

Annual Business Meeting Minutes, Baltimore, 29 May 1997

Date: 29 May 1997

From: Jim West

To: Dreiserians present at the Business Meeting, ALA

Subj: Very informal minutes

We decided that the Treasurer will continue to chair the ALA business meetings and will take on the responsibility of scheduling these meetings with the ALA planners.

We then discussed ways of building the membership of the Dreiser Society. Currently we have only 50-55 individual members; we feel that we can do better, especially given the level of interest in Dreiser abroad and the evidence of publishing on him and his work in this country. Keith Newlin at UNC-Wilmington has volunteered to set up a TD Website for us and to begin a TD Discussion Group. There was much enthusiasm for these ideas.

There followed a lengthy discussion of the future of Dreiser Studies. Clare Eby emphasized that working Dreiserians must support the journal by sending in material regularly. Otherwise the editor must scramble and wheedle--not a good thing. All present agreed to submit work and to encourage good students and colleagues to do the same. DS has almost caught up to its publication schedule and cleared out its backlog. We therefore need to get busy.

Clare informed us further that Special Collections at the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, University of Pennsylvania, has agreed to take on the production and mailing of DS. This was excellent news. Thanks to Tom Riggio for making this happen. Nancy Barrineau has agreed to continue as book review editor; Keith Newlin will function as compiler of the annual bibliography, and we will all help out with annotations.

We next discussed the future of the Newsletter. Margaret Vasey had sent a message detailing her difficulties with the publication; many of these resembled Clare's problems with DS. The consensus seemed to be that we discontinue the Newsletter for now and allow its functions to be absorbed by the revitalized DS and/or the Website.

Everyone in the field is most grateful to Clare and Margaret for their efforts during this transitional period. We also thank Fred Rusch for his years of faithful and useful service to DS.

Felicitations and congratulations to Phil Gerber, who steps down after two successful years as president of the Society. Yoshi Hakutani moves to the position of president and will lead us during the next biennium. Jim West was elected vice president; in the normal order of things he should be president in the year 2000, the centennial year of the publication of Sister Carrie.

We discussed some tentative plans for a celebration of the event. Jim, working with Jim Hutchisson--who has already done some investigating--will try to interest the Chicago Historical Society in hosting such an event. Possibilities for lodging will be checked out. We'll also look into having a college or local dramatic group stage "Under the Gaslight." After the meeting, someone made the capital suggestion that we get Madonna to play the lead. Surely she'll want to have a go at the part. Details to follow.