



DON-O-SAVR

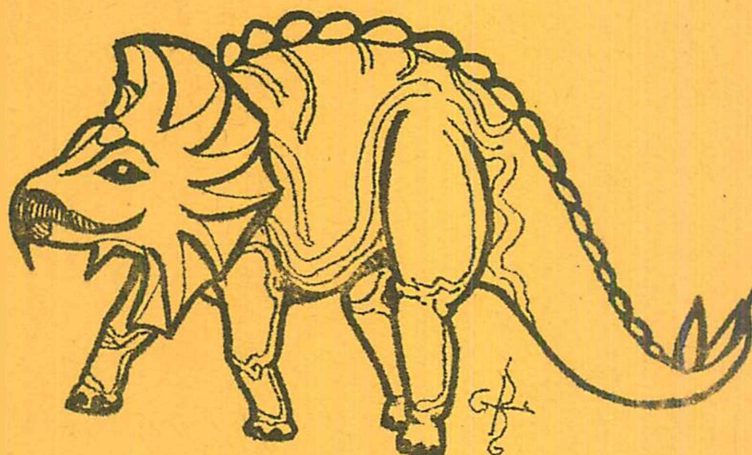
DON-O-SAUR

Number 31

Vol. III No. 7

April 1974

Published monthly by Don Thompson,
7498 Canosa Ct., Westminster, CO 80030.
Available at 25¢ per issue or 12 for
\$2.50, OR in exchange for other
fanzines, letters of comment or
artwork. And I changed my mind;
instead of cutting back on my
mailing list, I've decided to
let it grow, aiming at a circu-
lation of over 200 so I can take
advantage of the bulk rate on
third class mail. So a lot of
people will be getting this issue
who have never heard of D o-S
before. If you want to catch up
on the conversation, back issues are
available from No. 22 on.

[illegible]

Is anyone going to object vehemently if I decline to follow the pattern that has been developing in D-o-S--namely four to six pages of often discursive discourse, followed by locs or fanzine reviews?

Whether anyone objects or not, I'm going to break that pattern simply because this time it seems more natural to start with the locs. There's a good chance that my comments on some of the letters will lead into one (or more) of my typical discourses. We'll see.

Norman Hochberg
89-07 209 St.
Queens Village
N.Y. 11427

Say, aren't you the Don who I'm supposed to say, "Say, aren't you the Don who publishes that neat-oh fanzine that came out all of a sudden and where have you been so long?" about? You aren't?

Oh, well, I won't say it.

[But wait! Yes, yes! That's me! I think it's me. DO say it!]

D.O.S-C 28/29 bopped in recently and I just want to say thanks. Thanks for the zines, thanks for the thoughts and thanks for your editorials. The piece in 28 was simply wonderful.

Oh, yeah, there probably really is an energy crisis. But we've sort of known it had to happen. Sure the oil companies are profiteering and there are probably unbound illegalities. But one good thing that may come out of all this is a sense of energy consciousness on our parts. Maybe the rush to small cars and lower heating temperatures will stick with us. That would stretch out our energy reserves.

I think it would be deliciously wonderful if the American public conserved to such a great degree that after the shortage ended the gas companies couldn't sell as much gas.

Oh well. It'll never happen.

[Oh, it might, but the companies wouldn't lose any money; they would be permitted to raise their rates sufficient to make up any loss they might have suffered through a decline in sales. In fact, that's already happening. The power companies' profits declined during the winter because people kept their thermostats turned down, so now the rates are going up].

Don & Margaret Thompson ...We were staggered a bit to get Don-o-Saur because
 8786 Hendricks Road we'd not come across you before... And we loved your
 Mentor, Ohio 44060 comment that you were not only not the Don Thompson,
 you weren't the other Don Thompson.

In encouragement, I'll point out that my Don went through that phase too.
 (And people asked him whether he wrote the stories that appeared in If and
Galaxy. After some checking, he was told that it was the other Don Thompson
 (fan) who had written them. Isn't it marvelous? In that case, it was the
other Don Thompson who wasn't even the other Don Thompson).

I will pause to get my thoughts untwisted.

[And I'm glad she did because I was getting thoroughly confused myself,
 and I'm still not sure I followed that all the way through. Just so
 we understand that I wrote those If and Galaxy stories].

You might, of course, adopt an additional "h"--as did one of the Bob Stewarts:
 Dhon Thompson. But that's a little much, I think. Seems to me that if the
 world can survive the onus of one Richard Nixon, it can survive the blessing
 of three Don Thompsons in sfandom. (Oh, not everyone would call it a bless-
 ing, I suppose; but then, not everyone has taste).

You can tell Tony Cvetko that the Don Thompson who reviews sf and other books
 for the Cleveland Press is The Don Thompson, though. (Not that the two Dons
 work for Scripps Howard papers; I'm sure that Means Something). (Scripps
 Howard papers got taste; that must be it).

