party", or words to that effect. This would make it seem as if the "most important" writers in science fiction supported the work of New Era, and would be invaluable propaganda material. Fine, if New Era invite the winners individually and personally, and they agree to be photographed in this way. But it's simply not on for Conspiracy itself to announce that the *official* photographs will appear with what is effectively a New Era logo pasted over all of them.

This is the point at which bile and disgust really welled up in me. I went to bed quite early that night, exhausted and angry, despite the rival attractions of Toby Roxburgh's continuous, floating now-you-see-it-now-you-don't room party. Before I went to bed I quickly became aware that *nobody* was talking about anything but New Era's "takeover" of Conspiracy. Voices were raised, drinks were thrown (the next evening as well), and Scientology lost a few friends and made many enemies among people who were previously neutral or disinterested.

The whole thing was disgraceful. I know that many people are blaming the Conspiracy committee for the debacle, and I can see why. My defence of them is bound to seem patronizing, though this is not my intention. My defence is this: they were desperately overworked, they meant well, and they were innocents abroad. The only Committee member with any really long-term knowledge of the ins-and-outs of what sf professionals get up to and what commercial interests get up to, was Malcolm Edwards. And Malcolm, whose marriage had recently collapsed, did not play the central role as Chairman that was originally hoped and expected from him. That left decisions to be made by people who (a) had to make them in a hurry, and (b) didn't necessarily have the worldly wisdom to realize their implications.

I'm old, sour and cynical, and have been around for a long time. I saw a lot of these problems coming, but I was in no position to do anything very concrete about them. With hindsight (again) I wish I had made my feelings more strongly known earlier on. But I wasn't on the Committee, and I've never been on a Convention committee, and I simply didn't see myself (my own ethics have been queried over the years) as having the moral authority to

tell the Committee what to do and what not to do. I'm sorry now, when it's too late.

However, perhaps it was just a storm in a teacup after all. But I don't really think so.

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# Notes 2

## Chris Evans

### Following [Peter Nicholls](#)

**CE:** I've been unable to locate a complete recording of the Hugo ceremony and its preamble. Greg and Linda Pickersgill have a videotape of the event, but apparently the tape ran out soon after Budrys began his announcement and had to be changed. Greg's transcript, which follows, therefore has a gap in it.

"To me has fallen" [Budrys begins] "the honour of being the first to speak. Although the ceremony has not yet officially begun, as soon as I get off, it will. So I'll keep it brief.

"My name is Algis Budrys, this is my first visit to the United Kingdom, or indeed anywhere outside the borders of the United States for the past fifty years. It was worth waiting for. (APPLAUSE.) I'm delighted by the UK, I'm delighted by this convention, I'm delighted by the hospitality, the friendly guidance, and the cooperation of the convention committee. I will start from the top with Malcolm Edwards, Paul Oldroyd, Chris Donaldson, and I could go on if I knew the names, but I certainly do know the functions, and I thank you all for your graciousness, and your reception of Writers of the Future, which has exceeded all expectations. The amount of interest shown, the eagerness with which this program has been met here, justifies my own involvement in it, nourishes my heart, gladdens the hearts of the many prominent sf people who have been participants in the program, and in general just makes it real nice."

BREAK HERE, DURATION UNKNOWN.

"New Era wish to thank the convention and are pleased and proud at their ability to participate in the masquerade last night. We are particularly thanking Anne Page for her concern that we be given proper credit. I think what was more important to us was the ability to participate and to have the masquerade be such a stunning

success. I'm pleased to announce to you that the Writers of the Future contest has been extended into 1988. I make this announcement every year. They pretend they're going to stop it but they never do. I'll be making the same announcement next year in the analogous location. And finally I would like to announce that we have added a judge from the United Kingdom. Ramsey Campbell has been gracious enough to serve. (APPLAUSE.) And I thank you very much." (APPLAUSE, NO INDICATIONS OF DISSATISFACTION AUDIBLE ON SOUNDTRACK.)

Greg also transcribed the announcement Peter Nicholls made between the Big Heart Award and the First Fandom Award towards the end of the ceremony:

"Can I ask the Hugo winners to have sufficient patience to remain seated when this event finishes a few moments from now, as the press would like to take your photograph afterwards. There will also be a press facility for taking close-ups and more relaxed photographs, perhaps at the Starlight Room in the Metropole, afterwards. This is by invitation only, please note."

