

Ansible

Ansible 78 January 1994

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo by Dan Steffan. E-mail ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk. *Ansible* may be had whimsically or for stamped addressed envelopes (1/copy).

HAPPY NEW YEAR! ... despite far too many glum news items.

The Odious Ones

Deborah Beale insists that 99% of all sf gossip about her and Charon Wood's exit from Millennium is Greatly Exaggerated. No bust-up with the management, no Orion Group financial trouble, etc. But: 'This is an industry that puts particularly harsh pressures on its staff.... We just came to a point where the disadvantages far outweighed the benefits. We had a blast, but it isn't a career that can offer us what we want any more.'

Gerald Lawrence appointed himself *Ansible's* Saudi Arabian Affairs Correspondent in time for Chr*stm*s fun: 'Christmas cards are illegal. Hell, Christmas is illegal. There's a black market in Christmas trees. Seriously! Now that it's getting cold, the [locals] have started wearing anoraks over their thobes which makes them look a little peculiar. It's an even odder experience to have one of these strange figures—thobe, gupra, and grubby anorak—sidling up to you, looking each way to make sure there aren't any matawaha around, and then saying (in "fealthy postcards?" tones): "Psst—you wanna buy Creesmas tree very good very cheap?''

Patrick Nielsen Hayden retorts: 'Stephen Jones's nasty remarks about Steven Brust's World Fantasy Con programming (A77) can, rumour has it, be traced to Brust's failure to suck up to various extremely important WFC personages not entirely dissimilar to Stephen Jones. We have to appreciate the skill with which Jones knifes Brust as "he of the dragon books", a phrase nicely designed to convey with a wink just what sort of lowbrow junkmeister is under discussion here. In fact I'm not sure there's a single dragon in any of Brust's novels, but that's hardly the point in this sort of score-settling, now is it?' (*Others suggested that the 1993 WFC emphasis of fantasy over horror—deplored by SJ—was only fair, the imbalance usually being the other way....*)

Caroline Oakley is now sf editorial supremo at Millennium. 'Couldn't happen to a nicer person or better editor.' [JG]

Terry Pratchett: 'Just got back from a week in South Africa (apparently it's okay to go there now). Signed a lot of books for a lot of fans of various shades who were buying as if there was no tomorrow, which many seem to feel is the case. There's a lot of surface optimism around but you can hear the mighty creak of fingers being crossed. In Johannesburg there's areas that look like Cheltenham but with razor wire on the (high) garden walls, or electric fences, or "Armed Response" notices—but most noticeable are the walls that have had a few feet of extra blocks recently added...' [10 Dec]

Chris Priest is proliferating, according to DC Comics' *Shop Talk* (freelance newsletter): the Dec issue weirdly announces the '... new Ray writer, CHRISTOPHER PRIEST. Actually Priest isn't the new writer of *The Ray*. Christopher Priest will become the new name of former DC Editor, JIM OWLSEY. Jim, who has "been feeling a lot more spiritual lately", is talking about taking a new name in conjunction with his new company...' [NG] (*Did no one warn him about death threats?*)

Keith Roberts said goodbye in a horrifying Xmas circular: 'This is to advise you that in effect I died in March 1990, when I was finally diagnosed as suffering from multiple sclerosis. As you will perhaps know, this is a progressive and basically mysterious disease for which there is no known cure. Since then, developments have been rapid. I have been reduced from my former six feet plus to wheelchair height; increased spasticity has made artwork and production things of the past, while a so far unexplained complication has led to me contributing a major piece of my anatomy to the hospital incinerator. I'm

