

BALROG

BALROG is perpetrated and foisted upon an already cooling NAPA by Ben Solon who dwells at 3933 N. Janssen, Chicago, Ill. 60613. This is issue number 1 and is dated June 1966. It is intended for circulation with the 29th mailing of the Neffer Amateur Press Alliance. For those of you beside DE who are interested in such things, aside from BALROG's 5 pages, I also have 5 pages of fanzine reviews in NERKAS. I won't mention them again if you won't. And in case you haven't noticed, all this makes for a genuine 10 line colophon. You can't hardly get them kind no more. It certainly is a wonderful thing; it's also a Chaotic publication. You can't hardly get them kind, either.

FORE THOTS

A BOOK REVIEW

The Chicago Tribune's Books Today supplement for June 12, 1966 carried among other things, a notice of the 14th printing of The Blue Book of the John Birch Society. According to the notice, this is the first edition of The Blue Book published with the mass book trade in mind.

This new edition is a \$1 paperback in the 8 by 5 1/2 "quality" format, so it cannot be expected to be found among the smaller mass market books that fit into the wire racks and compartmented stalls in drug stores and supermarkets. How many "regular" book stores will carry The Blue Book is problematical. I hope a lot of them will because the public has had little chance to read this book for itself.

In saying this, I am not endorsing the program of the Birch Society nor the theory of history on which it is based. But having read The Blue Book some time ago, I am happy to see that now--some 7 years after its first publication--everyone will have the same opportunity. Because after reading The Blue Book, I found it almost impossible to see the Birch Society as a serious threat to American freedom as many of its liberal critics, over-reacting even now to the McCarthy era, have portrayed it. Indeed, much of the criticism leveled at the Birchers seems to contain the same unwarranted hysteria they are--with some justice--accused of. The public, deprived of responsible criticism, has a right to evaluate the society for itself.

The Blue Book is an annotated transcript of a series of talks given by Robert Welch at the organizational meeting held on December 8, 1958, in Indianapolis. It begins with a review of history in which the Communists are seen advancing on every front; the result of Communist infallibility combined with American treason, complacency and ineptitude. From there, Welch launches his plan for the Birch Society as a sort of counter conspiracy to regain the initiative.

I disagree with most of Welch's conclusions. His pessimistic reading of events either ignores those areas in which the U.S. has advanced and the Communists retreated or writes these exceptions off as temporary expedients, part of the Communist Master Plan. He completely rejects the idea of Communism's evolution--and even the possibility of evolution--which has wrought some profound changes since the days of Lenin and

and which supports western hopes for peaceful co-existence.

I also disagree that a counter-conspiracy of self-appointed Red hunters is the best way to combat the Communist menace. That the Birch Society has, since 1958, become an object of widespread ridicule is evidence enough that their skill as conspirators hardly parallels their enthusiasm for the Cause. Against the Communists, as Welch portrays them, the Birchers have about as much chance as a snowball in hell.

But all this disagreement is not to say, as many liberals do, that anti-Communism is a greater danger to America than Communism itself. And even if it were, I believe the nation has enough resilience to survive. If the public cannot be trusted--and even encouraged--to read Robert Welch--or Marx and Lenin for that matter--then the country isn't worth saving.

AND AN EXCLUSIVE

The hero cab driver was laughing nervously and squinting in the television lights; he was telling how he scuffled with and helped capture an escapee from the county jail.

"...and then I yelled, "Stop or I'll shoot! Of course, I didn't have a gun..."

Standing in the dull grey glow of the television screen, I stared at the cab driver, a likable character in the diverse cast of the 10 o'clock news. He was talking to this particular channel's reporter --talking to him alone. I know he was, because the announcer preceeded the film by saying something like: "...and now the hero cab driver describes the incident to our reporter.

Soon, however, a commercial and onwards to another channel where the on-camera announcer was talking, "...tells our reporter how he helped subdue the suspect..." Cut to the film, and there is the same cab driver talking to this station's reporter exclusively. "...of course, I didn't have a gun..." There is a brief shot of the reporter, staring intently at the cab driver, then scribbling in a notebook--he's all alone with the hero.

