

STOP
BREAKING
DOWN



HANSEN '77

Number 6

STOP BREAKING DOWN

.....

March 1978

Edited and produced by

Greg Pickersgill

with

Simone Walsh (Overseas Editor)

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STOP BREAKING DOWN 7 ; material for this issue should be in hand
by 1st MAY 1978

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The cover this issue is an original illustration by Rob Hansen

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M O A N I N G A T M I D N I G H T
.....

move on down the line

with

Greg Pickersgill

2 - 4 - 6 - 8 NEVER TOO LATE

Listen here to me, anyone who's ever told you this fanzine does not have a bi-monthly schedule is a goddam liar and you better believe it. Just because I'm having a bit of trouble in actually getting it together absolutely on time is no need to get sarcastic about the whole routine. Although such bitter jeering a la Rob Hansen is damned near as effective as incentive to pub one's ish as the more orthodox encouragement offered by such as Dave Langford and Kev Smith whenever they come round all dewey-eyed and say things like "Gosh Greg when's SBD coming out? You know I really need another fix of that, so good it's addictive..." and so on and so forth. Of course this is all acclaim very much in the same throbbing vein as the sort of "Ohhh my God! What a huge cock!" sort of routine people not totally unlike Robert Holdstock go through more often than not (and nowhere near so true either) but it's good for morale, I'll tell you. Trouble is I can't quite rid myself of the idea those two fucks are just putting me on.....

Still, here we go again, apathy and disinterest overcome for the time being - hopefully for a long time. As you will read it's the shock-horror threats of the status quo being overturned that have motivated me this time, as usual, I suppose, but whatever the train keeps rolling.

Amazingly enough there are departures from the standard format in this issue - unthinkable I know, but true. Most startling - to me as much as you - is the absence of a fanzine review section. Making this the first fanzine I've ever put out without one. There is reasoning behind this. Those who've read my last few fanzine review columns will no doubt have perceived the fairly quick shade off from logical argument and broad-based discussion of the British fanzine field to hardly anything more than blatant shilling for what I saw as good fanzines. This was no way a useful or desirable activity for me, for despite the fashionable cynicism of such as 'Big' John Harvey I always did intend a didactic, educational, teaching approach to fanzine reviewing, seeking to make potential and actual fanzine editors and writers more aware of what they could or would be doing. Obviously enough there's only so much can be said in that direction, and anyway as I progressed the less likely it seemed that anyone was in fact paying the slightest bit of gaddamned heed to what was being put out. And what with the advent of D. West, who despite being a bit of a Charnock is just about The Master as regards fanzine criticism, any gestures I had left to make were rapidly becoming redundant.

Anyway, after hardly any mental anguish at all I've concluded I'd better leave out that whole routine for the time being, until some vital new thought apropos fanzines presents itself. Okay, that's expecting a lot I know, but well..... Anyway, at the very least it'll keep people like Eric Bentcliffe off my back, stop them and any other whingeing retard of a failed first-time faneditor getting their knives into my back just because their poxy fanzines recieve other than uncritical acclaim. Balls to them all.

Nevertheless I can't resist reccommending some really Great stuff from time to time; like ONE OFF 4 from David Bridges, or DOT from Kev Smith, or TWLL DDU from Dave Langford. These fanzines simply sweep me off my feet, boogie my brains with pure pleasure, and if you have been so vacantly remiss as to not ensure they feature through your letterbox then go NOW to elsewhere in this issue where their addresses are listed and write off today, don't delay. Class material, get the best, the rest 'til later.

Another bit of clever jive I thought I'd try this issue is responding to the letters all in one heap at the end instead of individually. Unfortunately it is pretty hard to detect the final effect of this sort of brilliantly intuitive innovation until the whole thing is finished; then one realises what a balls-up one has made of things. I have cleverly succeeded in undermining even further the impact of a not especially fascinating and fairly ancient bunch of letters. Just goes to show that even Jove has a head of clay. It's pretty fucking hard assessing letters anyway; one time I read them and I'm gripped, fascinated, almost on the edge of writing myself a LoC having a go at the contentious/dim bizzaros featured therein, another time it's all as weak as David Griffin's piss. I dunno, he said philosophically.

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CAN'T STAND IT '78

Mention of David Griffin's piss in the previous paragraph leads me naturally to David Griffin, whose piss is proverbially weak because of his aversion to the fermented or distilled products of hop, grain, cane, or grape. Or even potato. He did not drink. Which is fair enough except one loses some of one's tuff masculinity going to a bar to buy a pint of lemonade. However, as those who read ONE OFF 4 will already know the chances of any fan being compromised into buying Griffin a pint of soft and fizzy are now, fortunately non-existent. He has, in the arms of a young lady described variously as 'a nutter' or 'deranged' quit the scene of fandom in no uncertain manner, severing his connections in a surprisingly crude and unsubtle manner. Especially that with Dave Bridges, who might justifiably feel used and cast aside with as little thought as a empty bottle.

Myself, I'm more pleased than anything to see the back of Griffin. Living as he did not far from us he was a constant damned nuisance, forever hinting or requesting lifts or invites over to watch TV programmes, or just hanging around making a fucking hole in the air. This may seem unnecessarily bitter, but honestly apart from his interest in sci-fi and his horrible boring fanzine he had nothing in common with

me or anyone else around here - a few remarkable coincidences relating to Simone's various past residences notwithstanding. However, as I said, we saw rather a lot of him. The worst aspect was having to duplicate his fanzines, which were uninteresting enough when they were in English, but the whole procedure became utterly deadly when they were in some incomprehensible Scandinavian tongue, as they were more often than not. Still, Brotherhood of Fandom and all that, and we were the first fans he made contact with when he moved to London, and Goddammit, despite the fact that any sort of conversation with him was at best stilted and awkward, I'm not quite the desperate hard-case I'm made out to be (often by myself) and anyway he was getting on something incredible with Dave Bridges by this time, so why not do a friend of a friend a good turn, even if you can't stand the little sod. I'm never at my best with uptight, moralistic, middle-class social misfits. Of course, eventually it got too heavy, and we made excuses, and eventually we saw less of him, and then when he came and stood next to me at the Globe I gave up the struggle and didn't even speak to him (I smiled tho', so I ain't all bad).

Alright, so why this sudden outpouring of retrospective hate? Well, it turned out that the fine young man found himself a woman, a woman who didn't like fandom, and particularly didn't like David Bridges. And the upshot of all this was that Griffin found it in his heart to not only quit fandom - virtually on the instructions of his new love - but also to give his remarkably friendly (but not like that(I hope)) relationship with Bridges the bullet. His final letter to Bridges, reproduced in ONE OFF 4, ends with "...don't bother writing again".

Now quite apart from the lack of respect I have for any man who lets his wife run his life in this manner his virtually contemptuous severance of contact with Bridges absolutely riles me beyond control. And apart from that, even, if this was his attitude towards his (apparently) best friend anywhere, how did he view the rest of us? The time I'd wasted..

Myself, should I ever meet David Griffin again, I think I'll punch that nasty little boy right in the mouth.

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MALTED MILK, MALTED MILK

Quite likely a part of my antipathy to Griffin might have been because he was a non-drinker. This isn't some sort of crazed ideological point, just a recognition that most fans tend to hit the bottle more than a glancing blow on occasion, and the realisation that fannish socializing and drink are so inextricably bound together that one without the other is a bit disorienting. This is likely because most fans meet for the first time at conventions, where free-flowing liquor helps provide a loose social state where the almost-by-definition asocial little creeps that most of us really are can flower and become more fascinating than our measly little lives usually allow us to be. Lack of critical faculty helps too. Then again, lots of fan socialising is at pubs or parties, and habits build up and up, until you get to the stage where dropping in on someone whilst going to the laundromat necessitates picking up a six-pack first.

Fans aren't alcoholics, far from it, most drink only in company; but those who do not do so seem a little odd. This suggests an unnatural requirement of conformity, but so what. A few straighteners do everyone a bit of good at the start, and sooner or later they all get used to each other and, hopefully, don't any longer need a few quick ones

before they can get up and get down together.

The trouble with all this determinedly social tippling with various individuals getting their heads bad and performing all sorts of mischief is that recent entrants into the wide world of fandom tend to get the impression that fans are obsessed with booze. Now however incredible this might seem to you and me on sober reflection (and they don't make many puns like that since Archie Mercer was run out of town) they may have a point. The fact is that most of the really entertaining moments in fandom - at conventions, say - happen when a number of people have got their heads bad and are performing acts of mischief en masse. And these things, being amusing, get written about in fannishly inclined fanzines more than somewhat. (They are also a valuable aid to lost memory, one of many essential public services provided by the much maligned fannish fanzine). Unfortunately all this sort of falling about stuff is dreadfully uncool, and not at all to do with science fiction, and certainly doesn't give the right impression of fandom as it should be in the best of all possible worlds.

But what can you do? Myself I prefer to read in fanzines stories and anecdotes about what real people are doing with their lives - no matter how 'unreal' their consciousness altered activities 'actually' are - than any skyfie drool, so get fucked all you sanctimonious little sods who complain about fannish fanzines in that vein. When I want to read serious material about SF or anything else I go elsewhere to find it, so get thou bloody hence and do likewise; get fucked all you jerks who would enter fandom and have it made over to your own image of it. Let's have a fair shake here boss.

Of course the Pioneers are right in a way; drinking is awful expensive and can get to be a real pain. Sooner or later there comes that time in everyone's life when one's physical form just can't take it like it used to. Tiredness and amnesia slip in unnoticed more readily than ever before and whole conversations - never mind subtle witticisms or eminently rememberable gossip - slip in one ear to proceed out the other entirely unhindered. Worse, one finds oneself lying in bed (if lucky) with no memory of ever going there. Worser, one wakes to discover the surface of the body totally numb, the only perceptible sensation being the internal organs twitching as if in the last stages of dysfunction. Coordinated movement is impossible, all memory has fled, and the one paramount terror (and I do mean terror) is that if one should by chance fall asleep again one will not reawaken. That is no balmy zephyr rustling the leaves, that is the scythe of the Reaper. No kidding. Don't know about you chaps but that sort of thing's been happening to me more than I bloody think necessary in the last year or so, so if anyone just happens to see me going at it a bit enthusiastic just kindly play the white man and tell me what's good for me, eh?

The real hell of overdoing the ruin is that it most often happens at conventions, when a keen young fan like me really ought to be clear-eyed, open minded, and ready and willing to do the dirty on others before the dirty is done unto him. Passing out or going amnesiac takes a lot of fun out of things. Also, mind you, some of us now have more reason than most to modify our evil ways. Responsibility and commitment rise like some hybrid lorelei/medusa. See next section.

STOP, HEY, WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

Once upon a time there was a young man famous in fandom for his predilection for leaping around at conventions wearing a small jockstrap and waving a large sword. At some point in his career he decided that this sort of behaviour was uncool so he planned to stage a convention instead. He got together with someone called George Hay on this and together they ran SCICON 70 which, had anyone known of such things at the time, would have been popularly known as MANCON 0. Anyway, despite that our hero was undaunted, contriving ideas which were more than a little revolutionary and ambitious. Essentially these vivid notions involved something not unlike a multi-media hugecon replacing the Easter convention, encompassing sf, comics, films, tv, thousands of people, huge hotel, bigger, bigger, bigger (and of course, better). However, great was his chagrin when unexpectedly (to him) his proposals were rejected by conventionees in favour of the more usual type of science-fiction con that most of them were acquainted with and generally thought was okay, thanks very much. Much upset, our protagonist vanished in a cloud of recrimination, and was rarely seen at conventions again. But he had a plan. He would return. And he bloody well has too.

