



## Aware how things should be: the 1950s

*Aware how things should be*

*Not how to make them so.*

Naomi Mitchison, member, Scottish PEN

With the end of the war the priorities were reconstruction and the repair of international relationships. In Scotland, regeneration was foremost in many writers' minds.

Among those calling for social and cultural regeneration in Scotland was Naomi Mitchison. The 1950s saw her established as one of many writers who reflected both Scottish and international issues. Among PEN members, these included Sydney Goodsir Smith, Robin Jenkins, Sorley Maclean, Iain Crichton Smith, Edwin Morgan and George Bruce.

PEN worked to reconnect countries shattered by war.

But then came the division of Europe by the Iron Curtain and a growing concern for writers restricted by authoritarian regimes. The first post-war International PEN Congress, in Zurich, was attended by Eric Linklater and Naomi Mitchison.

In 1949 International PEN had acquired consultative status at the United Nations, as 'representative of the writers of the world'. It was in this context that in 1950 Scottish PEN again hosted International PEN's annual Congress. It was deemed a 'great success' by *The Scotsman*. Eric Linklater edited an anthology of contemporary Scottish writing, *The Thistle and the Pen* which he hoped would make money for Scottish PEN, 'whose burden and honour in 1950 is to entertain in Edinburgh the International Congress of the P.E.N.'