therefore a one-legged hasbeen at the age of fifty eight. • Against expectations, I managed to keep these facts quiet for a considerable time; however a couple of interested parties obviously decided it would be bad for me to die unshriven and leaked the story, necessitating the present note. Rumours are only enjoyable if unconfirmed; I always was a spoilsport in that respect. Though I'm painfully aware that the information will be of interest to the various Important Authors I have offended over the years, mainly by existing. [...] • Having got myself blacklisted by the Establishment, it was unlikely I would ever publish again, in English at least; but this would not have been permitted anyway. In the Mother of Democracies, cripples are naturally not allowed to earn; that would be to rise above their station. At which point I did wonder if the good Lord was indeed punishing me for daring to oppose my betters. If so, it was a definite case of overkill; but I had thought for some time He was really a Thatcherite at heart. [...] • For me, life has been reduced to a daily battle to avoid the clutches of the People Farms; the normal euphemism for them is Residential Homes. In this, I may or may not be successful; I am buoyed by the thought that the ever-obliging State has at least provided a species of alternative. Having stood back for a month or so and watched my leg rot at the rate of several millimetres a day, the powers that be finally pressed on me enough pain-killers to solve my problem several times over. Either way, I would of course vanish from human contact. So I am taking this opportunity to send best wishes to you all, and good luck with your various enterprises. Yours sincerely....' [via Γ, CM, DP]

George Turner, whose stroke was reported in *Ansible* 71, 'is well, but feeling unable to write any more. So the articles in *SF Commentary* 73/4/5 are his last writings. Maybe.' [BRG]

Congius

28-30 Jan • **Starbase** (*Trek*), Hilton Hotel, Leeds. GoH George Takei. £35 reg; no memberships at the door (or after 14 Jan). Contact 152 Otley Rd, Headingley, Leeds, LS16 5JX.

4-6 Feb • **Vibraphone** (filk), Oak Hotel, Brighton. £27 reg. Contact 2 Duncan Gate, London Rd, Bromley, BR1 3SG.

26 Feb • **Intersection Party**, Carrick Hotel, Glasgow, 8pm—all welcome, please bring a chairman. Contact Jacky Grüter-Andrew, Intersection, Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR.

20-22 May • **Mexicon 6** ('The Party'), Hertford Park Hotel, Stevenage. £9.50 reg. £19.50 twin/dbl, £22.50 sngl. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

26-9 May • **Eurocon**, Timisoara, Romania. Now £15 reg. Optional '7-day advance tour of historic Transylvania'. Contact FATW, 17 Mimosa, 29 Avenue Rd, Tottenham, N15 5JF.

21-4 Oct • **Albacon**, Central Hotel, Glasgow. £25 reg to 31 April (!). Contact 10 Atlas Rd, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE.

29-30 Oct • **Who's 7** (*Dr Blake* event), Queen's Hotel, Crystal Palace, London. Now £35 reg (but £5 off if you book a hotel room). Contact 131 Norman Rd, Leytonstone, E11 4RJ.

Oct (?) 97 • **World Fantasy Con**, Britannia International Hotel, London Docklands. *Dracula* centenary theme. No memberships taken until Oct 94. Contact Jo Fletcher—see COA. Estimated room rates imply two-tier inflation: the 1995 Eastercon's £31 and £37 per person in this hotel's double/twin and single rooms (respectively) become £37.50 and £60. [BFSM]

Rumblings • **Intersection**, 1995 Glasgow Worldcon: co-chair Tim Illingworth resigned in December 'following a series of personal and policy disagreements with much of the rest of the board'. Vince Docherty resumes his former co-chair rôle by

e-mail from Oman. A rapid Intersection release praised Tim's past efforts; some thought to detect signs of friction in his response, 'Gee, it's so nice to know that the committee have put out a press release thanking me. It would have been even nicer to have been sent a copy personally.' *Martin Hoare*: 'To lose one chairman may be regarded as a misfortune ... to lose two seems like carelessness.' *Ansible* is nevertheless sure that Intersection remains strong and vital as ever. ● As of Feb 94, Intersection plans a monthly London meeting (3rd Fri, in the Wellington?), open to the public. Watch this space.