# **And Now A Word From Our Sponsor Geoff Ryman**

I'm not qualified to comment on Scientology as a philosophy or as a practice, nor am I familiar with the nature of its relationship with New Era publications or Writers of the Future.

But I can say that the fans who organized the World Science Fiction Convention must have been very grateful when New Era agreed to help with costs. The encouragement given by Writers of the Future in the form of workshops and the opportunity to publish must have been very welcome to new writers. The professionals who helped with the workshops must have been pleased with the handsome treatment they received.

The only people left out of the equation were the readers.

And it is readers that science fiction needs to develop if it is to continue as a thriving, independent genre. Written science fiction, like most other things, has to be marketed. Like any other marketing exercise, it must continually attract new customers to replace the old ones. An established newspaper must attract young people to replace its ageing readership. Recruitment literature must be targetted at the people who are undecided rather than at those who have already made up their minds to join.

In most respects, from its kitsch and dated presentation to its inward-looking insularity, the science fiction industry fails to reach out for its full potential readership. In marketing terms, it aims for its core market rather than for new buyers. This is a fundamental mistake. Committed buyers are never enough to keep any product going. Marketing, therefore, aims to attract the undecided.

The people who sell SF seem to have given up doing this. The packaging of SF novels, for example, fails to attract a substantial proportion of young people. Compare the stylishness of most magazine or record covers with the stereotyped pandering of SF covers. Why is it necessary to sell SF as junk? The tired imagery – the armoured women, the men with lasers, the impossible machinery – actively puts off most readers of any age. Their appeal is almost solely to the fans.

Fortunately, the substance of SF is better than its marketing. One of its greatest assets is its openness. As a literary genre and as a social activity, science fiction can accommodate right wing, left wing, technophilia, technophobia, mysticism, materialism, Marxism, Christianity. It is a broad church. It can attract the young person who thinks SDI is neat; it can attract the young person who wants to see unicorns. It can be written by both Jerry Pournelle and Ursula Le Guin. Basically, it has extraordinarily broad appeal, which its marketing then narrows.

If sponsorship identifies science fiction as a whole with a particular philosophy, then SF's openness to all ideas is less visible to potential readers. If the sponsorship identifies SF with particular philosophies that are regarded by the mainstream audience as cranky, then we in turn can be even further marginalized. Simply, sponsorship can limit our already narrow appeal.

Second, I wonder if the broad church itself can be disrupted. In British politics, we have recently seen what happens when a broad church becomes too closely identified with one of its constituent strains. The identification loses part of its support. The resulting internal conflicts do further damage.

Finally, sponsorship is a way of finding a substitute for an audience. It can indeed help bring into being good things that might not otherwise exist. Britain's only SF magazine, *Interzone*, would not exist without sponsorship, for example. But we might find we could pay for our conventions and our magazines, and improve book sales by a more active attempt to attract an even wider range of readers. The broad church could be made even broader. By allowing us to keep old fannish habits, sponsorship encourages our insularity and cosy conservatism, at the expense of our independence. It means we don't have to aim for new readers. It means we can even avoid improving the product.

In the meantime, if we need sponsorship, we have to remember that no sponsor is entirely altruistic. Any sponsor is at the very least going to want to be seen as a good guy and to be identified with the product in some way. To accept money without expecting that is simple bad faith or foolishness. If we have a sponsor, we must expect him to have a word or two to say on his own behalf.

And we might as well be sure that we are ready to say thank you.

Marketing point 2. The science fiction industry has done such a poor job of presenting itself that many people think we're dotty. Why would a successful organization offering, as I understand it, therapy and self-

development to a huge mainstream audience *want* to be identified with anything as marginal as SF?

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# Concepts of the Beholder

## Mike Christie

A couple of weeks before Worldcon, Sherry [Coldsmith] and I got a phonecall from Lisa Tuttle. Would we, she enquired, like to take part in a writers' workshop being run by Algis Budrys? You betcha we would. Tell us more.

So Lisa told us more, ending with Robert Springall's phone number at Writers of the Future. We rang off, and thought about it some more. Would it turn into a PR session for Scientology? There was some suspicion that we wouldn't have to bring stories; if so, what the hell would we actually be doing? We couldn't take four days out without being pretty damn sure it was going to be worthwhile.

