

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE FANTASY AMATEUR
PRESS ASSOCIATION

October 5, 1944

From the Presidential Office:

Dear Member:

As this is being written, the returns on the special ballot included with the September mailing are trickling in. I wish there were some form of black magic feasible, by means of which I could place a geas upon all of you who have not bothered to return your ballots to take them out, read over the proposed legislation, ponder carefully, then indicate your preference in the matter by voting. This is truly your organization and certainly if it is worth your yearly \$1 dues, it is also worth the time to mark a ballot according to your own convictions on the proposals put forward and invest in a 3¢ stamp and an envelope. After all, democratic standards, such as we have in FAPA, can't mean very much unless the wide powers given to the membership in our constitution are exercised.

Don't delay -- do it now.

Sincerely,

Your President,
Robert W. Lowndes

NOTES UPON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Dear FAPA Members:

I'm speaking now, merely as a member giving forth opinions.

An open letter from several members in Los Angeles deploras the presentation of the proposed amendments in the September mailing, stating that insufficient time for discussion was allotted. Frankly, I don't get their point in regard to these proposals.

Let's take the proposed article 13, first of all. In past mailings, there have been numerous discussions on the matter of obscene material, and the danger to the organization its inclusion in official mailings (or on publications bearing the organization's credit) such matter can easily entail. As the constitution stands now, there is no provision for the exclusion of such material, nor is any officer given authority to deal with such. Now it would take only one slip, coming to the attention of the Post Office to put FAPA behind the 8-ball -- and such a matter might come to the PO's attention at any time -- the forthcoming mailing might well contain the item which did the dirty work. If this proposed amendment (or rather article is passed) we can rest assured that every precaution against such a slip will be taken.

The subject of racism has also been discussed for some time in the mailings. This proposed article would be a form of action.

There are those who may feel that, regardless of the desirability of racial propaganda, an official ban upon it in the mailings would constitute a breach of the individual's freedom of expression. Let's look into that.

In the first place freedom of speech, or of the press, has always been restricted to a certain extent. You are all aware of libel laws, which exist for the purpose of protecting people from irrespons-

ble slander in written form, and from false accusation of crime or from character-assassination. Now racism is perhaps as vicious a form of mass character-assassination as can be imagined. It brands a man, or woman, groups, or nations, as inferior beings, evil or immoral and malicious creatures sheerly upon the grounds that they are members of a given race. According to racist propaganda, all Negroes are inferior, sub-human creatures, basically and integrally unworthy of the rights of American citizens solely because they are Negroes. Likewise, all Jews are incurably evil and sinister beings, responsible for most of the ills that beset us, dangerous elements in any society, sheerly because they are Jewish. By these standards, no Negro could possibly hope to be more than a slave; no Jew could possibly be a respectable or worthy human being, because some mysterious element in the blood makes him what he is. Racist slanders also affect many other peoples, such as the Germans, the Japanese, the Italians, the Chinese and so on.

If this proposed article is passed, the members of FAPA will have forfeited only the right (?) to this type of cowardly attack. (I say cowardly advisably, because it admits of no defense: persecution on political, economic, or religious grounds is bad enough -- but at least a poor man can get some money; a person can change their political or religious affiliations upon conviction of error -- but no man can change the color of his skin, or the racial heritage of his parents -- even if he were convinced that they were wrong and desired to do so.)

Some members seem to feel that this racist plank is directed against Jack Speer, who has been outspoken in racial attacks upon Negroes. That is true only to a limited degree -- since Jack does make such attacks, this article would affect him. But it does not single brother Speer out, for, if passed, it would be applicable to all. Would this mean, however, that no one could criticise Negroes, Jews, Germans, Japanese, etc in FAPA? By no means. If brother Speer wishes to state that he does not like certain things about Negroes he has known or observed, he is perfectly free to say so. It restricts him in one respect only: he may not state or imply that these (to him) undesirable things are common to all people whose skins are black -- or that having a black skin automatically places a person beyond the pale of American rights.

One member seems to think that the passage of this article would bar anti-Nazi or anti-Japanese discussions from the mailings. This is speciously absurd. Nazism is not a racial matter; there is no Nazi race. And as far as attacking the Japanese goes, the restriction again would go only so far as the Japanese as a race are concerned; it would not preclude attack on any specific government, or official attitude of Nippon -- or any matter which is subject to change.

The Los Angelenos are under the impression that passage of the proposed article would be a step toward severe censorship in the mailings. I think I have already shown the inaccuracy of that opinion. For, you will note, that outside of the specific items of racism and obscene matter, this proposed article bars censorship of material in the mailings. It insures the right of all members to dissertate upon any subject (except the two barred) whether or not they are concerned with fantasy and/or science fiction.

I might add that, in regard to the obscene matter, it is the Los Angeles crowd, outside of some material from Canada, who have been the offenders in recent mailings. (However, don't take this as a con-

denation of them; they've apologized for it, and I myself have erred in past years. I merely mentioned it because it seems strange to me that, under these circumstances, they should object to taking action in the matter.)

In regard to the proposed amendment to article 9 -- it's either a case of adjusting the situation now or waiting another year. It isn't all-important, I'll grant. As I've said before, I haven't heard of any mailings having been lost. However, let me point out again that the Post Office is going to be even more short-handed than before this year. There is more possibility of mailings being lost in the 1944 Xmas rush than before. And if there should be only 65 copies of any particular item in that mailing -- and someone's package doesn't arrive, then that member is out of luck. The other proposed changes incorporated in this amendment would help straighten out election proceedings. As we know, there was something of a muddle this year, and a lot of people may have become unduly excited and gone off half-cocked. However, a lack of proper machinery was just as much to blame as any fault on the part of any individuals in question.

The proposed revision of article 12 is certainly needed if we are to have in actuality the democratic organization we suppose we have. Regardless of his desirability, the fact remains that Claude Degler was expelled by 19 votes, against 14 nays. True, a majority sent in ballots, but the effect was of 19 speaking for 61 eligibles.

However, this amendment would not effect the election of officers, as the constitution provides that a plurality shall elect and does not require that a majority return ballots. Perhaps something should be done to make voting in elections mandatory upon all members who wish to renew their membership in the organizations but that is neither here nor there in the present instance. This proposed amendment would affect only the matter of impeachment of officers, over-riding the acts of officers, or suspension of sections of the constitution in specific cases without affecting a repeal of same -- most noteworthy to date in the business of suspending the privileges of a member, which amounts to expulsion. The proposed revision would make it necessary for a majority of the members to vote yes upon such proceedings, and provides for a square deal to the officer or member in question.

Still speaking unofficially, I believe these proposals to be sound legislation and suggest a yes vote upon them. However, I can't reiterate the plea that all members vote, one way or another as their individual opinions impel, to frequently.

Oh for a goose!

fraternally,

Doc Lowndes