

FANS AND ETHICS

A. Vinç Clarke

Since fanzines began, the freedom of the fan press has been one of its most cherished possessions. We who publish and edit fanzines have always felt able to say what we liked in the columns of fanzines, unfettered by the commercialism of the mundane Press and knowing that we could be called to account for any transgression of the unwritten rules - tell the truth as you see it ; deal fairly with anyone you criticise.

These ethical standards are, of course, subject to a great deal of strain , and it seems to me that during the last 3 or 4 years the standards and sense of responsibility of the fan press as a whole has weakened. As an example, I might cite the case of a US fanzine published by quite an eminent fan which ran an article on the effects of the drug Peyote - and where to obtain it. Now, the effects of this drug-taking were described as unpleasant ...for most people. Some, though, alleged the author, it could help to various spiritual insights (completely ignoring any hallucinatory aspect of these insights). Everything was left to the good sense of the reader; here's how to obtain the drug, now it's up to you, Jack.

Well, fanzines are read by youngsters just entering their teens. They're read by some not-very-bright adults. They're read by people who'll try anything once, and if they don't get sufficient kink- well, try something else more potent. I'm not going into detail on this, because if you have no sense of responsibility nothing you read on a printed page is likely to influence you, but I'd as soon show my baby how to strike a light and then leave her alone with a box of matches as run that article.

There are many other cases of irresponsibility, untruths, mischief-making. One of the most famous fans of recent years, Walt Willis, gave up a good percentage of his fanactivity after a fanzine argument with someone who used a quotation out of context as a deliberate smear , and the accusations of biased reporting make uneasy reading in the last year or two.

Now, the courses open to the victim of an attack in a fanzine are many. If you don't bother about the chances of parading fandom through a court of law, you can sue, relying on your opponent's own disinclination to carry the case to a conclusion. Personally, I feel that anyone introducing mundane law into fan publishing completely destroys the sense of the freedom of the fan press mentioned above and violates its spirit.

Secondly, you can ignore the attack. As fanzine fans are normally loquacious people this very silence will appear like an admission of the truth of the attack, and although the moral support of your friends who know you are right is a comforting thing, you remember that fanzines are not like daily papers, to be cast aside when finished and forgotten; copies lie around for years and are read by neofans long after their original publication.

Thirdly, you can reply to the attack. In your own fanzine, if you are lucky enough to possess one, or, ideally in the fanzine in which the attack took place if you can be sure of fair treatment. You thereby reach the same audience, even though your answer is somewhat later. Or, finally, you can reply in a separate pamphlet, to what you hope will be the same audience as the original fanzine.

This lengthy preface is an explanation and some comments from the reason for publishing the following script. Some background detail is necessary, however. In December '58 the London Circle was re-organised as a dues-paying club. In the ensuing months two schools of thought as to the running of the club became apparent. Of the 7 Committee members 3 belonged staunchly to School A, 2 belonged as staunchly to School B, 1 wavered, and 1, the A-slanted, tried to affect compromises. Eventually School B resigned and School A dissolved the formal organisation.

Now, although other people's quarrels are interesting enough, the least interesting to fanzine fans are club quarrels. So much of the interchange takes place on a verbal level that it is practically impossible to make sense out of fanzine reports. Inchmery fandom, which was a vocalisation of the School B above, intended to allow ruffled feelings to subside, and went ahead on its own busy affairs. Unfortunately, Laurence Sandfield, a member of School A, couldn't let things rest. He had often shouted, in the noisy meetings that sometimes took place, that "Inchmery fandom were obstructive". He never explained how. A columnist for the Alan Burns edited fanzine NORTHLIGHT, he published a 'history' of the events in the London Circle. Inchmery, who had already written twice to Sandfield in an effort to find out his exact grievances and had ignored a letter of criticism published in an American fanzine made one more effort to find out from Sandfield by direct letter what was the matter and then sent a cursory PC to Burns, refusing to reply in an article which they knew would be run with another of Sandfields commenting on it.

Another NORTHLIGHT appeared, with yet another article by Sandfield. Unfortunately, a member of Inchmery had decided to stand for TAFF in the interim, and from a letter published in NORTHLIGHT it was evident that Sandfield's attack, easy though it was to dismiss it from short range when one knew the facts, might, for someone outside this range, very much bias their voting.