You have all sorts of delicious comment hooks floating around, and I'll have
 to restrain myself forcefully from latching on to some. Such as mentioning
 admiration for your realizing the problem of alcoholism and doing something
 about it. Don and I are both close to some alcoholics (though, praise be,
 we're nowhere near such a state ourselves), and it's so rough to see someone
 heading into the situation and not be able to do anything about it. It's most
 cheering to see someone who sees it and acts. (We're not total abstainers--
 but I don't like the buzz I get after a few and I'm inclined to make an idiot
 of myself without liquor. I hate to add a handicap. And we just can't afford
 to keep much beer/wine/liquor around, anyway).

I think people will make a lot of personal sacrifices and go through a lot
 of personal inconvenience in an emergency. They may even find a certain maso-
 chistic pleasure in it. But they've got to feel there is an emergency--and
 they've got to see other people making similar sacrifices and experiencing sim-
 ilar inconveniences. When a leader talks with great gravity about how every-
 one will have to stop using unnecessary fuel--and immediately launches upon
 a barnstorming tour and jets off on vacation immediately after that-- Well,
 no one else is going to pitch in, either.

Regarding militarism vs. pacifism: Seems to me there is one alternative to
 the all-volunteer army. That is a universal draft--and I do mean universal.
 Everyone who has not already put in time in active service of the country
 would be lined up (figuratively) to do so. But, you see, here's the hitch:
 For almost the first time in history, the concept of service to country would
 not mean exclusively the concept of bleeding/dying/killing for the country.
 It would mean doing what was needed--helping in hospitals, giving blood,
 doing stenographic work, picking up the roadside litter, maintaining parklands,
 raising essential but unprofitable crops, etc. (In the process, everyone
 would be filtered through processing which would identify the people who, in
 turn, needed help from the government--educational, physical, etc). Would
 be nice to have service to the nation mean service to the nation, wouldn't
 it? Or at least it'd be Different...

[The letter, as I suspect you were able to figure out, was written by Maggie. Don did add a post script:]

Note you are Don C. Thompson. I am Don A. Thompson, other is Don B. Thompson. That seems neat, more so since I come first in the listing; though I must admit I prefer being known as the REAL Don Thompson.

Maggie's idea of the Universal Service draft interests me. A couple of years ago (or was it longer?) back when the matter of ending the draft was a debatable issue, I used to encourage my English classes to discuss it. (We occasionally talk about English in my English classes, but not often). Generally the sentiment was strongly in favor of ending the draft, though there were always a few students who were able to point out the pitfalls of an all-volunteer military. At a certain point in the discussion, I would propose universal service as a compromise or alternative. I was always surprised and a little dismayed by the vehemence of the reaction. Virtually nobody was in favor of it. As long as the subject was just the military draft, the girls in the class took very little part in the debate; it was a matter of purely academic interest to them; if they spoke up it was in behalf of their brothers or boyfriends. When I suggested the concept of universal service--the idea that everyone, male and female, at a certain age, should be required to contribute a year or two of service to the country--the girls were among the loudest and fiercest in expressing opposition. The boys who had been willing to go along with the military draft (because they had at least a chance of avoiding it) were totally against universal service.

Some of the students admitted quite honestly that their opposition was purely selfish; they simply didn't want their lives disrupted by one or two years of work that would probably be unrelated to their career interests. Others rationalized it as a matter of principle: it would be giving the government even more control over their lives than it already had; it was another step toward totalitarianism; it would serve to reinforce the spirit of nationalism at a time when the great need of civilization was for internationalism. (That might have been a powerful argument except that the student who advanced it was not receptive to the idea of an international service draft either. He approved of the idea of the Peace Corps but strongly felt it should be strictly voluntary.

So I don't know. It's easy for me to be in favor of universal service, either national or international (and I DO favor it), because I'm over the probable age limit. But as far as I can tell, from my very random and very unscientific sampling, the people in the age group that would be affected are not likely to welcome such a program.

Sometimes in the discussions, I would suggest that there seemed to be very little idealism among today's youth because they preferred compulsory military service to compulsory creative service, but they sometimes managed to turn that point against me: I was the one lacking in idealism because I was assuming that there wouldn't be enough creative service volunteers to do the necessary jobs if a volunteer program were set up.

I had no reply to that.

Here's another letter:

Robert Coulson
Route 3
Hartford City, IN 47348

I find it a bit startling that there are not only two Don Thompsons in fandom, but that both are newspapermen. [And both with Scripps-Howard; don't forget that].... A couple of issues back [of YANDRO], I speculated idly on fannish reaction to the energy crisis. Since fans are mostly liberal-oriented, they mostly favor ecology, the banning of polluting

factories, etc. Since I'm cynically oriented, I suspected that they might achieve a rapid reversal if they were asked to give up mimeo paper because of

the paper shortage, abandon conventions to save gasoline, etc. Personally I think the electric power companies are the biggest goddamned hypocrites in the country --except maybe Nixon. On the one hand they say that if they aren't allowed to build new power plants wherever they happen to want them, the increasing demand for power will cause more and more brownouts, discomfort, etc. On the other hand, they're pushing the sale of all-electric homes, electric toothbrushes, electric carving knives, etc., ad nauseum. Well, maybe I'd add the oil company executives to the list of People The Nation Could Most Do Without. (Not the companies themselves; just the present management).