Thence to a third channel, and...there is the cab driver, hunched behind the same row of microphones, sitting in the same chair and saying: "...of course, I didn't have a gun..." This channel's reporter is suddenly on-camera, nodding knowledgeably at the cab driver, pencil in hand. It's as though he's getting an exclusive, as though all those other reporters aren't there at the same time, getting the same statement, the same shots and the same film.

Now I ask you: how exclusive can you get?

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

The academy doesn't feel you're cut out for military life, Mr. de Gaulle. Have you considered basketball?

---Ben Solon

BACKLASH

THE ROGUE (Steve Barr) I found your remark to Greg Shaw: "...whoever the political type of fanzine is written by, I can't help but feel that LBJ knows more about it than the editor." somewhat irritating. It may be true that the average person's opinions on anything outside his personal field of endeavor are practically worthless except for their curiosity value, but then again, they may not be. Who are we to say?

Unless an individual is well educated in such diverse fields as military strategy, politics, sociology, education or science fiction, he may find himself reading with great interest a person who's opinions a real expert might have justifiable contempt for. Should a person's comments be restricted only to those areas in which he is an expert because of this? I don't think so, do you?

THE POPPY SEED (David Patrick) I fail to see how a zine "made up of mailing comments is lacking in original motivation..." Mailing comments --good mailing comments, that is--have as much original thought behind them as anything else you're likely to find in a fanzine. The fact that mailing comments are inspired by something someone else said (wrote, rather) doesn't make the slightest bit of difference; if the publisher lacked original motivation, if he had nothing to say, he wouldn't have commented in the first place.

"The City isn't a bad story at all (for fanzine fiction that is; I'm always forgetting little qualifiers like that), but "G. Selden Waldo's yarn is. And that illo on page 19 is rather, ah, obscene.

THE N3F WANTS YOU...LIKE THIS...(Dwain Kaiser) Enjoyed, but not particular comments are inspired. Sorry.

HOO JOWLS AND PEANUT BUTTER (Tom Dupree) "The Fan From D.I.T.T.O." is *funny*. In other words, not very.

BYZANTIUM (John Kusske) Noted.

ROMANN (Rich Mann) What can a new-comer say?

BUFFERING SOLUTIONS (Judi Sephton) I normally don't read thing like this; I have 20/700 vision (worse than Buck Coulson's, even), and I have no real desire to view the world with 20/800 eye-sight.

However...

Your statement, "Conservatives are too authoritarian..." Turned Me On. Being more or less conservative myself, I dislike blanket indictments of the entire Cause; I know too many conservatives who are anything but authoritarian. That is, they (and I) don't believe the government can Do No Wrong and that unthinking Obedience to Authority --"My country right or wrong"--is more to be desired than individual liberty.

And if you're justified in condemning all conservatives as believers in the State Above All, you'll certainly agree that I'm equally justified in censuring all liberals, as exemplified by that group of peace marchers who shouted at President Johnson: "Hey, hey, LBJ! How many kids did you kill today?", as Enemies of the State?

Of course they're not, but explain it in accordance with your logic, Judi.

SENA (Don Miller) "So You Want To Be a Real Member" is Funny As Hell.

GYRE (Lon Atkins) Perhaps the answer to the "Why is a fan?" question is undiscoverable at the present stage of psychology-as-a-science.

But I don't think so.

Offhand, I'd say the reason most people drift into fandom -- fandom anyway--is because it offers a medium for almost unlimited self-expression and communication; a fanzine is a particularly apt vehicle for self-expression, if only because publishing a fanzine is about the nearest thing to an act of total creativity I can think of. A fan-publisher has almost complete control over the appearance and contents of his publication, and over who receives it; he stencils the material, duplicates it, collates, staples, addresses, and stamps it. Often he writes the entire contents, and any material that isn't editor-created is included on his sufferance.