Once again out of the trapdoor springs Derek Stokes (for it is he!) amateur Conan and proprietor of what is arguably the most expensive bookshop in London except the ones that sell all the things that you can't afford to buy. And what he has returned with is, apparently - as all of you who diligently read the BSFA's MATRIX or listen keenly to rumour will know - much the same story as of old; hugecon, millions of people, DR WHO, STAR TREK, comix, films, scifi rock, 1999, and even a bit about science fiction book on the side, so I'm told. All this is dressed up as a serious bid for the 1979 Easter convention.

Okay, so wot? cries Little Jimmy Fan, what's wrong with all this then eh? Well, in my opinion, lots and lots. Quite apart from a feeling a vague unease at the prospect of someone who is not a regular conventioneer coming on down and taking over and doing it his way, there are certain basic points of principle I don't like.

First and foremost I just don't see the necessity for this kind of multi-media melange. Admittedly one can build a strong case for the fact that all of these notions are essentially science-fiction in outline at least, and most fans have at least a foot in one or all of these side-interests, but why on earth should the one major science-fiction convention of the year be adulterated with all this other jive? Why should the main science fiction event of the year - the one to which any sf enthusiast of the purer sort should gravitate - set out to cater for any or all of these side-interests on a policy level? After all each and every one of these groups are amply large and well organised enough to run their own conventions - which they do, often - where their own particular light can be kept shining to the exclusion of all others, and it is a certainty that none of them make any gesture or concession to sf fans (especially those who habitually attend Easter cons as they are at present). I mean, can you seriously imagine STAR TREK con organisers doffing their plastic ears for long enough to run a programme item for those desperate to discuss the latest Ian Watson tome? No, I can't either, and why should they anyway? Any more than we should make an

effort to accomodate them at our conventions. And it is worth remembering that even without actually attracting them a lot of these spinoff fans show up at sf fan events, where they prove distinctly inimiscible, adding nothing except noise and nuisance. If anyone doubts that they should show up at the London One Tun meeting one time and view the scampering hordes of DR WHC and ST fans who crowd in ~~there~~ these days. There are certainly sufficient of them to get it together and sort out their own pub-meeting, but no, they just ride on our backs. Anyway, imagine that multiplied a hundredfold or more and it is clear that at a deliberate multi-media con the convention as we know it would be overrun completely.

Which is another point, of course. The very scale of the thing is daunting, especiaally after tales of huge hangar-like con-halls at what I see as the nearest things in scale and form, the US worldcons. As far as many fans are concerned the average Eastercon on today is only just on the inside edge of manageability by a concom and sociability from a conventioneering viewpoint. And that is with around 500 attendees with no special grace nor favours extended to the specialist groups.

And as to **exactly why** Mr Stokes - who by his lack of attendance at most British conventions in recent years shows his total disinterest in things as they are (does he indeed know how ~~they~~ are?) - wishes to make such drastic changes I know not. Indeed, some of his plans are startling and revolutionary in the British Eastercon context; 'importing' several Huge Name American professionals, hiring a pro. scifi rock-band, simultaneous programming for all tastes and so on. All things requiring substantial sums of money, and thus huge attendances to provide that money in the first instance. Of course whether all that money would be **well** spent, especially from a traditional conventioneer's viewpoint, is another story. Personally I find it hard to see much of the generally altruistic nature of the usual con-organisers that come out of fandom in Mr Stokes.

His actual attitude to the convention leaves something to be desired also. He tends to dismiss with an airy wave of the hand the three hundred or so fans who do not (according to him) like his proposals (and if that's an insignificant number just how many does he intend to attract, for christ's sake?), and any notion that he first has to win the bid at the Skycon is equally contemptuously dismissed with the distinctly revolutionary statement that it doesn't matter to him. Whether he wins the bid or not, he's running his con irrespective.

All of which is basically the reason **why** I've been on three convention committees since the beginning of the year.

The first I'd ever heard of all this jive was the bit in the BSFA's MATRIX 15, in which it was more or less said that the BSFA was going to actively support Stokes' bid. This rather peculiar idea turned out to be something of a fumble all round. Apparently the BSFA had been approached - how, why, where, and on what terms are still facts shrouded in some mystery - and lacking knowledge of any other bid, and keen to present themselves as on the **for front** of sf in Britain they decided to go along with him. Fortunately communication with Stokes broke down more than somewhat, and certain individuals pointed out that this

sort of alliance with someone apparently inimical to conventions as they stand at present might not be totally good for the BSFA, and the upshot has been that the BSFA has since withdrawn any support, moral or otherwise, from the Stokes hugecon bid.

However, when I'd first heard of all this the only other bid I knew of was one I was already party to in some fashion; this was the Leeds group bid, headed at that time by D. West, David Pringle, and Mike Dickinson. The problem with that though was that West was proposing some fairly radical innovations as regards organisation; essentially he wanted to be a paid full-time organiser, taking what amounted to a salary from convention funds. As he is in any case unemployed this salary might not have been large (to unemployed West's something is better than nothing, after all) and I am sure he would have amply repayed it in effort and energy, but this proved to be more than somewhat unpopular - especially in view of the Stokes opposition which was generally supposed to be of a very shady financial nature anyway - and West got a bit shirty about the whole business and decided to leave the committee. To me this was a bad moment, for despite West's peculiar financial notions I saw him as the powerman of the committee, and wondered whether they'd be able to cope without him. Certainly I thought that the Stokes bid must be opposed effectively at all costs, not merely to stop him winning, but to short-circuit a situation that would import massive numbers of non-orthodox fans into a con-bidding situation and possibly rob 'us' of the Eastercon for an indefinite period. Something, as they say, had to be done.

So right away I organised a concom. Sounds like demonic energy at work, but so many people were vaguely appalled at Stokes' bid it was more a matter of who not to have on the concom than anything else. Actually in pretty short order a very strong, experienced, and able concom was slotted together and placed on 'hold' ready to move if and when, as we then believed, the Leeds bid would drop to bits without the Great Thought of D. West. And then, of course, the expected happened and the Leeds group powered back onto the scene more definite and determined than ever before, and my little firm was dispersed.

In the original concept of the Leeds bid I was to have once again run a Fandom Room. I'd been having strong qualms about that though, as I couldn't see any way I could do things any different from the way we did them at Coventry in '77, and figured that what would be a bit boring and repetitive for me might just as well be for you lot. So I managed to shed that slight burden - who is actually going to do I don't know - and worm my way onto the concom proper in some sort of amorphous post that even now I don't fully understand. Still and all I shall set to with a will.

Actually, despite the fact that no-one on the concom has had any previous con-organizing experience the bid is solid, definite, and realistic. Like any decent Eastercon committee we are going right at it 100% science fiction, giving the people what they want. In general form and production the convention will be more or less the same as usual, but more and better, as we aim to beef up the hardcore sf programme, provide a better and more varied selection of films than usual, and generally make the entire event a pleasureable one. No expense will be spared to do this, and all the money we take in in registrations, advertising, or whatever, will be pushed back into the con in some form or

other come what may, even if it is merely the last-minute organisation of a free drinking party for all attendees. Though obviously we hope to have been able to plan far enough ahead (accurately) to do something a little more ambitious than that. Rest assured that the Leedscon will be in the last analysis presenting fully documented accounts, and certainly won't be a typical convention in that the claim for 'Miscellaneous' almost outweighs every other expense.

Naturally, even at this early - not even yet won! - stage we have definite plans; one of the most extraordinary of which is the choice of a Guest of Honour who is not only a science fiction author, but is certainly not someone who has been GoH (or 'featured guest') at every other convention for the last ten years. He is also reputed to be quite a fascinating and entertaining individual.

As regards the concom individuals I believe we cover all bases more than adequately. Mike Dickinson, co-chairman with David Pringle, is a wellknown sf and fannish fan of some repute, both via his fine fanzine, BAR TREK, and the energy he has put into building up the Leeds SF Society along with another concom heavy, Alan Dorey. Pringle is certainly a major sf dude, producer of a ground-breaking book on J.G. Ballard (arguably Britain's major sf talent), and now working somewhere close to the left hand side of Malcolm Edwards at the SF FOUNDATION in London, Britain's only purpose-built sf outfit. Can't get better sf credentials than that. Alan Dorey, apart from his Leeds University SF Society effort, runs the Society magazine, BLACK HOLE, and another featured concom member, Paul Matthews, is, at the moment, resident artist and enigma. There is also, of course, me, looking after all the bits no-one else wants to do, I suspect, and generally making sure things take a fairly reasonable stance.

Anyway, when the biddeng session for the 1979 Eastercon comes around on the Sunday at the upcoming Skycon I want all You Lot in that hall with your arms ready to go up for us. Although I find it hard to believe that Stokes' ideas will gather much support from anyone who has enjoyed an Eastercon as it is now it is just likely that an apathetic electorate might just allow things to slip away, and we wouldn't like to see that now, would we? There is also a rumour going about that Stokes intends packing the hall, much as I'm trying to do, I suppose, but by actually importing people to the convention who would not normally have attended. Though how this fits with his declaration that he doesn't need to actually have his bid approved to run his convention I don't know. Then there's also a rumour going around that he isn't even going to bother to bid at all, just stage his con and to hell with us. Anyway, in any case let's all get in there and vote for Leeds - not just because it's Leeds, for in this sort of situation I'd encourage people to vote for anything other than a Stokes bid - but just to keep the Eastercon in our hands. If we sf fans lose the mandate to run the 'official' Eastercon to a huge group of fringe-fans we might never get it back, and Eastercons as we know them will be entirely lost to STAR TREK groupies and DR WHO freaks.

And apart from that the Leeds bid has lots of good notions I think you'll enjoy a lot!

And one final point - the BSFA and Leedscon have recently entered into an agreement which hopefully will be fruitful to both.

Greg Pickersgill

C A R D I F F R O S E
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touches of strange

by

ROB HANSEN

THE WAY OF THE DRAGON

The other day at our weekly gathering Bryn Fortey ordered me to write a history of the formation of Welshfandom.

"After all," said Bryn, "you were the X-factor that led to its formation."

Me, an X-factor! Wow, great! That's the nicest thing anyone's ever said about me. An X-factor. Gosh! Suitably buttered up I went away and thought about it for a bit, then I thought about the article and how it should start. The beginning seemed as good a place as any (I am a simple provincial after all) so I started at How I Got Into Fandom.

It all began for me early in 1975 with a copy of SF MONTHLY and boredom - thought by some to be synonymous, but not in this instance. After what were for me the halcyon days of 1974 the early months of '75 were a low time when it seemed the biggest thrill in life was a trip to the bathroom for a quick J. Arthur. So when I read in SFM that the annual Easter convention was due to take place in little over a month I took the plunge and sent my shekels along.

Now as you lot might be aware I'm a shy sort of person who wouldn't say Boo to a fly but I managed to get talking to a couple of other first-timers and spent most of the con with one, Paul Kincaid. After the con we had an almost weekly correspondence and one day I recieved a letter which almost convinced me he was going nuts. It was full of strange words, superfluous aitches, and references to a fantastic fanzine called MALFUNCTION and its godlike editor Peter Presford. That last bit impressed me because I knew that Peter Presford was the chairman of the next Easter convention and must thus be a really influential person indeed. I decided I'd better ingratiate myself with him and promptly wrote off for a copy of MALFUNCTION. In spite of its strangeness I enjoyed it. The cover mentioned some character called Greg Pickersgill, obviously a Presford construct, and was the inspiration for a later piece of idiocy that Greg won't let me forget.