Of course, the electric typewriter doesn't draw all that much juice--not compared to a stove, heater, tv, iron or refrigerator. On the other hand, I firmly believe that electric typewriters are Evil anyway and I wouldn't mourn their loss. On the third hand -- fans are Slans -- Juanita is devoted to her electric.

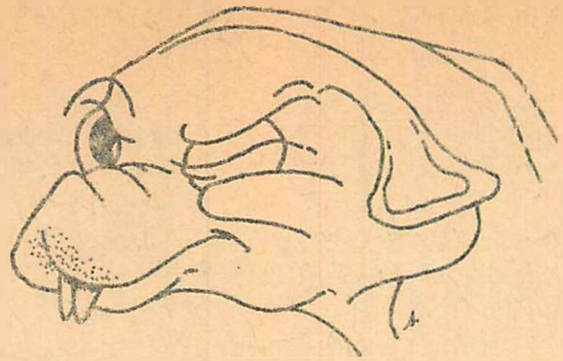
I enjoyed your comments on marriage, etc. Main thing about marriage is to marry someone you want to live with, not just go to bed with, and then to be tolerant. In our case Juanita has to use most of the tolerance, but then everyone knows what a nasty individual I am; ask Warren Johnson or Henry Bitman if you don't believe me. Anyway, suffice to say that in our case, by all the rules of the marriage guidebooks Juanita and I should have got a divorce years ago. We're even astrologically incompatible. (Walter Breen worked out something that "explains" that last, but I notice that astrologers can always find something that will explain observed abnormalities in the system).

Gad, we have a son named Bruce too. He'd better not let me catch him getting into drugs though -- not that I'd do anything to him except point out what a damned idiot he was making of himself. I tend to point out idiocies rather forcefully. I also tend to agree with the theory my parents used to raise me; very strict policies when I was young. No getting my own way, no being spoiled, praise when I did something right and punishment when I did something wrong. Then when I was old enough to take out the family car I was told that I was a presumably intelligent being, that if I hadn't learned proper behavior by now I was never going to, and to not wake up the family when I came in. (And the only time I caught hell was one night when I did wake them up). Of course, I agree with this because I think I turned out pretty well; other people may not agree. (Personally, I'm rather proud of being a nasty S.O.B.)

--Buck

I've got another letter coming up in a little while on the subject of drugs and child rearing, so I'll save the main body of my comments until then. But I don't think there's any very deep disagreement between me and Buck Coulson on this matter, particularly if he would agree that different kids have different needs, and that while a given technique of child rearing might work beautifully for one kid, it could be totally inappropriate for another. My major point is that if a parent hasn't succeeded in influencing a child properly when the kid is young, any attempts to do it in late adolescence are wasted effort-- which is just what Buck was saying.

WRITE!



Robert C. Peterson
2845 S. Gilpin St.
Denver, CO 80210

Denver is doing well in the fanzine business these days. Your mag reminds me of Ackerman's old time mag Voice of the Imagination (VOM for short). I only got in on the tail end of it and have only two or three issues in my collection. It was, as you may know, a letter-zine exclusively and ended shortly after World War II. Will be interested to see if you keep yours mostly a letter-zine or use articles or what....

Well, this particular issue, anyway, has a good start on being strictly a letterzine, though I still have hopes of departing from that format thish, and I certainly have no intention of letting that become an established pattern. My main concern is to keep Don-o-Saur loose-- to avoid a fixed mold; I never know in advance what's going to be any issue, and I'd prefer that the readers don't get the feeling that they know what to expect.

Here's that letter I mentioned earlier:

Darrell Schweitzer
113 Deepdale Rd.
Strafford, Pa. 19087

. . . Your comments on how to handle a drug "problem" appall me. I'm not one to say that marijuana carefully used (as opposed to abused or overused) is wrong. The legal aspects of it are the individual's problem. I don't allow any at my parties. However, this matter of letting anyone get away with more than that is dangerous. Haven't you seen or heard of ruined lives brought on by drugs? First there are the accidents, the bad trips that result in insanity, Art Linkletter's daughter trying to fly, etc. Then there are things like amphetamine depression, the inevitable physical decay from heroin, too much speed, the loss of initiative, reasoning ability, etc. And there are the social aspects, which are probably the most important: the drug user uses drugs rather than facing his problems. He becomes a cripple, and needs drugs to do what other people do naturally. Like the high school student who smokes pot to get through the aggravation of the day, to stave off the boredom. If he's stoned in class (common occurrence in local high schools) he doesn't notice that he isn't learning anything. He will probably be sufficiently apathetic to ignore the fact that he's failing. He'll also take speed (amazing how common that stuff is) to get through his gym classes. Then pot to counteract the speed afterwards. A sleeping pill to go to sleep at night. This isn't true "addiction" but it's a sad kind of dependency. If nothing else, it eats up an enormous amount of the kid's income. And he's using his drugs to hide from the world. They are all that really concern him, and he chooses his friends (if they can be called that) by how much dope they have around. Socially he is a nonentity. His maturation process is arrested. Yet he isn't technically "insane" and he isn't addicted to anything. His life is probably ruined though, and if not he certainly has wasted many years. I know lots of kids like that. Some go into drug pushing and crime. Some become vegetables. Few have a very bright future.

Still I think it is possible for marijuana to be used properly, as alcohol is. (By the way, I don't drink, so don't say I'm justifying my habit). There's nothing wrong with drinking at parties, or even getting drunk, provided you don't drive. Likewise with getting stoned. But the potential for abuse is so enormous that we can't afford to make drugs any more available. There are enough pitiful human wrecks caused by alcohol; do you want more caused by other things?

I have a friend who works for a suicide prevention agency. Probably a majority of his cases are drug-related. The reason is that the person has hidden behind drugs as long as he can, but in the end his problems, which have gone uncorrected all this time, catch up with him. Drugs seem like the easy way out. (Remember The Lotus Eaters?) I could tell you lots of horror

stories: the three boys who died in their room with the record player going so their mother didn't discover them for hours; the guy who gouged his eyes out while on LSD; the time my friend slit somebody's windpipe open in an attempt to revive an OD case who had stopped breathing. . . No, go read the papers. Watch closely the people you know. Consider the difference between the people who take drugs because they enjoy them and the ones who take them because they need them. If they stick at it long enough they'll inevitably become dependent. The temptation to take the easy way out of things is too great.

Pitifully weak things, these humans.

[Okay. Weak. Pitifully. But are muscles developed by outlawing exercise? People can get hurt on parallel bars. X number of high school athletes are killed every year on football fields. Or if you want to talk about horror stories and ruined lives, let's talk about automobile accidents. The number of kids who OD is miniscule compared to the number wiped out in car crashes. Should we outlaw motor vehicles?

[Those are just analogies and maybe not very good ones, though I think they make the point: how far should the government go in protecting the individual from himself?

[But let's drop the analogies and the generalities and bring it down to the specific case. I was talking only about my son, Bruce, and what I did (or did not do) when he told me he was experimenting with drugs; and I don't see that Darrell's letter suggests any concrete alternative. What should I have done? Beaten him? Turned him over to the police? Disowned him? What?

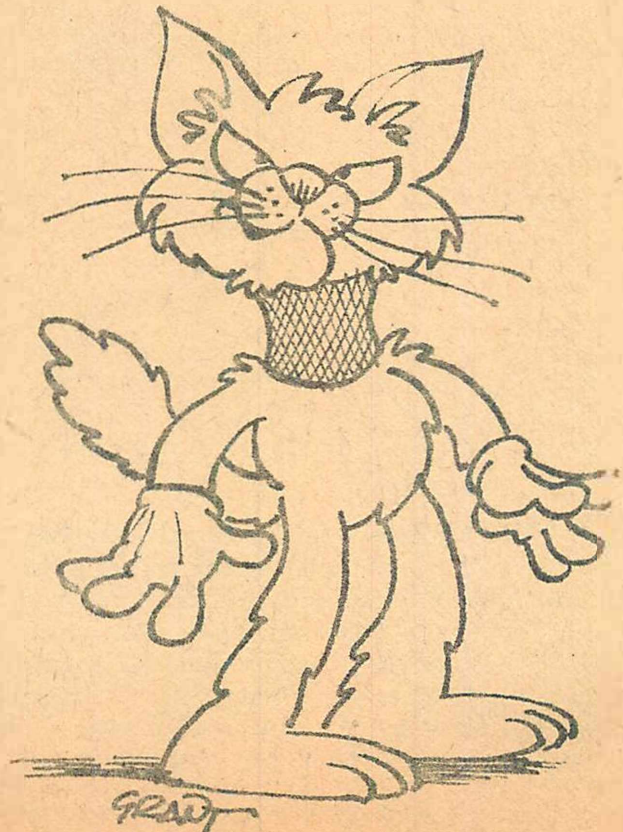
[I'll make a confession here: If Bruce's case had turned out as one of the horror stories that Darrell cites, I would have hated myself for the rest of my life for not having done something to stop him. I can afford to be smug because with him it turned out well. But I have another son entering high school next year, and I won't be completely surprised if he sooner or later decides to experiment with drugs. What will I do if he does? I really don't know. I just don't know. I'll wait and see.])