It was therefore decided to publish an answer to the two articles. Even at this time, Sandfield has been given 2 more chances. He has not taken advantage of either.

This is the answer.

A.VINCENT CLARKE

For Inchmery Fandom
236 Queens Rd. London SE14

Inchmery.

7th. January 1960

Dear Laurence,

In my card to Burns concerning NORTHLIGHT 7 I stated that you had been ill and had private worries. I was willing to let the nonsense you uttered die down; I have more pity for the state of your mind than anything else.

However, you have chosen to carry on with your mudslinging in NORTHLIGHT 8, and apart from the annoyance your remarks have caused Joy, you are now prejudicing Sandy's chances for TAFF.

You are perfectly entitled to your own opinions, but your maliciousness needs exposing. There are in fandom, as outside, people who are willing to believe the worst of others, and your articles will appeal to others like yourself, and in turn influence more likeable characters who might otherwise not know anything of us.

I am therefore enclosing a list of questions which I trust that you will make an effort to answer. Most of them are on a 'yes-no' basis, but it was impossible to do this with all of them. This letter and the questions are being sent to you by registered post on the 8th. January, Friday. We intend to run the questions and this letter off on the duplicator Monday night, the 11th. If you send your answers by return (by Sunday afternoon post) they will be included. If not, the duplicated pamphlet will be sent on Tuesday to every fan editor in this country and the US and to as many individual fans as we think should have a copy. You can please yourself when and where the answers get published after that.

If you want to come over to Inchmery and discuss this with us we will be in Sunday and Monday evening.

If, on reflection, you feel that you have erred in these articles, we are willing to cancel sending the questions out and to substitute the following apology:

"It has been brought to my notice by Inchmery fandom that my articles in NORTHLIGHT 7 & 8 contain a number of factual inaccuracies and inferences which are damaging to that group's reputation. As most of the articles were couched in generalities which it is impossible to retract individually, I wish to withdraw from the record the contents of each article and express my apologies to the Inchmery group for any inconvenience and annoyance caused to them."

I'm sorry that we have to do this.

Sincerely,

- (1) In NORTHLIGHT 7 you state, page 11, that "Ted took Sandy Sanderson to task for sheer downright inaccurate reporting in APE." You further state that it was 'smeary'. You do not cite any fact whatsoever. Do you regard this as 'smeary' reporting?
- (2) Is it not a fact that every charge levelled by Ted was answered, and no conclusion or censure was passed by the meeting ?
- (3) Was the main charge levelled at APE the report of the election of officers, for the LC, with particular references to the actions of Jim Ratigan.
- (4) Did you know that Ratigan subsequently admitted to Inchmery the correctness of the report?
- (5) Did you know that Ratigan admitted to concocting a rumour damaging to Inchmery and agreed not to publish any more rumours if we agreed not to expose the matter in APE?
- (6) Did you make any attempt to check on the above prior to writing your article?
- (7) You state that Inchmery, " without authority from the elected committee, or informing...the secretary, circularised the membership with a pamphlet..." (Northlight 7, ppl2). Was there any agreement amongst members that they would not circulate the membership?
- (8) If the answer to question 7 is NO, why mention authority if it is not a 'smear' ?
- (9) You state that the pamphlet 'purported to be concerned ' with what was being done with the LC member's money. Do you agree that membership fees were paid by fans to become members of the LC ?
- (10) Do you think that if you have paid a membership fee to a club you are entitled to know what is being done with this money, and it is the duty of the officers to keep the members informed?
- (11) Do you find anything wrong in being concerned with the state of a club to which you belong?
- (12) You state that a proposed constitution was 'under discussion'. Can you state by whom, and when discussion took place?
- (13) Do you find anything wrong in more than one proposed constitution being presented to members?
- (14) Do you consider that a proposed constitution (Inchmery's) which states that a quorum will be two thirds of the membership (approx. 30 members) is evidence of a 'naked drive for power'?
- (15) "Standard committee procedure has been evolved in democratic societies which will prevent demagogic action and facilitate the process of business". This is a quote from the pamphlet. Do you agree?
- (16) If the answer to 15 is YES, why have you written in NORTHLIGHT 8 that in the

proposed constitution (Inchmery's), which was based on accepted Committee procedure, were "devices-calculated to slow up procedure & cause exasperation"?