Robert Springall assured us that it was purely about writing, and that the reason we wouldn't need a manuscript was that we'd be learning new writing methods, not analysing old mistakes. This definitely gave us pause, but further checking revealed that we did in fact have to take a story along, so ... well, Budrys was a good writer, and I at least felt sure it would be worth hearing what he had to say about the pieces. I also felt sure he was too good a writer to promote anything but valuable writing techniques.

Monday morning, nine-thirty, the eight of us gathered in the basement of the Dickens House Museum, where we met Algis and Edna Budrys, and Ian Watson. Ian assisted Algis during the workshop. We got some introductory stuff, mostly about the Writers of the Future programme; about the great writers who have lent their names and their time to it; about how good a thing it is for all the new writers around; about the competition details; about the workshops planned for the U.K.; about the details of the rest of the week's work in the workshop; and about Scientology. This last took the form of a warning from Budrys more or less along the following lines (I paraphrase from memory):

"I can guarantee you all one thing. During Conspiracy, someone will come up to you and tell you that you've been brainwashed without knowing it, that you're a dupe of the Scientologists, that you're spreading an evil movement across the world. Therefore, you should know that when Ron

Hubbard founded the Writers of the Future programme, he did it because he had been in his day one of the greatest of all pulp writers – a fact often conveniently forgotten – and he had a deep affection for SF, and wanted to give something back to the genre. He felt that the best way to do this was to give beginning writers a new way into the field, and so he started the Writers of the Future competition, which gives away a couple of thousand dollars in prize money quarterly.

“When he offered me” – [Budrys] – “the job of coordinating the programme, I took it on condition that it should have nothing to do with the Church of Scientology. However, Hubbard himself made exactly the same condition; he said there were two reasons. Firstly, he did not feel it appropriate that the two should have any connection beyond his name. Secondly, if there was any business connection between the Church and anything that might be called a profit-making organization such as Bridge/New Era Publications, then the US Inland Revenue would be down on the Church for millions of dollars of income tax, as it would lose its tax-exempt status.”

(I stress that the above two paragraphs are based on my memory of what Budrys said; his actual words may have been somewhat different.)

That was the last we heard of Scientology for the workshop. Or so I thought. However, the methods used by the workshop are worth examining, as I gather that the “technology for writing” approach they use is pretty much in line with the standard Scientology method. This seems fairly harmless; but it might be worth pondering the likelihood of someone discovering that their writing had been helped by such a method; and being influenced to join the Scientologists as a result. Whether this is a bad thing, and whether it’s an effect that has been anticipated by the Scientologists working for and with the Writers of the Future team, are matters of opinion.

As far as the usefulness of the methods is concerned, I think I gained a lot of useful insights into the process of writing from the workshop. I think my own work will improve as a result, and I feel sure most beginning writers would be helped at least as much as they would be by a more conventional workshop. Essentially, we were given potted lectures on the structure of a story, the mechanics of suspense, the necessity and serendipity of research, and so forth. The supporting materials were mostly articles written by Hubbard for writers’ magazines in the thirties and forties, before he invented Dianetics.

There was, however, a piece on the definition and value of art, that dated from after the foundation of the Church, and which to my mind was the most dogmatic and the least useful piece. It was written in the style of a textbook. A sample: “A concept of the beholder and some understanding of his or her acceptance level is necessary to the formulation of a successful art form or presentation. This includes an approximation of what is familiar to him and is associated with the desired effect.”

Well, the workshop ended and Conspiracy began. I obtained, at my own initiative, a slip of paper signed by Paul Kincaid, the Hugo administrator, reading “I have no reason to suspect any irregularities in the final ballot for the novel Hugo” and passed it to Budrys, as he had mentioned he expected accusations of Scientologists buying the Hugo for *Black Genesis*. I went along to the Writers of the Future panel, which I’d organized, and learnt little I didn’t know. But most of the time, certainly on Friday, I was too busy to hear the rumours about the Scientologists having bought the convention, as I was the on-duty programming trouble-shooter for that day, and I did a bit of work over the rest of the convention.