At length the next MAL. appeared featuring my name and address with a plea for fanzines - only one came. That was MAYA. Apart from the obvious differences in production and diversity I found MAYA similar to MALFUNCTION in the in-groupishness and heresy it promoted. Heresy? Well, yes; how else could I take a statement like : "As you get

deeper into fandom SF becomes increasingly irrelevant" at that time? Now, of course, having experienced the process myself, I understand and sympathise with that view..but then? Anyway, when I locced MAYA I sent along some small filler-type illustrations which Rob decided were unsuitable for MAYA but which were taken over by other Gannet fans for their forthcoming fanzines.

Next came Mancon and in the course of chatting to Rob Jackson I was introduced to the Gannets who were using my drawings. I hit it off with Gannetfandom, spend most of the con with them, and decided I'd go to the first Silicon in Newcastle that August and see them all again. At Silicon I met Greg Pickersgill.

At Mancon I'd discovered Greg existed as a real person (who laughed at the back there?) and not as a Presford fiction, but it was at Silicon we met for the first time. I discovered that Greg was Welsh and knew of other Welsh fans. He mentioned someone called Bryn Fortey who lived in Newport (which is virtually a suburb of my home city of Cardiff) and suggested I contact him. Would he be interested in forming an SF group, I wondered. No chance, said Greg (which shows how well he knew someone who recently, somewhat to my horror, seriously suggested putting an ad in the press to attract newcomers). It was also at SILICON my dragon cartoon - an affectionate lampoon of our national flag similar to the one on the cover - was first aired; it has since become the badge of Welshfandom, awarded only after the most rigorous genealogical investigation.

By the time of the '76 Novacon I'd still done nothing about contacting Bryn but at Greg's urging I resolved to do so. I wrote a LoC to Bryn's fanzine RELATIVITY and at the end hinted that perhaps we should meet. Maybe the hint was too subtle. I wrote again suggesting that a meeting might be a Very Good Idea Indeed. Bryn agreed and we arranged for for a Friday night at the Greyhound in Newport where he and Mike Collins (local fringfan and Joe Cool) would be waiting for me with a fanzine in front of them for identification. It beats a red carnation.

Filled with trepidation (a local brew) I entered the pub and headed for the bar. Halfway there I stopped. Hadn't I seen a copy of RELATIVITY on the table I'd just passed? An old man and a midget; could it be....? It could and was. We discussed SF, fandom, Wales hosting the 1980 Eastercon (a rather grandiose idea that has recently given way to smaller things), and anybody who wasn't there.

Six weeks later we were all at Greg and Simone's housewarming party - a remarkable event that had a whole fanzine (Bryn's ACTION REPLAY) devoted to it. At that party we met Martin Hoare, fellow Welshman and old school chum of Dave Langford. Langford, of course, ex of Newport, was already one of the large body of expatriates in Welshfandom.

The latest stage of this saga came at Eastercon '77 when Dave introduced us to Dai Price, a resident of Newport. Dai also knows Dave and Martin from their schooldays, and it occurs to me that if they'd formed an SF group at that time they'd have had the youngest membership ever. Nappyfandom rules, OK.

And that's just about the complete story to date. Along with Kev Williams of the Gannets this is Welshfandom of the moment. If I were

pretentious enough now would be the time for me to claim to be the Dragonfather or somesuch, but I won't. The scorn would be too much to bear.

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NOTHING EVER HAPPENS AT NOVACON

"I always get amnesia at cons and can't usually remember what I did until a couple of weeks later" - D. WEST.

"I've enjoyed this con, tho' I haven't any recollection of what I've been doing for the last three days. Perhaps it was so enjoyable because I haven't suffered any undue aggravation from cretins" - GREG PICKERSGILL.

Well, I remember it. Some of it.

I boarded the train at Cardiff and had a boring two hour journey. Boring because I'd forgotten my glasses so I could hardly see beyond the glass in the windows. I'd also forgotten the map of how to get to the hotel, but that didn't matter because I'd been there before and obviously knew the way. I got lost.

Having got there I decided not to unpack - something I never got around to doing, which made packing up very easy - and rushed down to the bar where I stood next to a table full of famous fans totally unnoticed for fifteen minutes. Such is fame.

Peter Roberts was telling the assemblage about his TAFF trip in the USA, in particular the trouble he had getting through to people his vegetarianism. This led him to say things like; "I'll have a beef-burger, but hold the beef."

On Saturday evening I became part of a group organised by Simone who were going to an 'Alternate Banquet' at an Indian restaurant. Taxis were ordered for the trip and I climbed into one with John Piggott, Ian Williams, and Peter Roberts. We gave the driver the address, which he'd never heard of, and he made to start the car. It wouldn't start. Try as he would our driver - the first of the three we'd ordered to take us to the place - could not get the car going. Showing an almost human intelligence for a Brummie our driver asked one of the others to give him a push - backwards, down a hill, into the path of oncoming traffic. This did not convince me of the fellow's competence. By this time all the others were staring through the hotel lobby windows at the peculiar spectacle. For a while we sat on the slope in the middle of the road staring at them staring at us, until Ian had the bright idea of us getting out to push, which we did. At last, only fifteen minutes after getting into the car, it started and we got under way.

I'm not a great fan of Indian food. In fact I generally hate it, but on the understanding that most Indian places serve English meals as well I was quite content. However not this one! Hasty consultations discovered the least Indian-type dish - chicken tikka - which I augmented with an unpronounceable dish described as 'peas in Indian soft cheese', which sounded nice. Just my luck if they curry the cheese, I moaned aloud which brought forth peals of laughter.

Then the food arrived. One dish contained peas and cubes of cheese swimming in curry sauce and grease. No-one else wanted it so it must have been mine. Curried cheese! Bloody hell! The meal was foul; the curry sauce, surprisingly, being the only thing with any taste, the chicken was the consistency of a eraser, and many times during the evening I felt I was going to regurgitate what little I managed to eat. My tastes in food are conservative, I admit, but honestly, what's really wrong with a diet of baked beans?

Later in the evening I joined in a game of SF charades being held in the bar. Rob Holdstock's mimes inevitably involved various naughty bits of flesh you might find about your person, and one in particular caused a deal of confusion. Rob's graphic mime enabled us to determine the first syllable of the book title was 'tit', but the second half was impossible. It was a Royal personage of some sort.

"Tit Queen?" suggested Rog Peyton.

"Tit Princess?" I tried. These titles seemed unlikely for SF books even in these enlightened times. Rob got increasingly frantic until we at last determined the title was TITAN.

"I've never actually seen a book of that name but there's bound to be one, isn't there?" said Robert hopefully.

As seems to be traditional at the Royal Angus the heating was turned off on the Sunday evening.

"Christ, it's like the Arctic out here", said Greg, his head tucked into his jacket, leaping up and down to keep warm. The further from the bar you got the colder it became.

"There are probably men stuck to the urinals in the bog," I speculated.

Of course lots more things happened but so what anyway. After all it all falls into insignificance besides the ideological conflicts which led to the War of the Tilers in the Pre-Grout civilization.

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SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL

Unlike my contemporaries I never wanted to own a car, never could see what pleasure they derived from spending their time and money 'working on the engine'. I still don't. However some time ago I gave in and decided to go about getting one. The first hurdle, tho', was getting a license. I enrolled at a driving school and spent a very great deal of money indeed.

Hardly many months later I took my driving test. I'd hoped for a dry day but the downpour was torrential. Nervously I got into the car. The examiner told me to drive to the end of the street and turn left. I obeyed, but for some reason I was having difficulty seeing out of the windscreen. "Don't the wipers work then?" asked the examiner innocently. I mumbled something and fumbled for the wiper control. Suddenly I could see quite clearly.

The rest of the test was uneventful until I had to reverse

into a lane, which was fair enough, but the road was steeply cambered and the lane sloped upwards, thus forming a trough. I reversed into the lanesuccessfully and drove out slowly since, somewhat unreasonably, knocking down pedestrians does little to improve your chances of passing the test. Of course I came out of the lane so slowly I didn't have enough power to climb the camber and the engine stalled. We rocked back and forth in the trough for a while until the car came to rest. I turned to the examiner and grinned inanely.

Of course I passed the test.

Now was the time to think of getting a car. Getting a car remained at the thinking stage for some considerable time, until a friend of my mother's decided to sell a 1969 Viva for £270. Not having that sort of cash I made an appointment with my bank manager to arrange a loan. The terms were simple; I signed away my soul, ten per cent of all future earnings, and the resale rights to my Micheal Moorcock collection. Failure to meet a repayment meant repossession my the car and my sister being sold into white slavery.

The only fault with the car when I bought it was that the drivers door would only open from the inside, which meant I had to enter from the passenger side. The advantage to this was that it was also impossible to break into the car from the drivers side. However all good things come to an end and eventually the broken mechanism causing that partially happy state of affairs broke even further with the result that anyone could get in and out of the drivers door at will. I decided to fix this myself. I tied various bits together with nylon rope, then shut the door. As I had hoped it wouldn't open from the outside. Trouble was it wouldn't open from the inside either and with the door shut it was impossible to get the door-panel off and undo the rope.

Then the wiper on the driver's side packed up. It was during a typical Cardiff downpour and I leaned accross the passenger seat and tried to drive peering out of that side of the screen. This method of driving is rather silly, not to mention bloody dangerous, and I was wondering if I should continue when the other wiper stopped. I pulled over and pondered, finally deciding to drive on operating the wiper in front of me by hand. This meant winding the window down and putting my arm accross the windscreen, an operation which gave me a very small arc of vision and made the coordination necessary for driving almost impossible, not to mention soaking my jacket right up to the shoulder.

Without a doubt the most aggreivating sequence of events occurred on Whit Monday '77. I had to go and collect oa prescription for my ill grandmother, a simple enough task, but I realised it was going to be one of those days when I got into the car pulled on my seat-belt and dragged the whole structure right out of the floor. Beltless, I managed to collect and deliver the prescription to my gran without undue aggro. Then I offered my aunt, visiting my gran, a lift home. With a certain degree of pride I led her to my car, and with an equal degree of embarrassment explained why I had to get in via the passenger door. Once in I noticed it was starting to rain so I turned the wipers on. What I didn't notice was that in the months since the last rain (and

since I'd last washed the car) a lot of dust had collected on the wiper blades. Dust that mixed with rain to form an opaque layer of mud across the windscreen. I grinned inanely (a standard reaction in times of stress) and tried to rub the shit off with my hand, a course of action which did little other than make my hand filthy.

"Not to worry," I said, "I've got a cloth in the boot".

I walked round to the boot, put in the key, turned the lock, and watched in horror as it came away in my hands leaving a neat round hole. One of those days.

To cut a long story short I woke up one morning and discovered why I didn't have any money to spend on booze, books, fandom, and girls. So I sold the car.

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Rob Hansen

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READ IT IN A STORY, READ IT IN A BOOK
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Anyone with time on their hands and a brain in their heads should be after the best in fanzine-reading pleasure today, so take note of these here addresses -

ONE-OFF; David Bridges, 130 Valley Road, Meercsbrook, Sheffield S8 9GA

DOT; Kevin Smith, 26 Hawks Road, Kingston, Surrey KT1 3EG

TWLL-DDU; Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks.