Infinitely Improbable

Serious Scientific Sponsorship. Dr Dave Clements gloats over bagging a £750 grant from the government Office of Science & Technology's programme to 'improve public understanding of science'—by luring pro scientists to sf conventions. (Bob Shaw's von Donegan has already applied.) This, the smallest grant of OST's £150,000 kitty, was 100% of the sum requested and has excited disproportionate newspaper publicity (*Telegraph*, 5 Jan). Negotiations with VIBraphone and Sou'Wester are under way. Brush off your degrees, everyone. [AB/DC]

Bad News. 'In November, writers Pat Murphy and Claire Parman Brown were involved in a tragic car crash in Nepal, while returning from a 36-day expedition to the Everest base camp. Claire Brown died in the accident. She had an adventurous, restless spirit, and was always travelling; in recent years she had been to Hong Kong, Alaska, Indonesia, Nepal. She had completed one novel, *Vengeful Souls*, and was working on a second. She was 29. Pat Murphy was injured in the accident, but the extent of her injuries is not at present known.' [CPr]

C.O.A. *Amanda Baker*, 3 Bishop's Court, John Garne Way, Marston Road, Oxford, OX3 0TU. *John Bangsund*, PO Box 1096, Thornbury, Vic 3071, Australia. *Vijay Bowen/Mark Richards*, PO Box 021831, Brooklyn, NY 11202-0039, USA. *Jo Fletcher*, 24 Pearl Rd, Walthamstow, London, E17 4QZ. *Little, Brown & Co*, Brettenham House, Lancaster Place, London, WC2E 7EN. *Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas*, 15 Jansons Rd, Tottenham, London, N15 4JU ('Bourgeois cultural respectability looms'). *Tim Jones*, 87 Ellice St, Mt Victoria, Wellington, NZ. *Andy Richards/Cold Tonnage Books*, 22 Kings Lane, Windlesham, Surrey, GU20 6JQ. *Dick & Leah Smith*, 410 W. Willow Road, Prospect Heights, IL 60070-1250, USA (repeated by request owing to Certain Fanzines which printed the number as 140 or 401, tch-tch).

Hitch-Hiker Movie. Douglas Adams begs for thrilling wonder stories of his series' popularity and ability to induce mass conversions, raises the dead, etc: 'We need to put together an irresistible [*sic*] package to excite potential distributors of the movie of the *Hitch Hiker's Guide* (to be produced by Michael Nesmith).' At first this announcement was wickedly dismissed as a hoax, on the basis that Mr Adams can surely spell 'irresistible'.... Asked if he'd be in control of the movie, he reportedly said: 'Absolutely, I am going to be thoroughly involved.' ● It is revealed that the official Adams fan club term for the great man, based on close study of his autograph, is 'Bop Ad'. [JN]

Tremble, John Major! The National Student SF Association plans to bring the government to its knees with a gigantic London demonstration to protest the ruling that sf is not a 'core activity' for a students' union (i.e. no more funding). Ask Gareth Rees, 29 St Stephen's Place, Cambridge, CB3 0JE.

Galaxy magazine returns this month, edited by E.J.Gold (son of founder H.L.): PO Box 370, Nevada City, CA 95959, USA. Bimonthly; mail subs only; opens with new Sheckley serial.

L.Ron Hubbard goes on forever. His Church of Spiritual Technology 'has designed gas-filled, titanium time capsules to hold Hubbard's teachings, and plans to place 10,500 of the capsules in three vaults, two built to resist earthquakes or nuclear attack.... Hubbard's writings will be preserved on 1.8 million stainless steel plates and his lectures on 187,000 nickel records that could be played back with a stylus as crude as a thorn in the event of some future cataclysm.... [CST] also plans to place large, indestructible obelisks around the world covered with pictographs explaining Scientology "so that even a wandering savage will be able to understand and apply these principles."' [AP via NR] Next, **Mission Earth** will reappear as the

first sf 'megalithology' published on one million obelisks, with truly frightening implications for the future of remaining.

