

* (At the Baycon Business Session,
that is!...)

SECOND HUNDRED #200

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It is true that Andy Porter's SF WEEKLY (aka DEGLER!) is ten or fifteen numbers ahead of FIRST DRAFT. But this is still the oldest established permanent floating fanzine in New York, because DEGLER! #1 came out at about issue #16 of FD, simultaneously with the first "mailing"

SUPPORT ST LOUIS IN 1968*!!!

of Apa F, the Fanoclasts weekly apa that subsequently survived for 69 glorious weeks and, after 16 weeks, inspired LASFS (via Bruce Pelz) to found Apa L. Apa L still continues, though only intermittantly with me in it (I mention that because for several years I airmailed material to Don Fitch, Tom Gilbert, and Fred Patten, and was, in fact, the last of the six original out-of-town Apa L members to drop).

The percipient among you may already have noticed a charming coincidence -- namely that this is Undecided Publication #300, which is an average, roughly, of 75 fanzines a year for the last four years. That's by no means unusual in the era of Apa L, but it indicates a certain dogged tenacity.

I wd do a survey of the last 199 FIRST DRAFTs at this point, but it happens that I do not have an organized file of them after the first 100 issues. Besides, enough of it is ephemeral enough -- much like the present issue so far -- that it wd not make for particularly enlightening reading. And it wd have to go to more than 2 pages, which is a definite no-no these days with me.

Oh, for those glorious days when I wd fill up two stencils like this and pretend it was a fanzine! ...

Now we have another LETTER OF COMMENT, which will again be printed here in two successive issues because of space limitations. Fortunately it divides into two neat topics, cheerfully maintaining the universe in balance...

RICK SNEARY :: Dec. 28th, 1967

Dear Andy,

(...) ... By the way, would you tell Dave that he is a Nit, and that FD #191 is a great Nitpick... <<I try! -- dgv>>

Actually, by the rules he lays down, he is a liar, not the N.Y. Times. He says they "lie" when they referr to marijuana as a "narcotic" and to those who use it as "addicts".. -- Let me say first off, I know what Dave means, and I wouldn't use these words eather, but let me turn to my desk-side companion (though you may find that hard to believe) a Winston, College Edition Dictionary.

NARCOTIC (Gr. narkotikos=insensible state : markoun=to be numb) producing stuppor or sleep:--n. a drug that relieves pain and produces sleep or, in sufficiently large doses, stupor or complete insensibility.

ADDICT (Lat: Addicere=to give (oneself) up : dicere=to say) to devote or give (oneself) up; often to a bad object; -n. one who devotes himself constantly to a habit, pursuit, etc.; especially, a habitual user of drugs.

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((RICK SNEARY continues:))

According to that, booze is a narcotic and S.F.fans are addicts.. It certainly sounds broad enough to cover marijuana.. Dave says the Times lies when they use the words, which my dictionary says they do not (though I agree there is a miss-representation). Dave says that an incorrect statement in the public press is a lie. Thus by his own rules he would be guilty of lying!.. An example of the pointlessness of mere name calling.



DAVE VAN ARNAM interrupts RICK SNEARY for a week, with a few comments on this portion of his comments. First, some excerpts from the Merriam-Webster Fifth Edition (1945) Webster's Collegiate Dictionary:

"narcotic (...) --n. 1. A drug, as opium, which in moderate doses allays sensibility, relieves pain, and produces profound sleep, but in poisonous doses produces stupor, coma, or convulsions. 2. Figuratively, something that soothes, relieves, or lulls. (...)"

"addict (...) v.t. To apply habitually, as one's mind to speculation; to give (oneself) up or over, as to versifying, as a constant practice; to habituate. n. One who is addicted to a habit, esp. to the taking of some drug."

These definitions, from a couple of not extremely good dictionaries, do spark a lengthy essay on them alone. A few points do seem relevant to Rick's points directly, so I'll spare you the essay.

The Winston definition is a damn poor one if that is all there is to it, because they have settled for what amounts to smerging together parts of 1. and 2. from Merriam, to produce a definition that does not truly define. The word "narcotic" has two basic definitions, as most words minimally do. The first is the historic precise meaning, in the present case applying to opium, opiates, opium derivatives, and (possibly) addictants such as speed and suchlike garbage. The second is the poetic, figurative extension of the original precise meaning, as when Marx observed that religion is the opiate of the masses. This is a natural linguistic process.

Unfortunately it is fraught with dangers, especially in a mass-media era when words are being worn down, used up, and thrown away to the great cost of the English language's rich heritage. There was an article in PLAYBOY a couple of years back, pretending to prove that several hundred perfectly good words and phrases describing various states of alcoholic intoxication all boiled down to "drunk." This linguistic debasement is intolerable. Yes, words evolve, change, modify their meaning. No, the point is not to get a great mass of different words that all boil down to the same thing. Words have both precise and poetic levels of meaning. A newspaper has little need to use the second level when reporting hard facts about precise matters. (You'll notice also that my Merriam holds that writing poetry is a potential addiction; this reduces the precision of the word 'addiction' to a kind of tasteless mush, if taken with any seriousness.)

Several people have questioned my use of the word 'lie' in the context of the NY TIMES's consistent misuse of these words. But my context was of all those youngsters out there who are trying every god damned foolishness from glue-sniffing to breathing freon, because they no longer believe the warnings of their elders. Thus I cited the NYTIMES and its sorry record. My vigorous application of the term 'lie' was intended to convey the kids' attitudes, as verbalized (obviously imperfectly) by me. But more on all this next week, and Hoping You Are The Sane...