In other words, fandom gives us a chance to work out our Ghod complex without doing too much damage to others.

FRINGE (Carol Murray) Liked.

ASGARD (Alan Mann) Uninspiring.

MARIJAVE (Fred Lerner) I don't read things like this.

TROGLODYTE (Hank Lutrell) Your remarks in re the current state of the N3F are about the most coherent I've seen; and I couldn't agree more.

About this Crazy Bob Dylan Stuff... I'm of two minds (one for each head) about BD; I can take him or leave him alone. He reminds me of the little girl with the curl of song and story: when he's good--as in "Eve of Destruction" or "Mr. Tambourine Man"--he's very good. And when he's bad--as in "Subterranean Homesick Blues"--he's horrid.

Can't say as I think very much of Jack Gaughan's art. Oh, some of his work--the cover art he's done for Ace, for example--is fairly good, but most of his Galaxy stuff fails to move me; in fact, it strikes me as being completely uninspired.

GUANO (Art Hayes) Well, it's appropriately titled.

ZINGARO (Mark Irwin) Uncommentable.

THE WEEKLY TOOL (Mike Ward) You, Sir, are a H*A*C*K*E*R, Sir. And that, Sir is nearly as bad as being a Shit and a Moral Crud. Yes.

INFINITE FANAC (Mike Ward) What can I say?

NATTERJACK (Len Bailes) I'm both appalled and amazed at the, ah, courage involved in undertaking such hyperactivity.

NIEKAS (Felice Rolfe & Ed Myskys) The fanzine with something for everyone. If you folks don't win the Hugo this year, there just ain't no justice. I'd say more, but I'm quite sure both of you are fed up to there with inchoate

SHARDS (Nate Bucklin) Incoherent.

SCIENCE FICTION DISPLAY, er, SPINA (Creath Thorne) An excellent job; one of the best zines in the mailing.

It's easy to write fake crudzines? Well, maybe for you--I don't think I could have pulled SFD off; it's well-nigh unbelievable: you've captured the spirit--to say nothing of the style--of those exultant first issues proclaiming the imminent conquest of fandom that rank neos are supposed to purpentrade. All that's missing is the shoddy reproduction that such publications always feature.

I've never gone quite so far as to regulate my daily activities to fit in with the mail-man's schedule, but his arrival is one of the high-spots of my day. After all, unless one is fortunate enough to live in or near an activity center, most fannish contacts are made through the mails.

FOOFARAW (Fred Patten) I enjoyed your comments on the Hugo race; they're about the most comprehensive I've yet seen. One minor cavil, however: Squares of the City. Somehow, I just can't see it as a Hugo contender--let alone a Hugo winner. It's a fairly good story, but it isn't that good. The plotting is a trifle shoddy and the conclusion is rather abrupt to say the least. It's as though Brunner suddenly got tired of writing and decided to finish the story as swiftly as possible and to hell with all the loose threads left flapping in the breeze.

We (meaning N'APA, I presume) may be able to Do Something to help the N3F, but I, for one, doubt it. The NFFF has muddled along for more than twenty years without accomplishing very much, and I fail to see how it can be affected one way or another by the efforts of N'APAns or by N'APA's Leaving The Fold.

And speaking of Leaving The Fold, I'm in favor of it, but with reservations. If the N3F were to show some signs of life, I'd probably change my mind (and, yes, Virginia, I do so have a mind); but since the organization is more-or-less moribund (I haven't seen an issue of TNFF since December), I see no reason why I or anyone else should have to pay dues to two organizations in order to participate in the activities of one.

That doesn't make sense at all.

It isn't the money--\$1.75 isn't that much--it's the principle of the thing. If I have to pay out \$1.75, then, bighod, I want to reap \$1.75 worth of benefits.

Is that asking too much?

RACHE (Bruce Pelz) Enjoyed.

½LIFE (Stan Woolston) A good job, but almost uncommendable. Sorry.

--Ben Solon