Be Prepared. The New England SF Association notoriously plans for every contingency: 'The rules for other organizations suing the clubhouse were re-stated ...' [*Instant Message* 538]

Tiptree Award. Jeanne Gomoll notes: 'Since all of our judges are American this year, we would appreciate tips about gender-bending overseas fiction of 1993.' Report good stuff to 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704. The Tiptree fundraising sf cookbooks are still available in the UK, from me.

Hazel's Language Lessons. Bislama: *nogud*, bad; *sik nogud*, venereal disease; *kaset nogud*, pornographic cassette; *nogud nomo*, wonderful, fantastic. [KL]

'Enemies of Platt'

The saga of Charles Platt and Harlan Ellison (see *Ansible* 77) developed all sorts of bizarre ramifications as 1993 sputtered out and *The Last Dangerous Visions* entered its 21st or 22nd year of non-publication....

● **Christopher Priest's** polemic *The Last Deadloss Visions* appeared in electronic form, revised and updated—a preview of the new, commercial, printed edition due in April. It has been naughtily pointed out that this will be eligible for the non-fiction Hugo award in 1995.

● A joke **Enemies of Ellison** flyer was circulated in the USA, instantly identifiable by experienced Platt-watchers as the work of our Charles. This was much attacked in electronic forums, often by people who hadn't seen it and took the title at face value. In fact it begins: 'EoE is NOT an organization for those who wish to malign, harass or assault Harlan Ellison. Just the opposite! EoE is for those who have been named as enemies by Mr Ellison, and have been maligned, harassed, or assaulted, purely because (in most cases) they spoke the truth or expressed skepticism re his reputation, craft or self-promotional hype. / If you've received death threats on your answering machine ... if you've been referred to as a "wetbrain" on nationally networked TV ... if Mr Ellison has threatened to "pop you one" next time he sees you ... if he's promised to "sue you into oblivion" ... then EoE is for you!' [c/o Interactive Systems, PO Box 595, Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113, USA]

● **Andrew Porter**, famously mentioned by Mr Ellison on nationally networked TV, was quick to offer EoE a free ½-page ad in *SF Chronicle*.

● **Charles Platt** reluctantly admitted that 'Enemies of Ellison' might have been an unwise choice of name, and has since been referring to this 'support group' as 'Victims of Ellison'. Various treats for members are offered: 'I will be producing badges in due course and will incorporate icons on each badge indicating the abuse specifically suffered by the wearer. Clenched fist to indicate a physical attack, lips whispering into an ear to indicate badmouthing, and so forth.' [CPJ]

● **Ansible** thought the original flyer was reasonably amusing; but actually producing the badges, bimonthly newsletters, etc, all begins to seem a trifle obsessive. Charles: there is life after Harlan Ellison!

● **Harlan Ellison** himself wisely made no direct comment (that I know of), but his pal Barry R. Levin the Californian book dealer came up with a new angle: 'Dear Mr Platt: Do you want to be remembered as the man who *murdered* Harlan Ellison? Do you know how very bad his heart condition really is? Your little prank newsletter may be a joke to you, but the news of it is bound to set Harlan off—and that in his present condition could easily kill him. Is that what you really want?'

It is not known whether Mr Levin has counselled Mr Ellison against other exertions very nearly as strenuous as reading newsletters, such as blowing his top on networked TV, denouncing his perceived enemies in high-profile con appearances, etc. I'm sure that Mr Ellison, champion of free speech, would not endorse the implied ruling that a controversial figure can say anything he likes, as loudly as he likes, while owing to his state of health no one may respond with similar rude vigour.

Sf would be duller if fans weren't free to express such feisty sentiments as '[William Shatner] would screw a sheep in the window of Bloomingdale's if you gave him the chance' or 'Gene Roddenberry was a lying sack of shit ... a scum bag' or 'If you can't kick cripples, who can you kick? I mean, that's the whole point of cripples ...' (all from Harlan Ellison's Oct 93 Comicfest talk, according to *The Comics Journal*). [RH]