- (17) You further state that the proposed Constitution was unwanted - "that we didn't want." (Northlight 8, pp 5) How did you know this as this proposal was withdrawn, consequent on Ted Tubb at last producing one of his own?
- (18) "Inchmery have long been the biggest fan names in the London Circle, and have run various Cons and such." (Northlight 7, pp 12) If this is not a lie, name one Con. (or 'such') which all three at Inchmery have run by themselves, or any other event in the London O.
- (19) If you are unable to answer 19, how could Inchmery have felt that their "collective noses were rather being pushed out of joint." ?
- (20) You state that Inchmery sent a circular to John Carnell, "who was not a paid-up member of the LC." Did you know that Carnell intended to attend at the next business meeting?
- (21) Did you know that Vin/ Clarke wrote to both the Secretary and the Chairman of the LC prior to circulation of the pamphlet, asking for names of members?
- (22) Did you know that neither answered, and the Chairman at the next meeting said that he didn't think that it was worth while?
- (23) Did you know that at the time of the March meeting of the LC, when dues had been collected from approx. 35 fans, ranging from 1/- to 4/- each depending on how many meetings they had attended, no records had been kept of the addresses of any members, and 1/3rd. of the addresses were unknown to the then Secretary and Chairman?
- (24) Did you know that at least 2 months after the dissolution of the 'official' LC, several fully-paid-up members had not been informed?
- (25) In NORTHLIGHT 7, you state that "Vin/ asked Ted what had happened to the programme list which had been sent to him and Ted had no answer." Did you know that a copy had been sent to the Vice Chairman as well?
- (26) Did you know that this 'programme list' (actually, a proposed programme-item list) was compiled at a special meeting at the Globe fixed at the previous business meeting for the purpose of choosing ideas for a programme?
- (27) Do you agree that at this meeting neither the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer were present, and Vin/ organised a collection of ideas, stating that as he was going on holiday he would send them to the officers for approval and action?
- (28) Do you agree that nothing whatsoever was done during the two months following the July meeting about the programme except the above meeting and one the following week, and at the September meeting the Chairman asked the members what they had done?
- (29) You state "Ted asked Vin/ if a certain message had been relayed to him by Sandy Sanderson, and Vin/ said no. As a result of these two instances of procrast-

-ination, and carelessness, the programme had been delayed." Do you agree that Ted stated that the message had been to circulate all fans with details of the symposioun?

- (30) Do you agree that Vinç subsequently stated, both publicly and directly to you, that no such message was given, and that he was given to understand that Ted had said: "We'll have to get someone to circulate to all the fans in the London area and others who might be interested... I suppose it will have to be Vinç." ?
- (31) Do you know that no confirming letter was sent regarding this alleged message to Vinç, and no enquiry was raised by the Committee officials as to the non-receipt of any circular, although a month elapsed between the alleged message and the following meeting?
- (32) If you agree that Vinç informed you as above (30), why was no mention of this made in the article? Is it because any lie is good enough?
- (33) On page 13, NORTHLIGHT 7, you make a particular point of referring to an incident at the business meeting, Oct. 14th., stating that Vinç was thought to have spent £2 on drink, and the Treasurer (who had a full account from Vinç at the time you do not mention this) was corrected by Sandy Sanderson, who said that Vinç has spent the money on food - "hot dogs, in fact." On being corrected in APE, that the money was 30/-, the spender Arthur Thomson, and the food was hamburgers, you publish in NORTHLIGHT 8 the correction, with the words "as if it mattered." If it didn't matter, why was it mentioned in the first instance?
- (33b) Isn't it a fact that the mention of money was to impute some sort of mis-handling of funds by Vinç ?
- (33c) You also state regarding the incident: "I can only report what I heard. For the truth of the matter I'd advise everyone to avoid writing to Inchmery." As you were present at the meeting when the incident was discussed, how could you mis-hear three facts so interconnected?
- (34) Did you check with Atom regarding the matter after being corrected in APE?
- (34b) If not, why not?
- (35) You state, NORTHLIGHT 7, page 14: "Joy Clarke attempted to read a letter from Vinç in the first paragraph of which he stated that he had been "insulted by the Chairman while in a drunken condition" and this was 'rightly shouted down by Ted as hearsay evidence.' This is reported as fact, with quotation. Do you agree to this?
- (36) Vinç's letter, written in case the resignation was queried, started thus:
"My resignation was given to Ted Tubb on the night of the symposioun, and confirmed in writing a few days later.