Most notably, I was at the sub-committee meeting on Sunday morning that discussed the speech Budrys wanted to give before the Hugos. Peter Nicholls was outspokenly against it, even without the spur of the “Conspiracy ’87 – a branch of L. Ron Hubbard Inc.” posters that we started to find everywhere. We eventually decided that I should go and talk to Budrys, as I was on good terms with him; show him the posters, and suggest either cancelling the speech, or possibly interposing an extra (spurious) announcement between him and the Hugos, to emphasize that Budrys’ speech was not part of the ceremony.

I found Budrys in the Hugo hall, at the rehearsals. He was unsurprised by the poster, and said he thought it was probably American fans who had done it. He explained that in fact the main reason he wanted to speak was to scotch these rumours and that he hadn’t wanted to say so to Chris Donaldson. He said he would naturally not object to another subsequent announcement to separate him from the Hugos.

Given this, Peter, Chris Donaldson, Paul Oldroyd and I decided it would be OK. So we went ahead – and of course Budrys went back on his word, and used the announcement as he had claimed he would originally – to publicize the WOTF programme, including mentioning Bridge/New Era and L. Ron Hubbard by name.

I don't think Budrys lied to me; I think he decided we were being paranoid, and changed his mind. But when the flak blew up, he contacted Sarah Baziuk, the publicist for Writers of the Future in this country (poor woman) and suggested that she take me out for lunch and get my opinions – presumably as Joe Fan. I was a little disconcerted to find that she was a Scientologist, because that seemed instantly to make a mockery of the claims that the Church and the WOTF programme were only historically connected. In the end, I suggested that the only way to clean up the image would be to (a) appoint an independent director of WOTF in the U.K. – someone with unimpeachable credentials – and give them complete autonomy from Bridge/New Era, except for the money; and (b) get rid of Hubbard's name.

I knew perfectly well (b) was ridiculous. But I thought it would be interesting to see whether the Writers of the Future people, as distinct from the Bridge/New Era people, would be prepared to even hypothetically entertain the idea of getting someone else to sponsor the programme. Nobody denies the programme is a Good Thing (stripped down to its essentials) but is that what they are pushing, or is it Hubbard's name? When I asked Sarah what her reaction would be if another sponsor could be found, she said that it would be unfair to Hubbard; it had been his dream, and you couldn't take it away from him like that.

I have a story in the competition. I'm not sorry I submitted it, but if it wins, I would have to think hard about whether or not I'd agree to have it printed in the annual Writers of the Future anthology. And yet, if it does win, the Writers of the Future will give me a start in my writing career. How should I be ungrateful?

There are a lot of aspiring writers who would benefit from the programme; let's not kid ourselves it wouldn't matter much. Twelve new writers published every year is a lot of bones tossed to those hungry for a first sale. But if public opinion closes the programme, they'll just be twelve more people for whom the cupboard was bare.

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# **The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Unreadable Chris Priest**

Chris Priest prefers not to have this essay reproduced in digital editions of *Conspiracy Theories*.

# Notes 3

## Chris Evans

### Following [Chris Priest](#)

**CE:** Chris Priest's reference [*in a contribution withdrawn from this ebook*] to Author Services being set up with a capital of \$44 million comes from a report in the Washington POST entitled "Scientologist Said to Divert \$100 Million" and quoted by Ted White in *Egoscan* 7, August 1984:

"NEW YORK, July 11 (UPI) – The reclusive founder of the Church of Scientology diverted more than \$100 million from the cult-like organization into his foreign bank accounts, former church officials said in interviews.

"The former senior church officials told The New York TIMES that L. Ron Hubbard directed them to establish a series of shell corporations to channel many of the church's resources to his overseas accounts. Most of the money was on deposit in Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, they said.

"Meanwhile, the church's president, Heber Jentzsch, today called the charges 'garbage' and said, 'This is all false stuff ...'"

Several paragraphs further on: "Howard D. Schomer, a former Scientologist who was an executive of a firm alleged to be controlled by Hubbard, said he been told a major task of its staff was to convert assets of the church to Hubbard.

"Schomer said Hubbard's assets grew from \$10 million to \$44 million in the first six months he worked for Authors Services [sic], a company founded by Hubbard."

# **Scientology, Author Services and the Testimony of Bent Corydon Charles Platt**

Charles Platt prefers not to have this essay reproduced in digital editions of *Conspiracy Theories*.