Grant Canfield
28 Atalaya Terrace
San Francisco, CA
94117

Yours is the
most interesting
personalzine--if
I may call it that
--to come my way

in a long time. I only hope it continues to come my way. I'm very rushed at the moment: it seems like I always am. Otherwise I'd write a nice loc, possibly entering some of your discussions. In lieu of that, I'll enclose a drawing of my cat, before she convinced me to take off the goddamn flea collar. If you can use it in your publication, you are free to do so; if not, please return it. I hope to see more Don-o-Saurs, and I hope to be able to contribute more in the future.

[Needless to say, I hope so too. And I'm always glad to welcome another cat-lover aboard]



And speaking of cat lovers, here's a nice letter from Mike Glicksohn, which touches on that subject among others:

Mike Glicksohn
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M6P 2S3

Dear Don

I suspect you merely think that locs are more popular than fanzine reviews because far more people send you locs than send you fanzine reviews. So here is a fanzine review:

PLAIN POPCORN is a two-page personalzine from Richard Labonte destined for the new Canadian apa which Richard seems to feel is called CAPRA. It's been a looooooong time since the last Labonte zine, and this effort makes that lack all the harder to accept. Richard writes very well (he is, after all, a professional journalist, although that doesn't seem to help some other southwestern US faneds I could name) [I'm just typing this; I'm not paying the least bit of attention to what this character is saying; any insults or slurs will just slide off me like water off a duck] . . . In this maiden effort (seven Fannish Trivia points to the first three people to correctly identify

Richard's last fanzine) he talks about the wonderful trash available to him thru the world of movies.

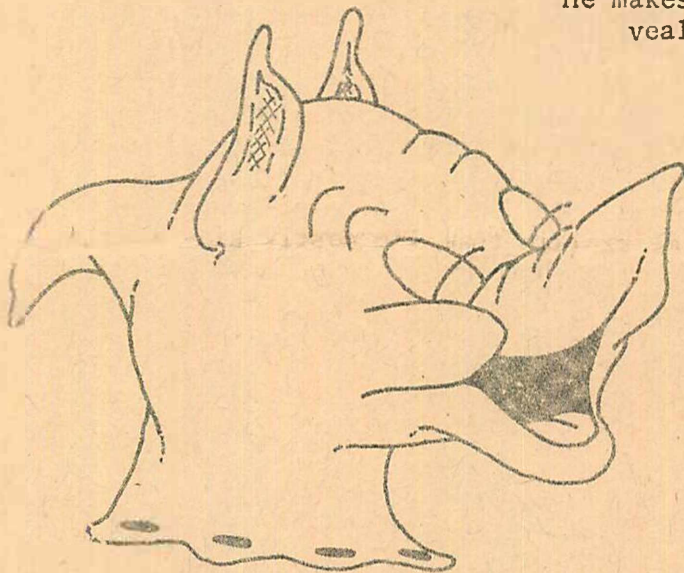
He makes a good point for bad movies, and reveals himself to be highly knowledgeable in this field. Typed on the

Browns' Selectric and seemingly Xeroxed off, this is merely competent in terms of

production, but the material is thought-provoking and

interesting and I

for one am glad to see Richard publishing again.



Yeah, heh, heh...
Some of my best
friends are DONOSAURS!

How's that? BRING BACK THE FANZINE REVIEWS, say I . . .

[Oh, all right, I probably will. I never had any intention of dropping them permanently or entirely. It's just that I don't like to commit myself to do fanzine reviews in a certain issue ahead of time. I prefer to let them creep in naturally and unexpectedly and spontaneously, as yours just did].

Your discourse was again superb. Honest, interesting, amusing, intelligent. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Having just recently separated from my wife, I suppose it was particularly relevant for me. I'm afraid my own interest in politics is a big far zero, but the attitudes you describe carry over to many other activities, and there is a great deal of truth in what you say. I kept finding myself thinking "I wish I'd written that" and I guess that's about the highest compliment I can pay. With it and an extensive course in the Famous Writers' School you can get a job selling newspapers...

[I am blushing furiously as I write this, both because of that (uncharacter-

istically) kind and generous compliment and for reasons you will understand as you read further. In order for the next paragraph of Mike's letter to be comprehensible, it will be necessary for me to repeat a portion of the loc he wrote last month. It began, as you may recall, with these stirring words:

"Listen, you festering pile of parrot droppings! Your kind make me puke! You vaccuous, toffee-nosed, malodorous pervert!!..."

And now it is my painful duty to print the second paragraph of Mike's letter from last month, which I edited out. Here's how it went:

"Actually, though, he explained in his usual mild-mannered inoffensive, puppyishly-eager-to-please tone of voice, the above paragraph is drawn mostly from a brilliant Monty Python sketch. Why I don't scarcely know what them words mean, for shuck's sake..."