Those three are definately the fanzines I have most enjoyed in recent months, and maybe there is something to be noted in the fact that they are all comparateivly small, unserious (as in not serious, not as in trivial) fanzines that are virtually entirely editor-written with the exception of letters. A point definately to be pondered by such as I who finds myself bored unto screaming death by producing a huge thick thing like this jammed with serious and constructive thoughts. Really I am sick to death with the format of this fanzine as it stands right now, and I can safely say I did not enjoy producing this issue in the least. I mean, it's all very worthy and so on, but is it interesting? I dunno. It serves to keep me name in currency (though what sort of comments are going to be appended after this I hesitate to imagine) and I suppose if I had an ounce of integrity I would have followed my own principles as a fanzine reviewer and not published until I had something to say. The trouble with that is, though, that it is often hard to decide whether there is anything to say or not. Confusion covers all.

Greg Pickersgill
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A L T E R N A T E . T I T L E .
.....

into the Blank Generation

with

SIMONE WALSH

This year's Silicon was an experience. An educational experience. Something occurred that I wouldn't have thought possible. (The fact that I stayed sober and didn't disgrace myself is not that remarkable..) It happened like this...

At the Imperial Hotel, Newcastle, venue of the 1977 Silicon (and never again) they have a pool table, and although the Manager did not like to see people using it and enjoying themselves we did manage to snatch a few games on it. A knot of fans were loitering near the table when two people approached.

"When does the programme start?" said one.

"When everyone gets there, I suppose," I helpfully replied, looking at them a bit strangely, after all at a gathering of fans you just don't go around earnestly asking such questions. But they persisted.

"It says here that the programme is going to start in five minutes." They indicated the scrap of paper put out by the committee listing when the two films and the panel discussion and the sf charades were scheduled to begin.

At this point I, and others around, began to realise that these people were not going to be content with any airy-fairy fannish waffle. The assembled fans realised that something was amiss. We didn't have a programme starting on time and there were not only people here who minded, but they minded quite a lot.

"We have come all the way from Norwich," they protested.

The fact that some of us had come twice as far and were quite happy with the situation didn't seem to cut any ice with them. It dawned upon us that these people were Science Fiction Enthusiasts. Not fans. Not only were they not fans, they were outside the BSFA as well, and any form of fandom as we know and love it was unknown to them. They were part of a SF Group in Norwich which boasted R.L. Fanthorpe as its president. They had regular meetings where they spoke about Science Fiction. I couldn't make out whether they ever had social fun at these meetings but from the hostility they radiated I don't think they did. They were very angry that they had been conned (as they seemed to see it) into attending the Silicon. Ian Williams was racking his brains (a short process, as is everything about Ian) to pinpoint any misleading blurbs the Silicon concomm might have put out, ones that said there will be no boozing, stupidity, game-playing and general fornication, and that there will be a programme,

packed, on time, utterly fascinating and exclusively SF oriented. It transpired that the Cambridge Group told them about the Silicon, but no-one could pin down where the Cambridge Group had heard about it. Was it the BSFA? Their Group Liaison Officer was at the Silicon and and we had fun blaming him for misinforming the Cambridge Group in the first place.

The first programme item got under way. I was actually on the panel. I will pause and let that fact sink in. I did protest and suggest lots of other women (I was to be the token woman) but somehow I ended up out front. The others were Rog Peyton, Dave Langford, Ian Williams in the chair, and Roy Kettle on the floor. Our two cuckoos sat in the front row waiting, I think, to hear wise words spoken even though they had probably decided at that stage that we weren't a very promising crowd. I must add that people bought them drinks and made friendly overtures because by this time people were beginning to feel vaguely guilty and uneasy that these individuals had come a long way for something that they obviously weren't going to get.

The subjects for the panel discussion were nominated from the audience, some of them very worthwhile topics which unfortunately didn't get the consideration they merited. The moral issue of how much of the profit should a concom pocket in the way of perks was kicked around in a halfhearted fashion. As an attendee I'd like to see cons end with as little surplus cash as possible. I prefer the idea of ploughing back any money into the con in the form of free parties, or a free (or heavily subsidised) buffet instead of a banquet, or better prizes for competitions etc. What is a fair rakeoff for a concom member? A free room at the con? Free meals or drink at concom meetings? All of them, or none? Or perhaps a £40 or £50 cash payment? Back in the Dark Ages when I was a concom member we were so holy we didn't take a penny - even paid our own registration fees!

Well, that panel is probably legendary now. Ian Williams bravely tried to keep things in order, but Kettle had taken far too much nerve bolster beforehand and was as uncontrollable as an epileptic robot. The resulting shambles didn't do anything for the image of fannish fans that the Norwich people took back with them to share with their club.

"Wait until we tell them about this!" one was heard to say.

After the panel they decided that they had had enough and they would go and spend the rest of the weekend with some friends they had locally. We tried to persuade them to stay, asking why they couldn't forget their preconceptions and just sit down, have a drink and just join in and see what it was like. They declined and left.

What really amazes me is that they just didn't want to stay for the social side. After all they would be socializing with people who had as strong a connection with Science Fiction as themselves (perhaps even stronger in some cases). I know a lot is made of the quip "Oh we never talk about SF" but everyone knows it's not entirely true. They looked like nice people, they looked happy and average, not manic depressives or Plymouth Brethren, yet they just didn't want to take one step into fannish fandom. We tried, we really tried, never before have people been so coaxed into fannish fun. Yet I feel that we're all going to be branded as a bunch of weirdos in their circles.

Talking of weirdos, when I heard that the BSFA Group Liason Officer was there I has a very strong desire to meet him. Having heard the feelings of some BSFA committee members about fannish fandom I thought it would be a good idea for your intrepid reporter to find out personally what was so vastly different between us. David Cobbledick was a quiet looking person in his early twenties (I should imagine). At first he was rather reserved when I homed in on him, and came on very sincere about his role in the BSFA. He was obviously open-minded (no he didn't have a hole in his head, Leroy Kettle), otherwise he wouldn't have been at such a small gathering of not very BSFA-oriented fannish fans (tho' naturally some of those present were BSFA members). I watched, everyone watched, the transformation of this chrysalis SF reader into an enthusiastic fannish fan. By the end of the Silicon he was so at home and confident it was a sight to behold. The timid introverted character had given way to a very friendly fannish fan. Now all he has to do is go back to HQ and persuade the likes of Chris Fowler and Tom Jones that fannish fans aren't all 'childish, stupid, and totally disgusting', or at least if we are we certainly know how to have a good time and are very willing to accept anyone who takes a step in the fannish direction. Bloody hell, I think the likes of Ian Garbutt want to be carried bodily into fannish fandom, but the fact is most people are too busy having a good time with those who arrive under their own power to issue gilt-edged invitations to those waiting on the sidelines.

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It is with mixed feelings that I approach the end of my job at the mental hospital. I've enjoyed working for a really crazy psychiatrist, in fact I got to like it so much that when they said would I continue staying permanently if his previous permanent secretary didn't come back I agreed. I must have been mad. The pay in hospitals certainly doesn't give you any difficulty in carrying the money home in a very small bag.

He really is a most charming man to work for; can you imagine working for someone who, when you're having an 'off' day finds it impossible not to get to work on you and restore your mood to an even plane? I'm not often moody but one day recently I felt quiet and not feeling at all like my daily chat, but as soon as he twigged I was being rather antisocial he was there giving me a mental once-over. I felt my mood being dragged off the floor and even felt resentful about being manipulated so easily, but by the end of the morning our relationship was on its usual high. I've been offered a job with another consultant, an Indian lady, but somehow it wouldn't be the same.

One fact I have discovered is that a lot of psychiatrists are Virgo zodiacally and a lot of aggressive patients are Scorpio. I'm a Virgo and Greg is a Scorpio. What, I wonder, does this mean?

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I know Robert P. Holdstock. Silence. I have actually met Robert P. Holdstock. More silence. He got a superb review in the TIMES for his latest book, EARTHWIND. Glowing, it was. Silence. OK, so who do you know who's famous? Whose name can you drop? I don't mean going around

saying "I know Brian Aldiss" when all you really mean is he trod on your foot at a con and said "Get out of my way!".

I was recently involved in a situation like the 'Rob Holdstock' one above. I was talking about records with a girl at work and it transpired that she knew the guitarist who'd taken Paul Kossoff's place in his band. In order to show I knew what she was saying I said "Lead guitarist in Back Street Rider?" "Crawler", she smartly replied. I thought she was being rather offensive, after all I was only trying to demonstrate that her name dropping wasn't wasted on me. Then I realised that she meant the band was called Back Street Crawler. (For the music fans the name dropped was Jeff Whitehorn). She also lived next door to the pianist in the Be-Bop Preservation Society, of whom I had never heard but Greg had. But then he knows everything about music except what the name of Paul Kossoff's replacement in B.S.C. was. Or at least he didn't up to a few days ago. All I could offer in exchange was Graham Charnock for his part in the NEW WORLDS FAIR album, but not only had she not heard of the record but she'd never heard of Micheal Moorcock.

My boss was the next to make me feel I didn't have much to offer the name-dropping world. He is a great friend of the actress who played Micheal Palin's mother in THOMPSON'S SCHOOLDAYS. He also knows the man who does the voice-over for the cream cleaner that won't scratch your bath as though you were wearing ice-skates in it. And the producer of DIXON OF DOCK GREEN.

My daughter told me on the phone the other night that she was talking to Jason Connery at school that day, and he's an awful twit with hair like Rod Stewart but blond and not a bit like his dad Sean.

I went to school with a person called Geoffrey Force who had ginger hair, ginger eyelashes and ginger skin, and was several classes ahead of me. One day after he left school I saw him interviewed on a TV news programme. He was off to an island off Australia to start a free-living colony with other young people. I never heard of him again. Does that count? No, I suppose not.

My French grandmother's best friend was aunt of the girl who is married to Courreges (Not the brewer, the dress designer). How about that? Too indirect? What about my French uncle who has met the Rainiers? He's a mirror salesman and supplied the mirrors for their palace. That's a bit too like Brian Aldiss' foot and hardly counts. It's no good, I can't compete. I'll wait until Robert P. Holdstock is a household name. Maybe he'll invent a crock for boiling bones in.

I've got Lenny the Lion's autograph though.

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Since I wrote (and the Editor stencilled) the above another six months have flown by, which means our bi-monthly fanzine is slightly behind schedule again. So much has happened in that time - trips to Wales, Novacon, parties parties parties. The only slight flaw in all these pleasant proceedings has been our car. Oh, it behaved itself perfectly on all the long hauls but it got really sick on a tiny trip to Victoria Station. Perhaps it thought I was going somewhere by train and got miffed. Anyway

as soon as the car showed signs of illness I panicked as usual and phoned Greg - "Ring your Dad and tell him the car is going wrong and ask what I should do!" I cry helplessly from a phone in Victoria. He demanded some symptoms lest his father thinks him odd - "There's a noise from the front-left-hand corner, it's only there when I drive at more than 15mph" (pause for hysterics) "What'll I do?"

Well, we arranged I'd phone back in a few minutes whilst Greg phoned home to Wales to ask the expert's opinion. This arrangement may seem strange until I point out that despite being the son of a locally renowned motor-mechanic Gregory often has trouble discovering which end the engine is at. He blames it on foreign influences but I think he really doesn't know how cars work.