# Lunch with AJ and the WOMBATS

## John Clute

My brief, which is self-imposed, is to describe a lunch. It took place a week after the Convention, and came about because of what happened at the Convention. My sense of what in fact did go on at Brighton is not privileged – many of the participants were closer to events than I was at any point – and I'll say little about those events, except to state that the implications of the collision between SF and its mutant offspring Scientology do continue to seem important to me. (The countervailing view, which in my hearing has been purveyed most forcefully by members of the SF community who'd become involved one way or another with the Writers of the Future programme, was that the whole brouhaha was something of a tempest in a teacup. It is a view which clearly invites an ad hominem response, one which could easily descend to indecorum. Fortunately it is also a view which can be rebutted, and has no doubt been rebutted more than once, in more general terms.) So we can pass on from Brighton itself. The Battle of Britain was over, and the valiant warriors had trooped back to London to display their iodine to the home folk. It was the Thursday or Friday after the Worldcon ended. Peter Nicholls rang.

– I thought you'd like to know that you should expect a call from AJ [Budrys].

– Why?

– He wants to have a meeting with you, me, Malcolm Edwards and Dave Langford. He wants us to tell him what we think went wrong.

– Come on.

– It's true. He said he wanted to have the benefit of our advice as Wise Old Men of the British science fiction scene.

– I don't believe you. We may be *old*.

– They were his words exactly. Wise Old Men.

– WOMs.

– Wise Old Men (Britain And Territories).

– WOMBATS.

– Shy creatures of the wild.

- My beard’s being cleaned. Owl shit. *You go.*
- We go together, old son.
- OK. But given the issues involved, we should all go Dutch.
- OK.

The call came. The lunch was arranged for the next Monday. Langford showed no interest in trundling down from Reading. The rest of us all met in Malcolm’s office at Gollancz, the firm which has published Budrys in this country for decades. I will now call him AJ. Though we’d corresponded for some years, I’d never met AJ in person until the previous week. Throughout the afternoon he exhibited that unflappable and fathomless American courtesy which I (for one) find deeply congenial, but inscrutable; he was of medium height, stocky, almost rotund, pale, serene. Like so many Americans, he exuded a bruising Dynaflo innocence – an innocence not of childhood but of Michaelmas. Peter, as usual, glowed with sartorial embonpoint, as though he had, only moments before, hatched out of a crystal egg; as neat as I know how to be, I resembled a cashiered Mountie; and Malcolm, as usual, looked as though the motorcycle gang had just left him behind in Hamelin. After chatting briefly, we (AJ and the three WOMBATs) then went to lunch at Malcolm’s shabby-genteel club.

We began the conversation. As the one among us most intimately involved in the sequence of decisions and requests that led up to AJ’s disastrous speech at the Hugo Awards ceremony, Peter led off. He described the inexperience and exhaustion of the members of the Convention Committee who were dealing with AJ’s request to speak, and the incrementing momentum of events that kept them off-balance; he gave his own sense that – whether or not deliberately on the part of AJ or Writers of the Future or New Era or Bridge Publications or the Church of Scientology itself – the Committee was ultimately bulldozed into approving a scenario in which the complex of Hubbard-derived organizations would be seen as having sponsored the Hugo Ceremony itself. Advertising (we all said at one point or another) was one thing, and was an accepted part of the Convention scene; but this was something else. It was *sponsorship*. The distinction was simple. When you advertise, you present your product in a context; when you sponsor, your product presents the context. And *your* product (we said) was L Ron Hubbard.

At this point I interjected what would become – in the four hours we were all together – rather a leit-motif for me. Whatever the legal niceties (I

said) separating Writers of the Future from New Era/Bridge Publications and from the Church of Scientology as a formal organization, it was absolutely the case that, for the members of the Convention in specific and for the British SF community in general, Writers of the Future and New Era were *perceived* as being intimately bound into L Ron Hubbard's posthumous empire. The perception was that only from that empire – perhaps in the form of revenue from the highly profitable publishing of Hubbard texts to a tied market – could New Era/Bridge derive the huge advertising budget so much in evidence at Brighton. So when AJ spoke for Writers of the Future at the Hugo Awards Ceremony, he was also speaking for the whole complex of organizations, and in that sense he was participating in Scientology's campaign to purchase the posthumous legitimation of L Ron Hubbard as a central figure in the SF pantheon.

