Noreascon 1: Science fiction and science

By David Niven

"...For although in a certain sense and for light-hearted persons non-existent things can be more easily and irresponsibly represented in fiction than in actuality, the things, for the serious and conscientious historian it is just the reverse. Nothing is harder, yet nothing is more necessary, than to speak of certain things whose existence is uncertain, and whose future is at least as uncertain as present events. The very fact that serious and conscientious men treat them as existing things makes it doubly close to reality and the possibility of being born."

- Albertus Secundus

(from the epigraph of Hermann Hesse's Magister Ludi)

Last weekend, the Sheraton-Boston hosted Noreascon, the 29th World Science Fiction Convention. The annual event is the most important of the year for an unlikely conglomeration of science fiction fans, including those who unashamedly call themselves Fans (the term is known as Fandom). A Woolsey is a thing of cult, fadification, and - dialect - it shuns old wave-few wave, hard-core fan fiction conventions. With a widely-mixed representation by race, creed, color, and hair length, it is difficult to tell whether any given person is a Sci-Fi Fan until he begins to speak.

What does one do at a World Science Fiction Convention? If one is interested in "science fiction," one should join the "mainstream" that Wells started - there had been advances in technology, but there was still a need for a new kind of story. Wells and for light-hearted persons non-existent things can be more easily and irresponsibly represented in fiction than in actuality, the things, for the serious and conscientious historian it is just the reverse. Nothing is harder, yet nothing is more necessary, than to speak of certain things whose existence is uncertain, and whose future is at least as uncertain as present events. The very fact that serious and conscientious men treat them as existing things makes it doubly close to reality and the possibility of being born.