Okay, now we're ready to pick up from THIS month's letter, which will now make some sense to you -- maybe.]

Nice job of selective editing there, boy! I don't mind you eliminating the disclaimer; if you want to develop a schtick that I'm mean and horrible, that is okay, but cutting the reference to Monty Python will leave the impression that I was trying to pass that prose off as my own, which isn't quite fair. A contentious pigheaded idiot I may be, but I'm not a plagiarist...

[Everybody straightened out on that now? I would be if I knew who Monty Python is. (I am braced for Mike's withering scorn as he condescends to enlighten me. If he does). Ah well. Here's his reference to cat lovers:]

Listen, for the record, would you let me explain that I'm mostly kidding about cats? I just have a perverted sense of humour and love to watch how irate cat-lovers get when someone denigrates felines. I just spent a week with some friends in Iowa and their cat and I got along famously. But there is something ludicrous about how emotional cat fanciers can get if you cast slurs upon the beasts. If someone says snakes are horrible slimy creatures, I might try to educate them, but I wouldn't get upset about it. Many cat lovers do, though.

. . .Great work. Love it. Hold the movie rights for me

Bruce D. Arthurs Boooo, hissss! Spending six pages on marriage and
57th Trans. Co. politics, then admitting you only did it for some in-
Fort Lee, VA 23801 finitismal reason! You had that punchline in mind all
 the time, didn't you?

I think that I preferred the longer style of locs, myself; get more out of them, you know?

Bit of an off issue, I thought. Sorry.

[What infinitismal reason? What punchline? But I think I know what Bruce is talking about--sort of. When I was writing last month's zine it did actually occur to me to wonder if anyone was going to feel cheated because the point made at the conclusion of the discourse might seem rather minor considering the length of the detour that led to it. It's almost a relief to learn that someone did feel cheated. It's even more of a relief to know that most readers apparently did not. The following letter counterbalances Bruce's note].

John Robinson
1-101st Street
Troy, NY 12180

Discourse on and on, on and on, on and on. Your meanderings are just about as entertaining as anything I've seen in fmz. It takes a Bob Tucker or a

Ray Nelson to do better and that is a seldom occurrence.

I was wondering there awhile if all your loose threads were going to come back together -- they did. What could have developed into a never-ending Proustian conglomeration got itself wrapped up quite neatly.

How do you do it? And do you think you can continue doing it?

I say probably. It's only when you exercise your memory that you realize how much is there and how it relates to your everyday life. You don't need a psychiatrist or a counselor; just start talking about "I remember when..." and a good ear for listening to yourself will accomplish the rest. Why, the things that I suddenly realize about myself discoursing on this and that and the other. I'll be watching your technique and preparing my plagiarizations. As Lester del Rey said at Torcon 2: Mediocre writers imitate. Great writers steal!

How does it feel to know that at least one of your writers is leaning forward over your perszine looking for material?

[Proud and humble, and like figuratively thumbing my nose at Bruce Arthurs and saying: nhyaa, nhyaa, nhyaa!]

Ann Chamberlain . . . Lots o' those people who used to say "No more
3464 Wilson Ave "C" chance'n a n [redacted] at election" would have been sur-
Oakland, CA 94602 prised to find out that a couple of incarnations ago
they were in black bodies themselves. Everybody has
to have a few embodiments in every nationality for experience. I can't prove
it -- it just makes sense to me, but who can disprove it?

I don't worry about women's lib. I am in a female body and that's fine with me. I've done as much sacrificing for the good of humanity at large, in male embodiments and I believe I am fair with both, but not much in love with either. Mysticism is seeing and not seeing. GOOD. You learn about MORE ways of seeing things. Form, size, color and weight artistically combined, ah, to be desired.

P.S. LSD plays hell with your pituitary.

Jackie Franke ...I enjoyed the hell out of your natterings this
Box 51 A RR 2 issue (#30). One of the most deviously circuitous
Beecher, IL 60401 that I've seen in some time, but managing to be in-
formative and entertaining at the same time.

There's no way to echo Ted Peak's remarks strongly enough to match my agreement with them. Suffice it to say that when people write of and about themselves, their similarities to some metaphysical common chord that runs through many in fandom is struck; recognized; and helps bind us together. If we can share a bit of ourselves, indeed We Are Not Alone.

An effete creep with balls -- only a fan would come up with a concept like that! Mike, it won't work. It's a well known fact that feline haters have no redeeming virtues whatever . . . or isn't humor a virtue?

Perhaps Jodie isn't feeling put out by the small changes saving energy has made in her lifestyle--but then I don't picture the Offuts as being an energy-guzzling family. Since Andy's lucky enough to work at home they're bound to be using less than their share of gasoline already.

...Somehow I have doubts that con attendance will be severely affected by the gas shortage. If fans can "enjoy" themselves packing 40 people into a 12 X 18 ft room, why cramming six to ten passengers into a Honda Civic to get to such luxurious digs wouldn't even be worth calling an inconvenience!