Well when I rang back his Dad had said it was either the drive-shaft coupling going or something to do with the axle. If the former it would cost about £15 to fix, if the latter, he said, it would be cheaper for him to come up from Wales to do it rather than us take it to a garage. However, he said I would probably be able to get home by driving very slowly. Which I did. Very slowly. Unfortunately by the time I got to the Chiswick roundabout - a scene of frequent traffic jams and aggravation - the car was moaning piteously and I was moving at about 3mph, so I pulled into a Peugeot garage wondering if frogs knew anything about British cars - tho' as I was moving at a snail's pace it may have been right up their alley. A man appeared and said the service department was closed, not surprising as it was New Year's Eve. He said "Let me sit in the car and I'll tell you what's wrong with it." He drove it two feet forward and two feet back, and got out smiling. "Drive-shaft couple - you got far to go? Hope not as the steering might go." Great, I thought, and assured him I only had another mile to go, then proceeded on my way at 1mph. Alas this proved too much of a strain (on the car, tho' driving at that speed down the Great West Road didn't do me much good either), for just as I was on the roundabout under the elevated part of the M4 about to turn into the home straight the car lurched and refused to go any further, there was a metallic clunk and movement ceased. Luckily the lights were red and as I looked behind me I saw there in the road the car's liver or kidneys - some sort of vital organs anyway. I leaped out and gathered them up (so that I could say "This" to the garage when they asked me what was wrong with the car. Much more helpful than saying "It won't go".)

Now the most amazing part of this is that I had ground to a halt a few yards from a garage that was running a breakdown service that day. The mechanics walked out, identified the lumps of metal as an ex-drive-shaft coupling, and pushed me into the garage. Total cost one hour later £15.20. So we got to Malcolm Edwards' New Year party after all.

I have fond memories of a trip to Wales with Rob and Sheila Holdstock - particularly of the time that Rob and Greg went nude bathing on a deserted beach. At first Rob just took off his socks and paddled, then gradually everything came off right down to his continental knickers and he plunged into the boiling surf...oh, okay, he waded into the flat calm sea. Greg being more modest and not known for his jazzy underwear

hovered behind rocks while he stripped off his clothes down to his pink pants (pink ? you might ask; suffice to say that we possess some orange sheets that ran in the wash. We have pink everything now, blue and pink striped towels, pink and pink striped towels, pink handkerchiefs and so on). Soon the pals were frolicking in the sea accompanied by the occasional howl as they gashed their legs on rocks or cut their feet on shells. Of course Rob had to wear his glasses - without them he'd have lost sight of land and probably ended up trying to get ashore on the Irish coast fifty miles accross the sea - and as he plunged manfully into the sea they fell off. After much panic and ordering all marine life to stand still he found them again. Phew.

They were a sight to behold when they came out. No, not that, I mean the blood. They were both bleeding from cuts on their legs and of course Rob was the worst. Shiela had to rip her petticoat into strips to bind his wounds. Well, she didn't really, she found some tissues and dried his eyes for him. Oh, I'm still lying - it must be contagious - all she did was mop up the blood. There, I've told the truth at last.

I was sorely tempted to swim nude with them but thought of a hundred reasons why not to - most of them inches!

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Reading through my piece on my job left me confused so don't know how you will find yourself - try lost property. Although I agreed to stay at the hospital if the psychiatrist's secretary didn't come back I later changed my mind (what was left of it) and said I'd leave at Christmas come hell or high water. Coincidentally (or was it?) the off-sick secretary I was replacing returned after being given an ultimatum of either coming back or resigning and losing sick-pay.

So once more I plunged into the temp-swamp, only to be sent to the most Godawful factory estate in the whole world. There I was stuck behind the Guinness factory for a week, then in front of the Guinness factory for three weeks, then next to the blancmange factory for two weeks, after which time I begged my agency to restore me to civilization. Two weeks ago they found me a place at Singer in West Ealing, where Anne Keylock (lifelong friend of Gerry Webb) works. She greeted me on my first day with "Oh God, what are you doing here again?" I temped there three years ago for two weeks.

At least I'm free of the smell of brewing Guinness and whatever it is they do to blancmange, and now I'm working in Ealing I can keep in touch with the hospital through lunchtime booze-ups with Lynne (a secretary from the hospital). The latest news is that Brisbane Ward's budgie was strangled by a patient. He must have had awfully small hands!

I also learned recently that the external shots of the the prison for the TV comedy series PORRIDGE were done on location at the hospital. Ain't life odd?

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Simone Walsh

A L L R I G H T N O W
.....

letter column

((())) - Greg Pickersgill

%% % - Simone Walsh

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GRAHAM CHARNOCK, * I liked SBD 5, although I made the mistake of
 70 Ledbury Road, * reading MOANING AT MIDNIGHT first and that
 London W 11 * depressed me because it started me thinking about
 * the Meaning of it all. But not for long. Aw fuckit,
 * * * * * what we ought to be doing is demystifying fandom,
 which means not talking about it as if it's a club or association or
 masonry that you can join or drop out of. Fandom ain't a way of life or
 even a frame of mind, it's just a behaviour pattern indulged in by differ-
 ing people to differing degrees at differing times. It's a quirky behaviour
 pattern, sure, and that's why I like it and indulge myself in it from
 time to time. The fanzine side of it at least gets you actively making and
 constructing something, even if it's only a crappy loc like this.

My admiration and awe for D. West increases with every piece
 of his I read. And he's a prolific bastard isn't he? What constantly stuns
 me is how from the isolation of Bingley and his infrequent contact with
 fandom he comes up with such on-the-spot evaluations and judgements, like
 the elitism of fandom being dependent 'on the voluntary servitude of those
 who consider themselves less worthy'. Yes, indeed. Yes. Under every jackboot
 a grateful serf. Under every whip flesh that yearns for the lash. It's
 only human nature, innit, but somehow one never thinks of human nature being
 operative in fandom. (D. - and you - will probably look upon these remarks
 as yet more Charnock piss-take, but they are not. I probably idolize D. in
 much the same way he idolizes me as a pop star, and he will probably find
 it as infuriating. But he can do something I can't, that's all.)

What alcohol does for me in writing (if it's working properly)
 is break down the initial barrier of self-consciousness. You know, that
 feeling of 'What a prick I am, what a stupid turd, what am I doing sitting
 in front of a typewriter, what can I say that won't make me appear the
 cunt I feel like'. I don't know if Simone suffers from this. I suspect not.
 Part of the appeal of her writing has always been the naturalness, the
 lack of self-consciousness. She'll probably say now that she sweats blood
 to achieve that effect, or worse, that Greg writes it in for her.

Poot to Harry Bell. Okay smartass, where's the bloody guitar-
 strap then? Guitars are heavy sods. You try playing one without a strap.

MIKE GLICKSOHN,
141 High Park Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario M6P 2S3,
Canada.

*
* Despite the fact that I've not felt the
* desire to publish a real fanzine in more
* than a year and - even more ominously - no
* longer even bother talking about doing so,
* I seriously doubt I'll ever quit fandom itself,
* despite the attractiveness of some of the

reasons Greg cites. Like Greg I'm more than happy with my degree of involvement in fandom. Too many of my best friends are fans, I enjoy cons far too much, and even though it sometimes doesn't show I enjoy fanzines and writing locs to them. And it doesn't have a thing to do with the fact that almost the only times I get laid nowadays are at conventions and you're a cad for even suggesting it.

I too get totally fed up with fans who 'see the light' and denounce the very activities they once participated in with such enthusiasm. I'm particularly pissed off by those who do so while attempting to become Professionals and claim they no longer have the time to 'waste' writing for fanzines. As if a third-rate bit of hack fiction could stand against the better pieces of fanwriting just because some cretin paid two cents a word for it. Balls to such ungrateful cretins. If I ever had to leave fandom you can bet I'll always recognise that for at least eleven years of my life it gave me the happiest times and the best friends I had.

It's good to see Don West tackling a con-report with as much skill as he brings to fanzine reviews. Damn sound ideas, although I think he's a bit cynical in discussing the existence of a fannish elite. It's pretty hard to get yourself considered important at a convention where three-quarters of the attendees not only have never heard of you but also couldn't give a damn because you don't write SF, draw for Marvel, or iron Leonard Nimoy's socks.

Much as I agree with a lot of what Eric says about the need for some changes in TAFF I'm not sure he's correct in saying people like Terry Carr and Peter Weston used it as a 'springboard to professionalism'. That sounds as if they consciously set out to win TAFF because it would help them become pros and I doubt that that is in any way correct. In the first place I don't see what real help being a TAFF winner would be in pro terms, and in the second the fannish credentials of Carr and Weston are beyond reproach. (Bosnyak, from all I've heard, did indeed 'use' the fund for a free trip abroad but that's just one of the five Eric mentions. I also wonder whether these are the five 'indifferent TAFF Administrators' Eric says he's going to name but doesn't get around to again? What about Elliot Shorter, who was hardly active after returning from Heicon?) The only one of Eric's suggestions for improving TAFF I might object to is that anyone with professional aspirations be ineligible. A lot of fans harbour hopes of becoming pros but that doesn't stop them being active and worthwhile fans, nor does the fact that a fan actually sells something mean that they will automatically stop fanning. The rest of what Eric says is spot on and I hope Peter Roberts will give these suggestions serious consideration when he returns from Suncon.

As one of those who has been partly responsible for spreading the Gospel According To Kettle I take umbrage at the suggestion that I am uncritical of what he writes. As with Bob Shaw, I'm fully aware of the fluctuations in quality of Roy's output, but the simple fact is that

even when Roy isn't writing at his best he is still working on a level that puts him above the great majority of current fanwriters. So while I'm not going to praise unduly work that could have been improved neither am I going to castigate what is merely good instead of Great. Besides which, and this is the real meat of the matter, in the area of humour all judgements are highly subjective, so I'm somewhat wary of claiming that such and such a piece wasn't up to someone's usual standards. Some of what Roy or Bob writes doesn't appeal to me as much as other things, sure, but that's as far as I'll go.

Still, I'm more than willing to admit that if what Greg suggests is actually happening then he is perfectly right in his suggestion that it is a bad thing and harmful to the recipients. Bob's speech at this year's Eastercon, for example, didn't strike me as being as funny as the previous year's (which may have been the funniest thing I read all that year in a fanzine). But it was still funny and I'm sure it was a big hit at the con.

Joseph Nicholas has some valid points on the changing nature of fandom but as an arrogant elitist pig I'm not likely to change my definition of 'fan' even if we get overwhelmed by Trekkies, 99ers, Rhodants, or whatever. What the hell, what I mean by 'fan' is very much a minority even now, maybe three or four hundred people in a Worldcon ten times that size. Nor do I see what I think of as fandom being swept away by the ravening mindless hordes of sercon-sucking neos. The fannish cons in the States and the fan press are too firmly in the grip of Damn Good Folks to be overrun by people who don't share at least some of the common traditions and interests that bind my version of fandom together. It's entirely possible though that things like the Worldcon could pass into essentially unfannish hands but for several years the worldcon has been a small fannish con surrounded by a sea of SF and special interest enthusiasts anyway so that's nothing new. By all means encourage non-fan types to set up their own fandoms; the best way to do this is to establish fannish conventions at which there won't be anything to interest them. There's no need to be actively hostile, of course: passive disinterest in their specialised interests will preserve the basic cohesiveness of fannish fandom. And our worldcon or your Eastercon will remain a mutual meeting ground where all the different groups can gather annually, often in wary suspicion of each other, to share a few mutual interests and perhaps discover that some of the other blokes aren't so bad after all.

I happen to think that Willis, if he wrote as he did in the heyday of HYPHEN, would still be in the forefront of fannish writing were he to start again today. And let's not forget he wasn't exactly alone in those days either. With Shaw, White, Hoffman, Clarke, Tucker etc around it wasn't all a one man show. Certainly we have good and even Great fanwriters around today but their talent doesn't diminish his; I just don't buy the suggestion that Willis was good because his contemporaries were weaker writers. They weren't all cretins by a hell of a long shot and he was an excellent writer, if it's at all possible to establish absolute standards for writing. It is rumoured that Bergeron is almost ready to release the 480 page Willis special-issue of WARHOON. It might help settle some of the argument, as to Willis' fanwriting status, and I've got a feeling he'll come through pretty damn well.

