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News from

The P.E.N.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF WRITERS
AMERICAN CENTER

Executive Secretary: JANE HUDSON

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY June 1944

BUSINESS MEETING The annual business meeting of the American Center of the P.E.N. Club was held at The Netherland Club on May 17th, followed by a cocktail party. The following officers and Executive Board were elected:

President:	Carl Carmer
Vice-Presidents:	Inez Haynes Irwin Rita Halle Kleeman Frederic Melcher
Secretary:	Whit Burnett
Treasurer:	Mary Day Winn

Executive Board

J. Donald Adams	Mignon Eberhardt	John P. Marquand
Maxwell Aley	Robert Frost	Anne O'Hare McCormick
Bessie Beatty	Mark Gayn	Frederic Melcher
Van Wyck Brooks	Langston Hughes	Blair Niles
Pearl Buck	Inez Haynes Irwin	William Sloane
Whit Burnett	Will Irwin	James Ramsey Ullman
Henry Seidel Canby	Rita Halle Kleeman	Margaret Widdemer
Carl Carmer	Manuel Komroff	John L. B. Williams
Norman Cousins	Christopher LaFarge	Mary Day Winn

After the election, Carl Carmer spoke about the aims of the P.E.N. for the coming year. He said:

"This is the moment when P.E.N., founded as it was on a belief that writers of the world, while differing on many subjects, are agreed on fundamental principles, faces the greatest challenge of its history. Its members believe in the right to be heard, the free discussion of world problems, argument characterized by objectivity and freedom from prejudice. The writer members of P.E.N. have a tremendous audience which may be influenced toward good will among nations. One of our primary purposes for the coming year must be emphasis upon friendly cooperation among the United Nations and those neutrals who feel as we do towards the utter defeat of the Axis powers and their eventual rehabilitation as members of the society of civilized nations. It is the purpose of the American Center to devote itself primarily to the achievement of this goal. Much more important than our own pleasure in association with each other in friendly social gatherings such as those which have made membership in the P.E.N. enjoyable in the past, is the establishment of genuine bonds of respect and affection among all Centers of P.E.N. throughout the world."

NEWS OF OTHER CENTERS Last Fall Mr. Carmer wrote the following letter to the 36 Centers still functioning all over the world:

"The American Center of P.E.N. is most anxious to receive information of the activities of the other Centers throughout the world, and feels that, particularly at this time, the power of an international organization such as ours should be used to the utmost toward establishing amity between the nations and towards bringing about a better world after the war. We therefore hope that you will keep us informed as to the progress of your Center, and that you will send us copies of all publications relating to it. We particularly desire to have the opportunity of meeting members of other Centers who may happen to be in America, and we hope that you will let us know of the visits of any of your members to these shores. I can assure you that they will be most heartily welcomed by the American Center."

Thirteen Centers answered this letter: those in Santiago, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Belfast, Dublin, Wellington (New Zealand), Tel Aviv, Bombay, Montreal, and the Polish, Czechoslovakian, German, and Hungarian Groups domiciled in London. The last received was from the Secretary of the Dublin Center, who said the letter from Mr. Carmer must have been on a long Winter and Spring Cruise, as it had taken almost four months to reach them. The Belfast Center sent an interesting little pamphlet called "The P.E.N. in Ulster"; the New Zealand Center sent us copies of their gazette, and the Polish Group reprints from the P.E.N. News concerning their activities. All letters showed a remarkable unanimity in emphasizing the desire to promote amity between Centers and nations, and gave evidence of great activity. We were particularly pleased to receive a request from the Chilean P.E.N. for an interchange of books. Action has been taken toward this end.

Six members of foreign Centers notified us when they came to New York, and were entertained either at P.E.N. dinners, or by a Hospitality Committee formed for this purpose.

London, which has continued to send us their excellent P.E.N. News, is bursting with activity, as usual. Herbert Agar, who has served this winter as a kind of liaison officer between the London and American Centers, was scheduled to be guest of honor at a special luncheon given by the London Center in honor of the U.S.A., but because of Mr. Agar's return to the States, the luncheon had to be postponed.

Dr. Stevenson, President of the Los Angeles Center, writes that that Center is well launched, with a membership of over 30, and holding dinners each month during the winter.

The San Francisco Center has also been busy during the winter, and has given a series of Sherry parties.

A suggestion came to the Executive Board that a Center of the P.E.N. be formed in Washington, D.C. After due consideration, the Board decided that there were too few P.E.N. members or other literary people permanently resident in Washington to form an effective, continuing Center there. However, a resolution was passed appointing Muna Lee, of the Division of Cultural Relations, Department of State, as Executive Secretary for 1944-45 of a Washington Committee of the American Center, and empowering her to call meetings of P.E.N. members now residing in the nation's capital.

WAR WORK The war work of the P.E.N. was merged with that of the Writers' War Board two years ago. We are ably represented on that Board both by our President, Carl Carmer, and by one of our Vice-Presidents, Rita Halle Kleeman, and we are always ready to cooperate with it in any way that we can.

EXECUTIVE BOARD In December the Executive Board sent a telegram to the Finnish Ambassador in Washington, urging that he do everything possible to effect the release of a distinguished Finnish writer, Hella Wuolijoki, imprisoned in Finland for political reasons. No reply to the telegram has been received.

In April the Board empowered the President to send a letter to the Boston Board of Retail Book Merchants, strongly protesting their refusal to sell Lillian Smith's "Strange Fruit". This letter, signed by Carl Carmer, also carried the signatures of a committee consisting of Dorothy Thompson, Will Irwin, Clifton Fadiman, Fannie Hurst, Manuel Komroff, and William Sloane. Copies of this letter were sent to Boston and New York papers.

DINNERS AND A COCKTAIL PARTY There have been three extremely successful dinners this season, all held in the charming Netherland Club, to which we are greatly indebted. The first, held November 18th, on the subject of the underground movement, was competently and interestingly covered by Alan Chase, Torolv Kandahl and W. W. Chaplin. On January 19th the impact of the war on writers was eloquently discussed by Ira Wolfert and Christopher LaFarge. Another member, Cornelia Otis Skinner, gave one of her famous sketches. On April 12th William Sloane and Teddy White, both recently returned from China, gave us an off-the-record account of the situation in that country at what proved to be one of the most interesting dinners the P.E.N. has ever had.

On December 16th we gave a cocktail party at the Rockefeller Center Luncheon Club for Emily Hahn, who had just returned on the Gripsholm from a long term of imprisonment in a Japanese concentration camp.

MEMBERSHIP We announce with deep regret the death of 4 of our members during the winter: John Peale Bishop, Henrik Willem Van Loon, Hewitt Howland, and William Allen White.

We have taken in 58 new members since the Secretary's Report last year. Our total membership is now 310.

Respectfully submitted

John L. B. Williams