"My major reason for resigning was an overwhelming feeling of disgust that the London Circle Chairman should pick an occasion such as this for trying to quarrel in a semi-drunken manner with other members of his Committee in front of members of other clubs."

- (37) You further state, NORTHLIGHT 7, "the Constitution was used by Inchmery to smash the London Circle constitution." Do you agree that this statement is meaningless without facts, and is in fact under the category of a "smear"?
- (38) Do you agree that the London Circle Constitution was drawn up by Ted Tubb, passed through for general approval by the Committee, and approved by members at a properly constituted meeting, with amendments?
- (39) Do you agree that Inchmery fandom consists of 3 members, and the London Circle membership was 45+?
- (40) You state in NORTHLIGHT 7, that the June meeting "ended on the same happy note that it began". You further state: "Because of being on the sick list I missed two business meetings but turned up on the 3rd Friday of September ..." Is it not a fact that the Tubb constitution was voted on at the July meeting and was passed (with amendments) and that you were present?
- (41) Was your illness connected with loss of memory, or the nervous exhaustion you state you were suffering from at the beginning of the year? (NORTHLIGHT 7 pp16)
- (42) Do you agree that although the proposed Tubb Constitution was amended at the July meeting (when it was adopted), no notice of the revised and final version was ever sent to members?
- (43) Can you cite one instance in which Inchmery fandom referred to this revised Constitution to obstruct the business of the Circle?
- (44) You state categorically in N7 that "Inchmery fandom has now left the London Circle." You admit that this is a lie in N8. You state that you "inadvertently misled my readers." How do you explain this 'accident' as Sandy attended the next social meeting at the Globe following the official meeting at which the 'official' circle was dissolved?
- (45) You state that the SF Club of London has a restricted membership "which is all right for those who like sycophantic yes-men." Have you heard of any fan club meeting in a private house in which membership is not restricted, and if so can you name it?
- (46) Did you know that s-f fans in Belfast meet at the Willis home by invitation?
- (47) Do you know any of the members of the SF Club of London?
- (48) If the answer to 47 is YES, name those whom you consider to be sycophantic yes-men?
- (49) If the answer to 47 is NO, would you regard the description of members of a club which you don't know as 'sycophantic yes-men' as a smear?
- (50) In NORTHLIGHT 8, Alan Burns says: "...since Inchmery has condescended to make something of the London O affair and drag N in ..." Do you agree that Alan wrote 2 letters to Inchmery asking us to comment on your article in N 7?
- (51) Would you say that Alan is interested in provoking a quarrel amongst people of different political views than himself?
- (52) Why do you think he says "...drag N in..." when the article was published in N?