Good reading in Donny, glad to see it -- even if it is disgustingly punctual --

Jodie Offutt
Funny Farm
Haldeman, KY 40329

All right. We'll call them discourses. You probably write the most interesting and enjoyable discourses of any in the fanzines I read. It is very hard to write personal stuff for very long without becoming tiresome and self-indulgent. Not to mention boring. You are none of the above. I agree with whoever else said it: we are being fanzinereviewed to death.

Our backgrounds are very similar (substitute Irish Catholic for Baptist). And I have listened to our congressman (Carl Perkins) talk for thirty minutes at a stretch without saying a damned thing. Amazing; you have to admire that in an odd sort of way.

Oh God! Why doesn't somebody publish a petzine so all the animal comments could be contained in one fanzine? We were at some friends' house the other night and they had four pups, one of which they wanted to give us. I told them that since I was driving, andy would have to hold the dog and if it peed on his suede jacket, andy would probably shit in his pants. Then I would have the whole mess to clean up. We didn't take the dog.

I'll tell you why I think there's not been much talk about the energy crisis in fandom: most fans already car-pool, hitch rides, and ride buses to cons. They're (for the most part) a skimpy bunch who save their \$\$ to spend at art shows and huckster rooms.

Don D'Amassa
19 Angell Drive
E. Prov., RI 02914

You are probably right
that the world is run
by conspiracies, an
uncountable number of

conspiracies, many of which encompasses conspirators who don't even recognize themselves as such. Government is just one contender, and has the disadvantage of being recognized as one such, where many other groups are recognized only subliminally if at all.

There is an interesting argument that I've never been able to resolve to my own satisfaction. The problem is: Do you elect representatives to simply convey the majority opinion of their constituents, or do you instead elect the man's judgmental ability, assuming that he has more time, inclination, and (perhaps) intelligence to deal with the matters of government that you do? If it's the former case, then representatives should listen closely to their constituents. If the latter, they should listen but be unswayed.

[Roger Sween has some rather positive observations on just this question coming up pretty soon; I intend to take an active part in this discussion when I get to his letter].

You speak of the postal service. Let me tell you about it. While I was stationed in Vietnam, and later in Oklahoma, my mail was regularly opened, apparently because of certain political activities I was engaged in. Now they've either forgotten me or their techniques are more clever, because my mail no longer appears to be open. But last week I received half of a letter from Ken Budka, with a note from the Cleveland PO saying it had been chewed up in a machine. Then I got a SON OF THE WSFA JOURNAL from Don Miller, in several pieces, with a note from the Baltimore PO saying it had been damaged while handling. Then I got a package at work, with two holes punched clear through it, with a note from the New Haven PO saying it had been damaged during routine handling. And yesterday I got a package from Rose Hogue, which had apparently been folded in half. Improved postal service, huh?

[Such horror stories abound. SOMETHING has got to be done. But what?]



Roger Sween
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. . . After skimming #30, I thought you were discussing religion, but when I read it I found that was only part of the matter so close to your heart. What you really were discussing was the nature of representative government. I agree with you that fanac is just as important politically as active campaign participation, because politics stems from philosophy and philosophy is carried de rerum natura in fanzines whether the editor articulates it or not or is consistent or not. I, of course, prefer an articulate, consistent approach to everything. And the basic issue of the day is not Watergate, energy, or whatever--these are only symptoms of a root question--the basic question is what ought to be the aim of government.

...You see that the public should be consulted; although you are somewhat facetious about this, I suspect you mean it. The function of representatives, however, should not be to act as a poll taker; they should not, and most likely can not, parrot the desires of their constituents in Congress. The complicated issues of our times require dedicated study and concentrated thought. However much a representative may be informed as to his constituents' wishes, it is up to him to make up his own mind. Should Congress have to decide upon impeachment, can you imagine every constituent sitting down and reading the millions of words in the hearings of the Watergate committee?

[No. In fact, I can't even imagine every congressman reading all that testimony. But I am pretty sure that this is one issue where the representatives will be paying closer attention to the views of their constituents than to the factual record. The matter will be decided, I venture to predict, not on the objective guilt or innocence of the president, but on whether or not a majority of the people believe he is guilty. Note that I am not saying that Congress is always or even usually that responsive to the wishes of the people; and I am sure as hell not saying it should be. But impeachment is a very special case. But I consider this almost irrelevant to one of the major points I had in mind with last month's discourse. I suspect, Roger, as I'll try to show after I let you finish, that you and I are either talking about different things or at least we have strikingly different outlooks on the same subject. Go ahead and finish now. I'll shut up until you're through]

The representatives must make their decisions not entirely on fact, but also on the basis of values. My objection is not that I am never consulted. (I feel I am consulted all the time). But it is impossible to know where my representatives stand on issues. Two forces have created these wishy-washy factotums. One is the erosion of philosophy during the twentieth century in Western civilization. The other is the desire of politicians to appeal to everyone so as to make their every statement as evasive as possible. Occasionally one will come out strongly on a straw issue. Marijuana is a good example; our beloved Senator Proxmire was in town a while ago, and the only thing he would commit himself on was the legalization of pot-- he gave a flat "No!" But what are these toy balloons compared to elucidating the purpose of government.