Peter and Malcolm went on to describe in detail the events surrounding that ceremony: AJ's speech; the booing in the hall when Gene Wolfe named Hubbard's *Black Genesis* as one of the books shortlisted for the novel award; the strange confusions about where the photo opportunity for Hugo winners would be held, concerning which Peter (as emcee) was given conflicting messages to read out to the Convention, and which he had finally to announce would be held in what turned out to be the Skyline Room, where New Era/Bridge was giving an invitation-only post-Awards party; the reported attempts by Fred Harris and others to ensure that Hugo winners were photographed under a banner advertising L Ron Hubbard and the organizations which used his name; and so forth. Given Scientology's authoritarian attitude towards the control of information, and their bad relations with the press, it was not surprising (I remarked) that various legitimate members of the press were reported to have been *excluded* from the photo opportunity.

There seemed no doubt that AJ felt considerable dismay at this recital, and said more than once that, as far as he was concerned, nothing like this sequence of events would ever occur again. I said (and I think others said as well) that we were not meeting him at this point to give advice about how the organization he represented could better accomplish its goals. He then described his purpose in speaking before the ceremony. What he had wished to do (he said) was to dissociate Writers of the Future, with which he identified himself strongly, from any other organization to which it might have been linked. To this end (he said) he did not mention L Ron Hubbard's

name.

– But you did mention his name, said Peter.

– Yes, said Malcolm. You most certainly did.

I am myself absolutely certain that AJ genuinely believed he had not mentioned Hubbard, and when both Peter and Malcolm continued to assure him that he had indeed done so, and that there were tapes available which would confirm he had done so, he was visibly bemused. Thus ended the first phase of the conversation.

Interestingly, and at some considerable length, AJ then told us of his gradual involvement with individuals and organizations connected to L Ron Hubbard, then still alive. This involvement came about originally through AJ's professional work as an SF writer/critic. Very briefly, after some initial advice he gave about *Battlefield Earth*, AJ was asked in his capacity as professional critic to read and evaluate the manuscript of the ten-volume novel Hubbard had written next, apparently around 1980-1982, and which is now being serially released by Bridge Publications and New Era, cognate organizations with different market areas (as AJ explained), and both initially founded to release Hubbard texts on Dianetics and Scientology. AJ had read the manuscript and had suggested changes, none of which (he thought) had been made. At around the same time, he became centrally involved with the Writers of the Future programme, and was soon working full-time ("More than full-time," he said) on its projects; this situation continues. The shape of AJ's narrative, and the specific details he gave about the complications of funding Writers of the Future during the six months after Hubbard's death in 1986, were clearly intended to separate Writers of the Future in our minds from any other Hubbard-derived organization. However, though we were in no position to dispute (or to wish to dispute) any of the legal or circumstantial ramifications of AJ's presentation, I don't think I was alone in feeling that we were being given material of only marginal relevance to the issues at hand.

I know I felt that, as a highly skilled professional, himself involved in advertising over the past decade or two, AJ should not have failed to understand the Public Relations implications of his pre-Awards speech, should not have failed to understand that publicity for Writers of the Future was also publicity for the guru whose philanthropy had brought it into existence; and that publicity for L Ron Hubbard was also publicity for a militant closed quasi-religious organization which had, AJ now seemed to be claiming, over lunch, not the remotest interest, financial or otherwise, in

Writers of the Future. And moreover I thought AJ should have at least suspected that his talk, given as it was in L Ron Hubbard's name at the most nearly solemn moment of a Worldcon already inundated with welcome-board advertising from Hubbard's scions, must inevitably have been understood by the audience as an attempt to announce the Award ceremony on behalf of the *sponsor*. On matters like these, I did not feel it was my job to teach AJ how to suck eggs. I was not about to think of AJ as a patsy. But on none of these matters – perhaps because he had suggested the lunch in order to hear *our* views – was he prepared to comment.