TOM JONES, * After reading 3 SFRs I thought I must read
39 Ripplesmere, * something uptempo, humourous, biting - like SBD.
Bracknell, * But what did I find; depression. Greg pissed off
Berks RG12 3QA * with the world and fandom, a con report that would
* * * * * * * * * * * put off the most resolute fan from going to a con
* on two counts - a. why go to something so boring;
b. for fear that one might meet the morose D. West.

Although you dangled a lot of bait I'm not going to be drawn into an argument about fandom/BSFA fandom et al. You see we don't talk the same language (think the same way). What you call 'BSFA fandom' I call 'part of fandom, some of whom are members of the BSFA' (like you) and what you call 'real fandom' I call 'part of fandom who are heavily into fanzines of a non-sf nature' (like you again). You see we couldn't agree the ground rules, so there's no point talking about it.

Joseph Nicholas' letter made me laugh. The thought of any convention committee or the 'real' fans ever ejecting the Trekkies, Dr Who fans etc is so unreal. I thought one of the good things about cons was that you could meet people who thought differently to you, so you could look at things in different ways. Obviously Joseph thinks not. He should realise that most people probably despise fans as much as he despises Trekkies etc and probably for the same reasons, so maybe if he tried to understand Trekkies he'd learn something about himself.

Sod you, this is too sombre. Make sure SBD 6 is FUN - get it right!

EDGAR BELKA, * The neo entering fandom rapidly becomes entranced
43 Court Farm Road, * by those wierd and wonderful examples of grandiose
Northolt, Middlesex. * ephemera, fanzines. The outstanding quality of
* * * * * * * * * * * them is the apparent sense of freedom the editor
* commands to handle and control his own unique
piece of reality. This is the dope that luringly attracts the neo towards publishing his first truly atrocious crudzine. But that's not the end of it. The kid gets a big kick out of seeing his work finally take on the colour of duplicating ink. In a blinding vision of assured Greatness - his name in lights, BNF, all the rest of the ego-trip - he goes on to produce another stereotyped version of his first ghastly effort.

Suddenly he wakes with a rude shock to hear the baying of the fanzine reviewers. Little Jimmy Fan's effort is not the be all and end all of fannish experience. The fans are either tearing it to bits, or worse still, ignoring it. That 'nice fellow' I met at the Tun', Mr Pickersgill, is saying hard luck kid, but let's face up to it, it ain't good enough, it's a load of fucking shit. Tears in his eyes, gripping his scorned masterpiece to his chest, the neo staggers away to contemplate the error of his ways. He resolves these as being some kind of animosity directed at him because he is outside of some clique. He becomes paranoid and starts having hate sessions wherein he pins up SBD or WRINKLED SHREW on the wall and throws darts at them.

Hell, sometimes I could sit down and cry! After all, here I

am, trying in my own sweet apathetic way to make contacts in fandom - to climb the ladder to Greatness and become a Bloody Nauseating Fan. Jesus, I get these fanzines and the editors expect me to give them more than just a lousy 'Liked it - really great - send us another sometime'. But if they have no faith in a neo producing his first zine then how can they expect them to produce more than just the same old crud dished up as LoC material?

The old arguments - Listen gov, all I wanna do is pub a zine, we all gotta start somewhere - just aren't good enough, unless, maybe, you like crud.

The trouble with that view is that even I will produce crud and even if it my best crud I will feel offended if, as I know is very likely, someone calls it such. I want to produce something that will win me a little egoboo.

The only advice I have gleaned from various reviewers is 'to study the field'. Excellent advice, that I in all my naivete attempted to follow. It lead me into moods of deep contemplation and depression, during which I thought I just don't know enough of the background to write good fanzine stuff. Then I thought about restating other fans' arguments in my own words, hoping that blatant plagiarism wouldn't be noticed. Bloody hell, at this rate it'll take me years before I can produce even a third-rate fanzine and until then I'll forever be the neo!

One solution is for budding neos to write articles for other established fanzines. Sure, you'd get a load of shit, and you'd waste plenty of time rejecting the dross and saying why it wasn't good enough. Faneds should be expected to return contributions and state the reasons why they're rejected and give advice. And if that sounds like too much hard work then don't produce a zine. If you're going to produce a fanzine you should be prepared to edit it. A fanzine is a labour of love, and that means you should have to go through all the heartbreak before you get the gut-wrenching ecstasy of creation. Even God has responsibilities.

It is hard for a neo to get into fandom. Not excessively so, I admit, but for someone to turn up and make friends with strangers in the hope they're 'your sort' of people takes a load of guts, or in my case a gut-load of alcohol. Fandom is exclusive.

I met a guy at this year's Eastercon who I'd heard of before. He'd formed a clique within the Newcastle SF society, and controlled their fiction zine, which, naturally, carried only material from within the clique. Not having actually met him before I was prepared to give him a chance. Our first meeting convinced me that if he had a brain he didn't use it much. The second time was when I was suffering from the excesses of the night before. I wasn't in the mood to argue, I nodded as little as possible, and groaned as he passed me numerous five-hundred word stories to read. I gave opinions without actually reading them - something I seem to have a knack for. It began to anger me when he started slinging the fannish fans for even turning up at an Eastercon - he thought the Fan Room was an invasion of fannish fans into what had been the true SF fans' territory. Alas, my mood was one of great self-pity and I failed to contradict him, though I doubt it would have had any effect anyway.

There seem to be a lot of groups around these days who're either too moronic or lazy to develop something on a par with fandom who nevertheless believe themselves to be the new messiahs and feel they should take over fandom. Fuck it, they don't even like fandom - yet we accept them into the fold, encourage them to enter fandom, and when we organise conventions we go out of our way to put on things they are likely to enjoy. And there's the trouble, there are too many people indiscriminately pandered to by fandom.

Bringing down the walls of the 'fannish clique' (even though such walls as they are are relatively easy to get over) should provide a chance for the neo to get onto the wavelength of fandom, or get out of the way. Not provide an easy access for people who want to do away with fandom as it is now and replace it with what they think it should be. That may sound paranoid, but it's not. The BSFA is breeding a new type of fan who thinks that fandom should change to fit his preconceptions. Hell, how can anyone outside of fandom ever claim to have the right to change fandom - the change must come from fans that know what fandom is (if any change is needed at all) not from neos who have no idea. But the neos are demanding that fandom changes to accomodate them.

Joseph Nicholas suggests the ejection of Trekkies and Who freaks from the Eastercon - I'd go further, let's put fandom back into the Eastercon, not tuck it away into a small room. If the sercon fan doesn't like it he can ask that benevolent body the BSFA to organise an alternative. Eastercons need not lose all their sercon side, but let's keep it balanced and use the convention as a means of introducing people to fannish fandom.

*
*
PAUL KINCAID,
20 Sherbourne Road,
Middleton,
Manchester M24 3EH
* * * * *

* I don't particularly think kind thoughts about
* Trekkies and the like, and I'd be glad enough to
* see them off, along with all those who see no
* further than a D&D game. In short, all those who
* have become attached to fandom like limpets simply
* because there's nothing else for them to become
attached to. It's about time they grew up and took a few faltering steps
unaided. Illiberal of me, but there it is.

However there is that rather delicious saying about throwing baby out with the bathwater, and I'd be rather frightened that if we closed ranks, as you seem to be suggesting, against sercon fans, something important might go down the drain. Like it or not the fans entering fandom now (myself included, I suppose) are our future. Shouldn't we rather subvert newcomers, not lock ourselves away as if besieged?

You say the sercon newcomers are "mainly SF-oriented because they haven't had much exposure to anything other than hardcore scifi fandom because they haven't needed to get next to it" (my emphasis). Jesus, do you know what you're saying? Aren't you rather putting the cart before the horse? Is the fact that I'm not exactly exposed to jetset society due to the fact that I don't need such society? Conversely, if I did suddenly need such society would I automatically find myself exposed to it?

you join? For me personally it forms, apart from a source of great egoboo, a foundation platform from which to leap into the murky waters of fandom. Something you can place trust in before being thrown to the wolves (and you must admit, compared to the BSFA, fandom is very unstable). I suppose we are a fandom unto ourselves but we certainly don't try to give our members a bad impression of trufandom, at least I don't. It's not really surprising though, that a neo thinks of fandom as being elitist when he reads about such things as BNFs and the Astral League and the various fandoms (Gannets, Brums, Cygnets etc) and especially when he sees the same people featured in fandoms publications over and over again. The greatest impressions of elitism a neo gets, though, is from people like you who seem to show contempt for the BSFA and similar organisations, and therefore contempt for its members.

DARROLL PARDOE,
Flat 2,
38 Sandown Lane,
Liverpool L15 4HU
* * * * *

I'm not so sure a rejuvenated HYPHEN would make the grade in today's fandom. It was very much a fanzine of its time, when fandom was all very snug and matey and not split up into little factions like it is now. Us traditional publishing-oriented fans were in the majority then, and top

of the pile, instead of being a barely tolerated minority among all the SF freaks. Surely the main point is that fandom is a living organism, always evolving. Nostalgia is all very pleasant, but would we really want to go back to 1960 or even 1969? We ought to live in fandom as it is, and do our bit towards influencing its future development in the way that we want it to be. If we all sit around saying how great things used to be someone else will be making the running here and now and we'll wake up one day to find fandom as we know it has disappeared. The past is mainly valuable for its effect on the present.

Imagine in a year or two a fandom ruled by a powerful Serious and Constructive BSFA, running a reincarnated PaDs, with a new Tribe X rampaging through the corridors of the Eastercon, and a few pitiful wrecks of fannish fans huddled in the hotel broom closet, aka 'Fan Room'.

PETER WESTON,
72 Beeches Drive,
Erdington,
Birmingham B24 ODT
* * * * *

I agree with Bentcliffe in many of the things he said about TAFF and the present state of the Award - in fact I used to say most of them myself back in the early seventies when those other inefficient Administrators were letting the side down, as I thought. Trouble is it isn't that simple. Disinterest

in TAFF isn't purely a function of lack of effort on the part of the current incumbent; modern-day fandom comes with a built-in lack of interest no matter what. Remember the TAFF panel at Mancon? Quickest way to clear a con hall that I know.

I'd like to think Eric is less than fair about my own efforts in this respect. And his imaginary dialog is just that - imaginary. Nobody can claim not to have heard about the last TAFF campaign, nobody with any real connection with fandom. I put dec nt pieces on TAFF in all the con programme books, and left ballots available in strategic places at the

Leicester convention.

In all I printed over 2000 ballot sheets and put them out through LOCUS, CHECKPOINT, MAYA, and a few other fanzines. If anyone didn't see that lot too bad, they probably wouldn't have been qualified to vote under the 2-year rule anyway.

At Leicester I remember going around offering TAFF ballots to people who I knew hadn't voted until it struck me that this was a stupid thing to do for two reasons. First it is the job of the candidates nominators to campaign for their men, not the Administrators (and the nominators didn't, did they?). Second, with my confidential knowledge of the latest voting totals I could justifiably have been accused of favouritism - ie soliciting votes from known Jeeves supporters, or vice versa. The Administrators must always remain strictly neutral.

But British fandom really doesn't care a damn, despite anything Eric says.

Greg is correct when he talks about the transient lifespan of a fan. By the nature of things one tends to win TAFF (if ever) when one is past the prime of activity. If you live long enough to get there you've lost most of your reason for actually wanting to. There is a natural time when people ought to win TAFF if they're to give of their best, be really representative of their times. With Terry Jeeves it might have been somewhere in the late fifties or early sixties, with me it was 1971 when I was in very close contact with US fandom. I suspect Peter Roberts should have gone in 1974.....