- (53) You state that you never sent a wildly accusative letter to anyone, referring to Joy's charge in NORTHLIGHT 8. Do you deny that you wrote a letter (in reference to the proposed Constitution circulated by Inchmery) which ended: "Referring back to your 'dictatorship' charge, if this is true surely we have merely changed one for another?" Earlier in this letter you wrote: "...since 1955 the word of Inchmery and its cohorts has been the only word." In view of your answer to Question 18, what is this 'dictatorship' charge but wild accusation?
- (54) You state in NORTHLIGHT 8 that Joy speaks of "an agreement on each side never to mention the matter ((earlier schism)) again, which agreement I don't remember." In N 7 you speak of a vote of confidence in the Committee at the June meeting. This vote included the agreement, as the proposer will tell you. Do you agree that this is an example of forgetfulness on your part... again?
- (55) You state that you did not receive a letter from Joy asking for an explanation. Would you agree that you received a postcard, which you commented on to Vinz at the next LC meeting, reading:
 "We were very surprised at the tone of your letter and especially by your apparent poor opinion of us. As you have never mentioned any feeling that we were dictating to you before, we don't quite know what incident or incidents you have in mind or when we stopped you voting for something. It seems that in the present instance we are just not getting through to each other in the matter of who is entitled to do what around the LC and this is something that should be resolved by frank discussion and not by vague bad feeling. We are trying to clarify the situation - will you?"
- (56) Would you agree that you did not answer this postcard?
- (57) You give an extract from a letter Joy wrote to you on the 9th. Nov. Would you agree that the context reads:
 "You are, once again, accusing us of obstruction, and saying that we 'used the constitution' to be obstructive. Would you kindly, as soon as you possibly can, give us a list of actions we have taken that you may in any way consider obstructive. This time, to ensure we get an answer, I am enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. We are so certainetc."
- (58) Would you agree that no mention was made of referring to the matter in APE?
- (59) Do you agree that your answer (not quoted in N) included the following:
 "I don't intend to answer it ((the last letter)) of course. The approach was wrong. I never accede to such insolent and peremptory demands. Furthermore, any further letters from Inchmery to me must carry Vinz's signature, as I will deal with no one else."
- (60) Do you agree that the text of the postcard sent to Alan Burns read as follows:
 "Reference this nonsense in NORTHLIGHT 11. Laurence Sandfield is a sick man with private and personal troubles and a couple of grudges against me. If you had checked with me before publishing his silly mixture of untruths and meant-to-be -damaging inferences I could have told you the position. The fact that you did not shows your motives quite clearly. Crawl back under that stone before someone treads on you. If any of your readers unacquainted with us doubt my good intentions - or Inchmery's - they are invited to write to us. VINZ,"

- (61) Do you agree that the underlined words were altered or omitted from the text published in NORTHLIGHT 8 ?
- (62) Do you agree that you have been ill, and part of this illness was to your mental health? (See 41)
- (63) Do you agree that your wife has suffered from ill health recently?
- (64) You state that "the least little thing is likely to upset them(Inchmery)" Would you say that lies and slander should be ignored?
- (65) You state: "Inchmery tried to refuse these funds to us ((N8)). This is a fact. Sandy Sanderson said at the meeting 'No, the money was for the Circle as then constituted.' Meaning as constituted when the gift was made." Do you agree that in APE 4, Sandy printed the following letter from Carnell: "Herewith, as promised, cheque for £27:13:0d being a donation to the London Circle funds from the Midwestcon and Cincinnati Fantasy Group. This, in part, to make up for the money the Circle loaned to the 15th World Con. and did not receive back..."
- (66) Do you agree that this was several months before the official dues-paying Circle came into being?
- (67) Do you agree that in APE 10, Sandy wrote: "After a great deal of effort and against strong opposition, Inchmery was able to push through the fact that since the money from the States had been received on behalf of the larger group known as the LC that existed prior to the formation of the current dues-paying LC by Ted Tubb in December '58, it could not be disposed of by the smaller group. It was agreed that a meeting of all interested parties - those that could be reached - would be called..."
- (68) Do you consider it obstructive to be careful of funds, which care meets with general agreement?
- (69) You state the money was given by New York fandom in NORTHLIGHT 8. As (from #5 above) this is yet another mistake, would you put this mistake down to ignorance or the feeling that it doesn't matter what the facts are as long as something possibly damaging to Inchmery can be published?
- (70) Do you agree that when disposition of money is made in a dues-paying club all members should be informed of the intention and given the opportunity to debate?
- (71) If the answer to 70 is YES, why put in NORTHLIGHT 8 that "perhaps (the whole membership had not been circularised)...but who would have cared?" #?
- (72) If the answer to 70 is NO, why do you report in NORTHLIGHT 7 without comment "These two (Hall and Duncombe) are responsible for the disbursement of monies belonging to the LC...subject to the wishes of the London O." Don't you trust Hall & Duncombe?
- (73) If you do trust them, who doesn't trust them enough to have a condition concerning wishes of the LC written into their duties? †
- ((† I have every confidence in their financial integrity, of course (1967))