So what does it add up to? A tempest in a teacup? I continue to think not. There are two issues. One) sponsorship. Two) Scientology. Much of the conversation over lunch with AJ had concerned, directly or indirectly, the first of these, and it may well be the case that all four of us came essentially to agree that a scene as uncoordinated and collegial as an SF convention should not be seen to be sponsored by anyone. (Throughout our conversation I used the term “undue sponsorship,” a regrettable tautology I mention only now. In the context to which we were restricting ourselves, no sponsorship is *due*.) We may have all agreed about sponsorship in the abstract, and AJ may have agreed that appearances were at the very least misleading; but it is certain that the three of us did not persuade him that in fact Scientology et al had a case to answer – that we were not at all foolish in suspecting that there *had* been an attempt to buy-out the convention and to present it as gift from L Ron Hubbard's folk.

Which brings us to Scientology. Perhaps because he felt it was irrelevant to his concerns, AJ did not make any comments on the Church of Scientology at all, beyond disclaiming any connection between the Church and Writers of the Future. As I'm restricting myself to this lunch, neither will I attempt to discuss Scientology in any extended fashion. But (even cursorily) I think a few things can be mentioned. Given the intertwined histories of American SF and Dianetics/Scientology, and given AJ's strongly argued version of the history of the genre, in which L Ron Hubbard has a central role, I think it both perfectly natural and unexceptionable that AJ feel a kind of affinity both to Hubbard and to the revanchist longings of his heirs. But this sense of a community of discourse should not extend – and as far as I'm concerned should be *seen* not to extend – to any form of complicity or intellectual sympathy – on AJ's part or anyone else's – either with the tenets of Hubbard's Church or with the behaviour of the leaders of that Church, insofar

as an extraordinary barrier of litigation – funded from a seemingly bottomless purse – permits those tenets and that behaviour to be known. If all the facts were known, Scientology might not prove to be a repellent monolithic faith, a contaminated can-do cod Freudianism which transmogrifies the darkest truths about homo sapiens into imbecile litanies of Popular Mechanics soul-tinkerer's prattle, user's manuals for customizing the human machine, as though Thomas Alva Edison had been reborn as Shirley MacLaine; but the facts are not permitted to be known. If all the facts were known, the tactics of the Scientology organizations might not seem authoritarian, paranoid, manipulative, illiberal, claustrophobic, destructive of any sense that those with power should fund not prisons of the human mind but clerisies; but the facts are not permitted to be known. (It is here, incidentally, that one can begin to construct an argument with the tempest-teapotters, by introducing the concept of the *trahison des clercs*.) But none of this was properly aired, and if the lunch with AJ failed, if the WOMBATs felt drained and melancholic as 4pm rolled around, I think it may have been the failure of any of us to address one central issue that sapped the spirit.