DAVID V. LEWIS,
8 Aldis Avenue,
Stowmarket,
Suffolk.

* I am sorry D. West did not receive a copy of the
* BSFA Yearbook as I expressly asked that all
* contributors - BSFA members or not - should receive
* copies as a matter of common courtesy. The saga of
* the Yearbook is one of gross misunderstanding from
* start to finish and a lesson to those who criticise
and then take up the challenge to do better. My advice is don't be
conned into doing it! Never again will I be cajoled into doing something
I know I have not the skills to do by anyone, and to be castigated for
doing what I understood was required by the ruling cabal.

I made it clear at the start that I could neither type nor edit but was fobbed off with airy disclaimers. It was to be a lavish litho production and I had full authority to collect whatever I pleased in the way of artwork and articles. The typing and layout would be taken care of for me. I spent a lot of time writing to many people in Autumn 1976 asking/pleading for material, suffering disappointment **after** disappointment before I had a dozen or so articles lined up, along with illustrators doing stuff for it. I eventually had everything in the post in ample time for the deadline I had been set. As is now known the book came out months late, and to my disgust, horribly duplicated and with one article (by Brian Tawn on Music) missing. When I voiced my dissatisfaction with this I was told that since I had neither typed nor laid-out the mss it was assumed I had washed my hands of the whole thing, and

that in their (the BSFA's) opinion the articles I had secured were not what was required for a yearbook but as it was too late to do anything about it they had gone ahead and published it anyway. I consider this an insult for all the hours I put in on the job and also to the contributors, some of the best fanwriters in the country. I later resigned from the BSFA Council (to which I had been elected at the Eastercon in a laughable affair supposed to be democratic) to show my feelings about the affair.

Despite this aggrevation I have noticed no difficulty in getting into fandom via the BSFA. I think Greg's antipathy to the BSFA is Greg doing what he says we should not do, ie knock older fen. Being a late sixties fan he does not like seventies fen knocking him but he enjoys baiting that product of fifties fen, the BSFA. Let us not forget that the BSFA was formed in 1958 primarily to ensure that Eastercons continued, as they seemed in imminent danger of folding at that time. So to say that BSFA fandom is separate from the rest of fandom is nonsense; the BSFA was born of fandom. I and many other members are living proof that we fit into fandom completely.

KEEP ON PUSHING

+++++

we also heard from

* * * * *

* JACK MARSH: Living a lot closer to Plus Books
* than Haverfordwest I visited it several times
* during its heyday. Eventually I got chatting to
* the boss about SF and was invited into the back
* room... 'allo, I thought, an iron? No, he was just
* into Jack Vance! There was a bloody great cupboard
* full of imported books and the guy just let me
browse as long as I wanted. I went back one day whilst searching for THE GAS by Charles Platt. It was the same guy as usual. "Have you got THE GAS by Charles Platt, published by Ophelia Press?" He slowly leaned over the counter and stared down at my trousers. When policemen seek to work 'plain clothes' by removing their jackets and putting on a raincoat they little realise a policeman's distinctive narrow-bottomed black trousers are a dead giveaway. Anyway, when satisfied that scruffy jeans do not a policeman indicate he turned around and pulled a small knob set into the wall behind him. Bugger me! There was a cupboard completely disguised and wallpapered over to merge completely with the wall...stuffed with Ophelia Press and Olympia Press and more and more...a veritable pornucopia! "Ophelia Press...Ophelia Press.." he chanted passing out pounds and pounds worth of stuff. "No, no, that's not it...that's not it.." I said. "It's all Ophelia Press", he explained patiently. "Yes, but what I want is Science Fiction." He gave me a look which I can only describe as 'knowing'. "If it's Ophelia Press it's dirty", he said, shoving it all back into the hidey-hole.

: :

ANDREW STEPHENSON: Your reunion with Plus Books was really touching. No hoax; it moved me. Probably because I never had the pleasure (?) of knowing such places when still a pre-neo. (My early, grubbing-among-the-offcasts days were spent in radio junk-shops, which have their own

special charm, may I say). Odd to think that that guy has been stuck in that same rut all these years whilst your lives have been evolving. Once he was important to you, now he's largely irrelevant; one day.. well, he'll simply no longer be there, but you probably won't know because he'll have passed out of your lives. Of such stuff is philosophy builded, one might murmur archaically, mulling over the human condition.

: :

IAN MAULE: TAFF is heavily loaded against ordinary fans, particularly from the American side. We want to see people who produce fanzines, write letters, and generally act like fans as winners. Unfortunately there are more convention fans than fanzine fans in the USA and with the distribution of TAFF ballots at conventions it is only natural that these convention fans pull a lot of weight with the voters. The ideal situation might be for the recipient country only to choose who they want and for ballots to be distributed in fanzines and nowhere else.

: :

DAVE LANGFORD: SBD 5 arrived on the same day as SIDDHARTHA whatever thenumberwas. (Which is maybe a bit like saying that the Battle of Trafalgar was fought on the same sea I paddled in last summer...oops, sorry Ian!) Amazing effect, reading twice in half an hour of Ian's **struggle** with the forces of nature; like a double exposure or stereoscopic view. Ian Williams bulking forth in 3D from the page. The mind boggles.

: :

BEN BURR: I'm soon going to put out my own zine. No doubt it will be crappy, a typical bad-bloody-bad first issue.

: :

JOSEPH NICHOLAS: You aren't the only one to feel a distinct lack of drive in fandom at the moment. It's almost as if nobody cares any more, as though, threatened with being overwhelmed by the fringe mobs like Trekkies and sercons, we've already conceded defeat and are just going to fade quietly away with not even a headstone to mark our passing. Bloody hell...I just can't face up to the possibility that this might actually happen, with a new and different form of trufannishness arising to replace the old.

: :

AND : DAVE STAVES ; ROB HANSEN ; DAVE COCKFIELD

PLUS : JOHN HALL ; TERRY HUGHES ; PETER PRESFORD ; JOHN KOENIG ; and JOSEPH NICHOLAS (again!) who all sent substantial and excellent letters on a variety of rock music topics, not used here for reasons of pure editorial whim, but as they are Good and Timeless missives might well show up in the future. Several pats on the back to those guys anyway, and as usual, Thank You, all.

stop duper....stop duper....stop duper....Peter Roberts' Late Letter....(tardy cretin)...

PETER ROBERTS, *
38 Oakland Drive, * I'm in general agreement with the spirit of
Dawlish, * Eric's piece on TAFF: his analysis of the recent
Devon. * shortcomings seems reasonable, as does his
* demand for a resurgence of fannish interest in
* * * * * TAFF. But I'm not happy with some of his
* suggested remedies, mainly because I don't
think they're practical.

Firstly, there's the idea of a change of venue to avoid problems of size, and consequent dilution of fannishness at the major conventions. Eric suggests TAFF winners should attend an American regional instead of the Worldcon, and the Novacon instead of Eastercon. Fair enough, except that Eric doesn't mention one grave problem: the fans in the host country may prefer to meet a TAFF delegate at a smaller, less phrenetic convention, but the TAFF delegate may well prefer to attend the traditional major convention. For example despite having heard all the complaints and criticisms of recent US Worldcons I wanted to see one for myself and Suncon would still have been the con I'd have chosen to attend should I have had any sort of option as TAFF winner. The problem, in other words, is who calls the tune - the home voters, the host voters, or the candidates? An awkward question, and one I wouldn't care to take sides on.

There are a number of additional problems about changing the venue, notably the unseasonable time of Novacon (a trip to Europe in November just isn't appealing, it may well be impossible for fans with limited time-off - teachers or students, for example) and the sheer size of America which leads to regional cons being really regional. I went to Windycon last year, a fairly large fannish con with several hundred attendees, mostly from Chicago, but with a sprinkling of fans from adjacent states; apart from the GoHs and a couple of fans en route across America, there were no active fans from either the West or East coasts. That's certainly too limiting for TAFF, though Midwestcon, which Eric mentions, may be somewhat better.

As for Eric's other suggestion, 'limiting TAFF to active fanzine fans', I think that's really a matter for the voters. I agree that TAFF is for fans and that the ideal candidate should be an active fan-editor or contributor as well as a con-goer - that's worth emphasizing and I'll try to do that. But I don't believe it's much good laying down official rules for a photo-fit TAFF winner, if only because such rules would be cumbersome and easily avoided. Basically it's not a question of demanding that certain publishing credential or some such be complied with, it's more intuitive: most active and interested fans simply know who sounds like a reasonable candidate and who doesn't. When it comes right down to it, therefore, it's up to the voters to vote for the right candidates. Either that or the TAFF Administrators could veto the nomination of candidates they didn't think were suitable, and that would be an amusing way to plunge all fandom into war.

So, what are we left with? Well, there's the question of the TAFF Trip Report: that might be made obligatory, though just how

you'd enforce it, I don't know. I don't fancy fines or anything like that, but possibly if candidates gave a written undertaking to write a report then general fannish opinion might compel them to produce the thing after their trip (either that or gaffiation).

Other than that I think it's mostly a case of voter education or re-education. I don't think it is all so completely in the lap of the TAFF Administrators as Eric seems to suggest. I reckon Roy Tackett and I should reflect fannish opinion, and perhaps even mould it; but I'd be wary of going beyond that. Anyway, I'm certainly open to ideas and I'm quite prepared to consider changes with, as you say, my 'cautiously enthusiastic interest'. Can't say fairer than that, can I boss?

RESPONSES TO LETTERS

(Okay, feeble, I know I know, but you try thinking of a snappy song-line or title that means the same thing, especially on a cold February Monday. Gnash. The things we do for love.....)

Well, I suppose Roberts first because he's last. Despite my usual lust to see any Old Orders overturned amidst blood and destruction I must say that Captain Cool's cautious enthusiasm holds me transfixed by its logical progression. Everything he says is true. And so it goes too for Peter Weston a few pages back, especially that bit about TAFF winners always going long after their 'Right Time' sotosay. A main point is that in this day and age with fandom mutating visibly around us is it any more reasonable to expect yer average Jimmy Fan to worry about whether or not they'll be disappointed or upset at being confronted (or more likely seeing for a split-second at the other end of a corridor) by some rather dull yesterdays-fan. I mean, who cares? The more you think about it the dafter it all becomes. I suppose I'll still vote tho', one way or other. Incidentally note well the complete absence of mention of that mythical creation the 'TAFF Report' from Mr Weston's letter. At least fandom ought to deserve an excuse (any excuse).

So much for tradition. Onward to, if not finer things, at least a man who can play the guitar. Dear Graham, whilst all that woolly stuff about behaviour patterns has an engagingly intellectual ring, it does rather conjure up the vile spectre of diletantism. Dilletante fans dipping in and out of fandom on whom never get right onto the pure pleasure of the Life like those who devote themselves to it more than somewhat. No doubt Fandom is just a Goddamned hobby (ah, how slickly those facile old phrases drop from the brain!) but obviously anything worth doing at all is worth doing well, and the more you pay the better you get. That sort of attitude is rather like trying to be a diletante sexual athlete; only practise makes perfect, don't it. I mean, like, life can be dreadful dull at times, and fandom really can transcend the limitations of reality like nobodies business. I fear you are being a bit of a Platt here Mr Charnock, though it is nice to see that you do not in so many words attempt to excuse or justify that sort of reprehensible behaviour at all. Though it probably says much about the poverty of my own life that I do not automatically agree with you. Mean old scene eh wot?