- (74) You state that Vinç turned up at 5 mins. to 9 at night for a meeting timed at 8 o'clock. Who timed it?
- (75) How do you know that Vinç knew it was for 8 o'clock?
- (76) Did Vinç state that he thought it was a Committee meeting and Committee meetings had previously started at 8.30 ?
- (77) Does Vinç state that the arrival was just after 8.35pm and the meeting was still in session?
- (78) Did you know that a previous Committee meeting at the house of Ted Tubb had been delayed for 30 minutes because the Vice-Chairman was not present?
- (79) Did Vinç state that his late arrival was due to trouble with his bicycle?
- (80) Would you agree that everyone at the meeting with the exception of Vinç had been at the Globe the previous week when a business meeting was arranged?
- (81) If the answer to 80 is YES, why do you infer ("he was the only one under that impression") that he lied or was mistaken concerning the nature of the meeting?
- (82) If the answer to 80 is NO, state facts, i.e., who was at the meeting who had not been previously informed at the preceding meeting, and how they knew.
- (83) You state that the meeting passed a decision that 'in future circularisation would be unnecessary.' State how many were present if this was put to the meeting.
- (84) State who proposed and seconded the resolution referred to in 83, or if you cannot, state why it was thought necessary for Ken Bulmer subsequently (May 26th) to circulate details of dates of future meetings?
- (85) You write 'Democratically Elected Committee' in capital letters to point out its significance. Would you say that one of the most vital safeguards for a democracy is the secret ballot?
- (86) If the answer to 85 is NO, are you then in favour of a system of open ballot?
- (87) If the answer to 86 is YES, how do you reconcile this with your objections to the circulation of a proposed constitution?
- (88) Ref. 85 above, would you say the Committee was elected by secret ballot?
- (89) You state that (NORTHLIGHT 8, pp 4).: "Inghmery has taken as an attack something that just never was one." Did you state in N7 : "If Ted did, in fact, insult Vinç --as is alleged-- then I haven't the faintest doubt that Vinç deserved it..." ?
- (90) Did you state in N7: Inchmery fandom has now left the London O...and those of us left have breathed a sigh of relief." ?
- (91) Did you state a report in APE was both "inaccurate and smeary" ?

- ((92) Do you know the meaning of the word 'hypocrisy'?
- (93) Do you resent the fact that 'Sandy' Sanderson has the same nickname as yourself yet is so far better known (although not having been in fandom so long) that an old time fan like Rick Sneary doubts your existence (NB)
- (94) Do you feel any resentment against Vinç because he protested on behalf of a group at the Globe in mid-'58 because you and other skiffers were making so much noise that conversation wasn't possible?
- (95) Do you feel any resentment against Vinç for satirising an article by you about Jazz in the Clacton Group's PERIHELION ?
- (96) Do you feel that, eg. your articles under the pen-name of 'Sandra Laurence', women should be weak, inferior and of lesser intelligence than men?
- (97) Would you resent a woman who obviously displays more intelligence than you possess?
- (98) You state: "Would it be, I wonder, that Inchmery have a feeling of guilt that leads them to expect an attack, and thus sees one where none is intended." (See 89-91-91 above). Is it not a fact that FANAC 42, Aug. 18th., '59, printed an item reading in part:

"Laurence 'Sandy' Sandfield is mad at Inchmery Fandom on account of a report on the London Circle which Sandfield claims was 'inaccurate...to a great extent smeary...'...makes disgruntled marks on paper about what he terms 'the general policy of obstruction which the Inchmery faction have followed"?

VINÇ CLARKE
for Inchmery Fandom

P O S T S C R I P T

I have been very reluctant to publish this pamphlet; other considerations apart any defence against such muddled mud-slinging savours of bullying. We at Inchmery have been outspoken on what we have regarded as moral issues in fandom during the last 3 years, and this is not the first time someone has become excited about it. However, there are two particular reasons for publishing this, although to a limited audience. One, as mentioned previously, the TAFF candidature ("Well, this Sandfield says he's truthful; no smoke without fire, y'know. He may be wrong, but just to be on the safe side I won't vote for Sanderson"); the second reason is a letter received from Sandfield dated 18th. January, when reluctance and other commitments had still delayed publication. This letter gives no answers, and no denials; its significance is in the following paragraph:

" The questions were carefully disguised statements, really, all designed to blacken my name and, while doing so, show up Inchmery. As far as the effect on my fannish name is concerned, I couldn't care less, for within the next few months I shall be going gafia, permanently. The reasons for this have nothing to do with fandom - I mean nothing to do in every sense-- so there is no point in my outlining them to you. Even if I cared to."

Here we have the truth at last. In other words "To hell with fandom; I'm OK"

Vinç