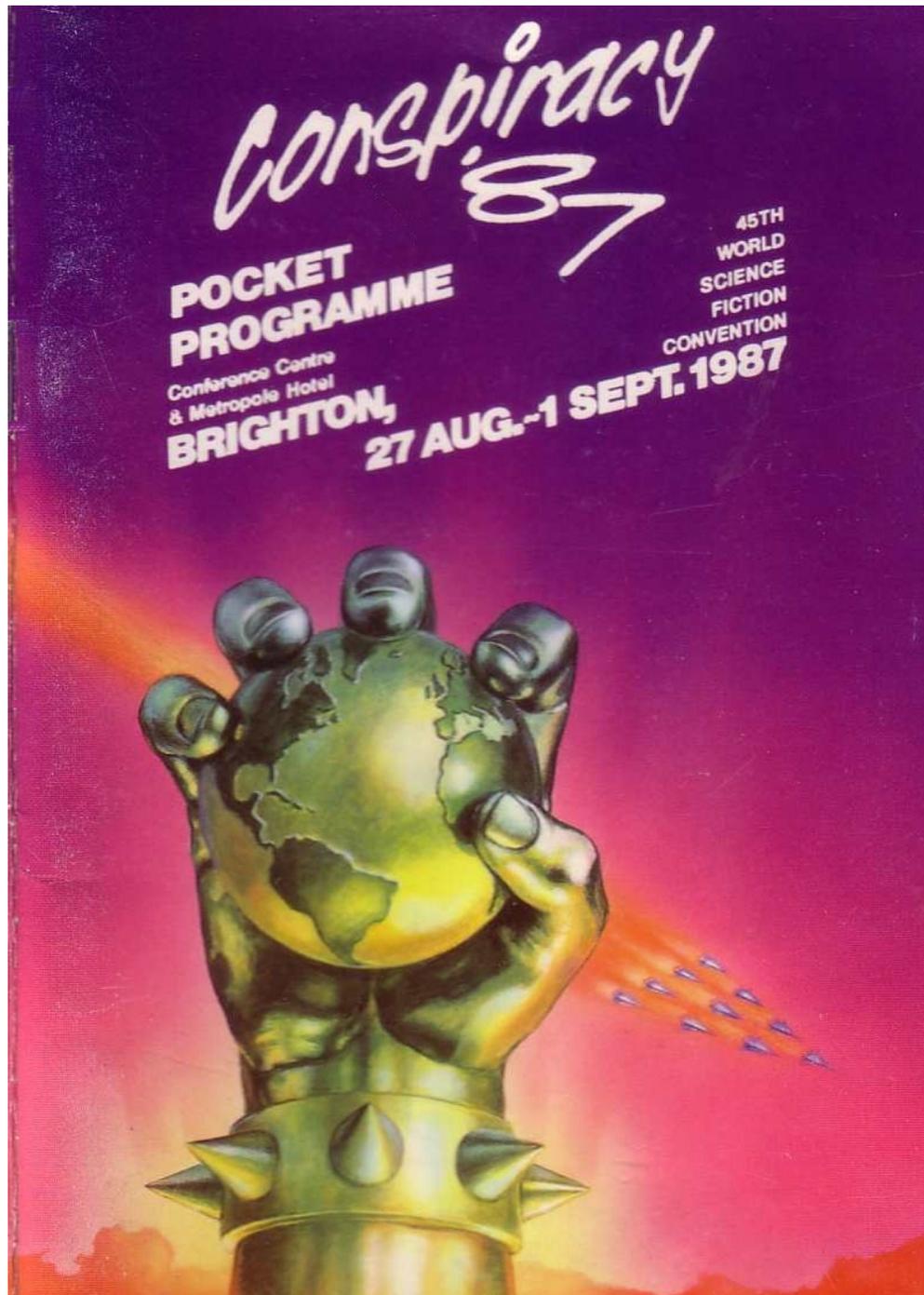
I have no idea what AJ thinks of Scientology as a system for private adherence or belief, if indeed he thinks about it at all; and perhaps it's none of my business. More sadly, after four hours with a man for whom I felt a strong liking, I ended up with no real sense of what AJ thought about anything. We tossed facts, tales, suggestions, hyperboles, accusations and commiserations at him; but it was like lobbing rocks into a black hole. Except for the statement that certain events would not happen again, and the insecure moment about whether or not he mentioned L Ron's name, he remained, as far as we could tell, fully imperturbable, untouched, untouching. And as far as the lunch went, that was that. But the debate continued internally, at least in my head. It was all well and good (I argued) to grant Scientology (or Scientology's quasi-corporate compadres) every right to advertise their presence at a Convention and promulgate their views there. Indeed it was germane to SF's sense of collective identity – which was vested in Committee members last August – not to act in an oppressive fashion against a group suspected of themselves acting oppressively against others, for to act as one's enemy was to become one's enemy.

But the principle did not apply (I continued) in the same fashion to individuals. When an individual said Yes to something associated with Scientology and/or its founder (like Writers of the Future), he was speaking

as an autonomous person, not a forum. Persons did not accept advertising. They *became* advertising. So when a person said Yes, he gave something of himself to that organization. He gave his name. He donated his virtue. It was a gift which, to mean anything at all, had to have been free. AJ must have been free to work for Writers of the Future. Robert Silverberg and Gene Wolfe and Roger Zelazny and the others must have been free to lend their names to Writers of the Future, and to all that it implied. But being free of course meant being free to say No. Which is what some writers in the field *did* say. When they were asked to lend their names to an organization connected – obscurely but ineradicably – to a philosophy of which they could not approve, they said No. I wished it were not the case, but nothing AJ said over lunch persuaded me (or I think any of us) that there had ever been any good reason for any person not to say No.

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**Appendix  
Conspiracy '87 Pocket  
Programme Cover**



Artwork by Gerry Grace, originally for *Mission Earth, Vol 1: The Invaders Plan* (1985) by L. Ron Hubbard.

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**The End**

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