And then of course to make a mockery of it all along rushes demon neofan Edgar Bonka taking everything far too seriously. I mean, Jesus, I've always advocated a few moments actual thought and consideration before hacking out a First Fanzine, but here's the Slavic Kid looking like he is about to sit the Final Exam. Really, anyone with enough common sense to realise - as Belka has done - that one's first fannish efforts should be prefaced with a bit of consideration is not going to make an entire balls of things when he does commit himself to paper, so there's no need to agonise quite so much. And anyway the certain best way of getting oneself about in fandom is to first pub one's ish; your average neofan has if anything less knowledge and ability to write a good purpose-built fanzine article for another editor than he has to do his own fanzine, which if he has any sense will all be about himself, and is at the very least a good way of introducing his presence to the Great Wide World Of Fandom. It's also a good way of getting one others' mailing lists. Actually, if Belka had stuck this letter behind a Terry Jeeves cover and in front of another few pages of drivel he'd have had quite a fair fanzine. Wouldn't have boggled any brains, for sure, but maybe better than all this self-abasement. Do it 'til you're satisfied.

Pretty much everyone else seems obsessed to some degree with the BSFA - fandom interface. Major stuff, no doubt, and during the ever-decreasingly small periods when I feel actually in touch with the modern world of fandom I fret myself stupid about just that. Certainly Tom Jones protestations to the contrary there is something of a rift between the BSFA fans and the rest of us (don't ask who 'us' is, for Christ's sake) which is at least partially due to the remarkable recovery the BSFA has made in recent years, right from the very edge of oblivion. The average BSFA member these days does not actually need to go beyond the bounds of the organisation to get into some action. There's a great deal of activity going on in BSFA terms these days, one only has to look at the healthy responses their two or three journals get to realise this. In the old days (ah! the good old days! thank God they'll never come again!) there was totally piss-nothing going on in the BSFA and anyone who actually wanted to be something other than just a consumer (as still most BSFA members want to be) just had to go out into established fannish-type fandom to get next to anything at all. This is what I mean, Paul Kincaid; within the BSFA there are activities and attitudes similar to but not alike those you encounter in fandom-proper, and because they are there there is no necessity for the average activity-inclined BSFA member to leave the BSFA compound and search them out. It isn't so much what they haven't had they don't need, but what they've got one version of they don't need two. And the BSFA - in the persons of recent MATRIX and VECTOR editors - have hardly been going out of their way to encourage the average BSFA member to join fandom, what with general accusations of childishness, jargonry, cliquishness, idocy, and not even reading sf hardly at all. Now it is a shame to see this sort of divisiveness in an organisation fundamentally set up, as Dave Lewis points out, to recruit members for Eastercons (and by extension, fandom). Now obviously fandom isn't something for everyone, but it is worth allowing that as it is essentially centered around science fiction, and sf is in truth vitally important to the whole idea, any sf reader, especially

those sufficiently motivated to join the BSFA, should have an opportunity to get next to it. Which is why I was so amazed and disgusted by the criminal irresponsibility displayed some time back by various BSFA functionaries in venting their spleen against fandom in a quasi-official manner, flinging about accusations of fandom being sick, disgusting, childish, cliquish, cultivating jargon deliberately to exclude outsiders, and various other antisocial vilenesses. It is worth remembering that to the average BSFA member the editor of, say, VECTOR, is only slightly to the lower left-hand side of God, and in the absence of any other knowledge your little Jimmy BSFA will tend to believe what he is told, and being told that sort of thing he is hardly going to rush about to find out any more (more truthful) information. Still and all, that was some time back and recently the BSFA has moderated its attitude somewhat, and definite efforts are being made by both sides to effect something of a rapprochement, to tie the BSFA and fandom back together again. Of course none of this would be necessary if BSFA members and fans were more or less one and the same thing, as they used to be back in the old days, and I truly wish that a lot more fans would follow my example and rejoin the BSFA, be a link in the chain, do not let fandom change around us in ways which we will not like or be party of. Because the vast majority of fans come to fandom via the BSFA in the beginning, and if they don't come, well, we go, eventually, no doubt of that.

And no, Garbutt, I am not contemptuous of the BSFA and its members. I am one myself. I joined - again, after a couple of years lapse occasioned mainly because for a long time the BSFA (which you seem to have deluded yourself is and always has been a secure functioning unit) didn't have anyone to whom one could apply to for membership - because I have a certain mystical belief in the organisation, much as some people have in the Power for Good, and probably as equally misplaced. As I said almost all fannish fans were BSFA members first - all of us wide-eyed neos going to our first cons, goggling at super-famous professionals sitting on the stage talking at us. I joined in the first instance because I wanted to know more about sf, and to meet people to talk to. I'm still a member because I remember what I was then and I appreciate there are lots like me now, and just because I was perhaps unfortunate enough to meet the BSFA in one of its regular downswings doesn't mean things always have to be like that; let's all work together to give the people what they **need** when they need it (not what they want because they don't know any better as one unfortunate BSFA hanger-on would have it) and even though the BSFA at present can offer a good substitute for fandom there's no doubt that the two together provide a whole greater than the sum of parts.

Garbutt, your vision of fandom as unstable compared to the BSFA is at best comic. The BSFA has regular collapses - hopefully not to be repeated but who can tell - but fandom keeps on rolling on. Just who do you think runs these damned conventions anyway? Fannish fans, that's who. Just because there's no sort of fannish fuhrerbunker doesn't mean the whole place is in a shambles. The BSFA, it is worth noting, has never yet run a convention, despite having had its initials appended to con titles prior to 1967. True, in those days fans and BSFA members were somewhat the same creature, but there's still a difference. Anyway, please bear in mind the fact that these generally-condemned fannish fans who run cons voluntarily subsume their especial activities and essentially go out of

their way to plan and run the sort of convention that might not in fact hold any great personal pleasure for them, other than being a worthy job well done. All these vile fannish fans were gosh-wow sf readers and enthusiasts in the first instance, remember, and although familiarity does indeed breed a little contempt there is no doubt that the Prime Directive in every Easterconcom's collective mind is "What would I like to see if this were my first convention?" To turn to the absurd for a moment can you imagine the BSFA turning about on its own interests in like manner; I mean, there's a good case to be made out for doing away with all these fucking sercon freaks who're barging on on the fannish fans' act. Let them get hence and run their own conventions.....only jokin' boss, that would actually be the end of us all. .

My God, Garbutt, you bumbling radoteur, how can you possibly equate elitism with the merely unfamiliar? Does this mean anyone who knows something you don't, or is familiar with some scene you are not, is automatically an elitist bastard? Do you usually gripe and complain about having to read stories by the same bunch of writers in every sf magazine, do you whinge about sf writing being a fairly enclosed field with a comparatively limited number of writers producing the majority of books? No, of course not, because you haven't built up the idea that sf writing is something you're automatically shut out from. The reason why you see the same names in fanzines time and time again is because they're either the best writers who are in demand, or they are actually interesting individuals in fannish terms whose activities are popularly adjudged amusing or interesting, and these bizarre and incomprehensible terms like 'Gannets' or 'Brums' are simply handy collective nouns for fangroups from specific parts of the country. Rather like 'Scots' or 'Welsh', you grasp the idea? I suppose though that everyone finds fandom elitist, impenetrable, and enclosed on first viewing; all these people all known to each other, aware of things you are not familiar with. How to get in? No-one knows for certain, it's sort of osmosis really, one day the barrier is simply no longer there. The secret is to read and write to fanzines, talk to people at conventions, and simply be alert, be yourself, and be interesting and interested. Don't pose, don't create a big deal about nothing, try to 'create' a reputation. If there's anything about you you'll be noticed in your time. If there isn't, well, remember for every one man you continually hear about in fandom there's another six who're just extras in the big con of life. Just try to remember that fans tend to be lazy, happy to ease back in familiar and established company rather than ease some fractious newcomer on, though they're more than willing to go halfway to meet someone who's prepared to play the game. Do something worthwhile in fan terms and you'll be accepted. Think of fanac in the same terms as a subscription. Ain't no-one going to mention you just because you're there, though, Everest you are not.

It is also worth recalling that the fanzines of ten years ago were filled with a completely different set of names, and yes, I admit it, snot-nosed ~~newcomers~~ like myself were going around saying pretty much what you're saying now. Oddly enough, though, I expect you to know better than I did.

Greg Pickersgill

ENDLESS BOOGIE

.....

what goes around

comes around

.....and why was sunny Dawlish the only part of western Britain not submerged beneath snow in the recent sub-Arctic conditions? Gulf stream nothing, it was the presence of Astral Master PETER ROBERTS, no doubt. Tho' his arcane skills didn't save him from having to run downstairs and sleep in the kitchen one night during hurricane-force winds when he thought the roof was going to blow off.....there is no truth whatever in the rumour that MAYA has folded. It is merely coincidence that cheery ROBERT JACKSON has taken recently to playing Doctor and Nursie with sweet young CORAL CLARKE; JACKSON has not forsaken his lust for a HUGO for other diversions, he just, well, hasn't the energy to type out 367 LoCs right now..... there is equally little truth in the widespread allegation that numbers-racket operator KEV SMITH is heading for a nervous breakdown, or that 'Big' DAVE LANGFORD is getting progressively deafer; still, it is true that whenever you mention 'Skycon' to them SMITH gets jumpy and irritable and LANGFORD turns away like he hasn't heard you speak.....more good LEEDSCON news ; excellent roomrates secured from the Leeds DRAGONARA hotel, management very enthusiastic and cooperative, free car park, free facility rooms (which means all con funds can be put into useful stuff and events, not wasted on hiring halls etcetera).....LEROY KETTLE leaves home; star of fanzines, Worldcons, and Skycon moves into damp one room dungeon after ex-matrimonial home sold out from under him. The shock has been so great that it is not expected KETTLE will be able to perform well (if at all) at upcoming SKYCON.....though with as much as twenty days to go before the convention KETTLE has sworn a special con edition of his fanzine....ummm, whatever it was called, will appear at the con.....and who is this STEVE HAYNES character who carried off the snatch of the century by stealing £7000 + worth of old pulps from the British Library? And then sold them to various dealers-about-town, one of whom recognised the BL shelf-marks and fairly wisely turned him in - he is now helping police with their enquiries. See full story next issue if I can find out any more, especially something about his secret statement to BL authorities about how he actually smuggled the stuff out of the building. HAYNES was, apparently, employed by the BL and concieved of the snatch as revenge for some typical bit of BL management persecution. I know the feeling.....shock horror surprise news is that partially British American fan RICH COAD will not be appearing in Britain this year. Coming next year, he claims. Don't hold breath, we say.....VOTE LEEDS '79.....dunno what it is about JOSEPH NICHOLAS/X/ these days but he's been going about laying his hands on women a lot more than necessary these days, and even talking to them a lot too (well, one of them, anyway).....ROBERT HOLDSTOCK (writer) not at all upset at being held up as prime example of literary cretin by some dim American toad in a recent ish of GALAXY; HOLDSTOCK immediately produced signed statements by such literary giants as CHRIS CARLSEN and ROBERT BLACK proving he has been the greatest influence on their careers since ROBERT E. HOWARD and JOHN NORMAN.....moving men; MIKE COLLINS of Newport moves to London on March 11th, and ROB HANSEN of Cardiff moves into COLLIN's Newport flat on the same day - see CHECKPOINT (which lives!) in near future for changes of address.....and here we go down to the bottom of the page with only seventeen days to go before the Skycon - that means six issues of this fanzine in two years. Pitiful, I call it.....have fun.....

