

This is the first issue of a weekly fanzine by  
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# 1 March 17th, 1994 4228 Francis Ave. N. # 103, Seattle, WA 98103.  
This is Drag Bunt Press Production # 174.

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"A Futurian Education lasts a lifetime."

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OVER THE LONG HISTORY OF FANDOM the word "frequent" has had varying definitions. Right now, one can publish a fanzine but once every six to ten weeks, refer to it as "frequent" in its colophon, and no one offers any complaint. But during the period when fanzines were the most significant arena for the expression of fannish thought and action, a fanzine had to appear at least every month to be called frequent, and weekly newszines, even weekly apas, were not particularly uncommon. They were considered a critical element of fandom's communication network.

I was reminded of that fact while sorting a box of fanzines from the late 50's and early 60's, part of a collection I am cataloging for John D. Berry. I found many issues of weekly or near-weekly fanzines, such as Ted White's GAFIA/STELLAR/GAMBIT, John Magnus' RUMBLE NEWSLETTER, Dave Rike's RUR, and from the later 60's, Dave Van Arnam's FIRST DRAFT. And don't forget the most successful weekly of the age, Carr and Ellick's FANAC. All make for fascinating reading; making no real pretense of objectivity, they presented news of and reacted to fannish events in the same sentence. Lively debate resulted. Despite having a fraction of today's fannish population, fandom in those days seemed somehow to have more of just about everything; more interest, more energy, more enthusiasm, and more character.

It occurred to me to ask myself why this should be. Why don't we have any of that energy today, when we have many material advantages that fans of the fifties once dreamt of? The most obvious answer is that the diffusion of SF and its archetypes into every corner of mainstream culture has taken away the edge of being a fan -- a proud and lonely thing -- and bloated the ranks of "fandom" beyond the ability of anyone's mailing list to encompass it.

Many fen swear to me that the energy and immediacy that fandom had in the heyday of the weekly newszine is alive and well on-line. I'm prepared to accept this as true -- the lack of current crudzines is proof that eager neo-fans must be channeling their efforts somewhere. And it seems like an oddly backward gesture for fandom to have barred on-line fanac from Hugo eligibility. But I'm not quite ready to take the information on-ramp just yet. Too many of the people whose opinions I respect don't have access to the Net, and who knows if they ever will. And I find that I have a desire to hear some of those opinions, in regard to issues that confront us and our interest in fandom's future.

Thus, you have before you the first issue of APPARATCHIK. For at least the next two months, I'll be sending it out once a week, to a very select list of people interested in the infrastructure, theoretical values, and future of science fiction fandom. After that, we'll see. I've managed to find a printer who will provide me with copies for 3 cents a side, so that with first class postage, a one-sheet will cost me 35 cents. I hope that you will return that investment with your opinions of the issues I raise here.

Although I am only planning to make fifty copies per issue, don't consider this a private forum. If others are interested in being added to the list, I'll do so in exchange for about the cost of the first two months copies, \$3.00. And if you don't care to receive further issues, please let me know right away.

THE BURNING FANNISH ISSUE most often on my mind these days is TAFF. I'd like to stand for TAFF; the opportunity to create new ties with fans overseas appeals to me, and in my opinion, a good TAFF race, win or lose, inevitably produces them as its most important product. I'd welcome the mundane burdens that go with the job as well. It often feels like I should be giving more back to fandom than I have. But with the state TAFF is in right now, one must wonder if anyone is ever going to stand again.

I have spoken of the relative inactivity of the most recent TAFF administration in the past, yet that's the least of our concerns. What can Jeanne do about the fact that there is apparently no fan in North American that anyone in British Fandom would really like to meet? What can she do to correct the impression that most British fans would rather be torn apart with dental tools than attend an American worldcon? What can anyone do in the face of the utter apathy which TAFF provokes in the U.S. outside of a tiny cell of fanatics that attend Corflu and Ditto?

It seems to me that there are two general paths which TAFF can take in the near future. One is to take steps to open the election and fund-raising process to a larger segment of fandom. We could advertise in regional convention program books, lay ballots - drop that requirement that unknown voters be vouched for - and informational flyers on freebie tables from coast to coast, and perhaps most usefully, we could sponsor a "TAFF Topic" for on-line services. Steps like these would bring new participants into the process, and whatever they lacked in fan-historic savvy, they would likely make up in enthusiasm.

The second plan that occurs to me is to make TAFF even more insular than it has been, even more of a private toy for fanzine fandom. If we openly admitted that TAFF is just a club for fmz fans to visit each other, delegates could be freed of the onus of attending the worldcon, or indeed any convention at all.

There are other options we should consider. How can fans from continental Europe be made a larger part of the process? How can we conduct a referendum on changes in TAFF to please people here and abroad? Which TAFF traditions are essential, and which should be discarded? I want to hear - and print - your ideas about this. The thing I don't want to do is say goodbye to TAFF altogether. There must be some life left in it yet. -- aph 3/17/94

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A dried potato skin makes an excellent blotter for the office...

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Address Correction Requested