In a campaign a representative should be able to enunciate his political philosophy so the electors can make a decision between contenders. That there is frequently so little difference between opponents has forced candidates to any measures to get votes so that present day campaigns are fought between p.r. men and a media war is waged. These empty contests give the advantage to the incumbent so that once elected many are assured of a job for life.

The only political ideal you expressed was "the Rooseveltian ideal of social justice." It is not clear if such a commitment is still the case, but I'm afraid that social justice is a vague or hollow concept, meaning anything to anybody and is part of the intellectual malaise of our century. Justice only results when rights are protected, and the only rights that can be objectively determined are individual rights.

It is funny that you should suspect oil billionaires of being at the heart of the problem. Lobbying is carried on by everyone from professional organizations, Common Cause groups, labor unions, and business interests. This free-for-all is what has come of social justice. Government has retreated from its function of protecting each one's rights to the business of providing for everyone's needs. The results have been disastrous. A disaster we witness without penetrating to its cause.

And it seems funny to me that Roger should think the oil billionaires are not at the heart of the problem, or at least close to it. Hell, who's talking about lobbying? I didn't say anything about lobbying, did I? Maybe I did, casually, but what I'm talking about is power -- the sources of power. Who runs the country? This is the same point upon which my wife and I have agreed to disagree, and perhaps that's as close as Roger and I can come to an understanding of each other. Roger, like my wife, takes government seriously. They both see many things wrong in the political processes, but there seems to be an underlying assumption that IF the flaws could be repaired--if citizens would keep closer track of what the lawmakers are doing, if the lawmakers would be more honest and forthright, more dedicated, etc., etc.-- then better legislation would be enacted and many of the things wrong with the country could be made right. I'm sorry, but this just seems to me like a naive assumption (though I admit it's one I myself clung to for a long time).

But I have come to the conclusion (and I tried to make this explicit in D-o-S 30; I was really astonished that Bruce Arthurs considered it an "infinitesimal point:")

he probably didn't think I was really serious, but I was; it was my major point) that the trappings of representative government are just a decoy, an entertainment, a charade. (Oh, I know there's an inner circle of congressmen and senators and cabinet members who probably feel they're exercising power, and doubtless, compared to most officials, they are, but I can't believe that the really crucial decisions are made on that level, either). I confessed that I don't know who the real rulers are. And I tend to agree with Don D'Amassa that there are many conspiracies and conspirators, and some of them may not even know of the others' existence. I don't insist that



there's a single group of Secret Masters in control of the whole world. I should certainly expect the world to be in much better shape if that were true.

Obviously I can't prove anything, any more than Ann Chamberlain can prove reincarnation. I don't even know anything. It's just speculation, conjecture, something that I feel very strongly.

Of course my conviction is based on observation: the total helplessness of either the executive branch or the legislative to exert any influence over the economy; the behavior of the giant oil corporations in the international arena; "The Sovereign State of ITT" (which I haven't read and don't even feel any compelling need to -- the title says it all); the Vietnam involvement that somebody (the Pentagon generals, I suspect, though it could have been Nixon for purely political reasons) kept going long after the American public was fed up with it.

...Getting back to the beginning of Roger's letter. . . his comment: "You see that the public should be consulted..." Actually, I didn't say that. What I said (and even what I meant) was that I should be consulted. By whoever is in charge. Simply because I think I could give some helpful advice on some issues, and because I definitely do feel resentful and frustrated at being so systematically ignored.

(I'd be interested in knowing how Roger comes by the feeling that he is consulted. By whom, and how meaningful is the consultation?)

I'm sure that my resentment and frustration are shared by many Americans, and I may inadvertently have given the impression that I was arguing for some form of popular government. If so, let me hasten to correct the impression. About the last thing I would want for the country is rule by majority decision. No thanks! That would be horrible! The Bill of Rights would be almost immediately abolished, racial and cultural minorities would be "put in their place"-- if not exterminated; all efforts toward such matters as ecological balance, resource conservation, penal reform, etc., would be abandoned and reversed.

I would probably have to write a book--or at least a very lengthy discourse--to explain (and discover) how I managed to arrive at the political and philosophical views that I now hold, and it's getting too late in this zine to begin such a project. So I won't.

Roy Tackett has some comments that apply to what Roger and Don and I and others have been talking about. Here he is:

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...Your comments on people in authority making decisions that affect your life without consulting you is something that we should all think about and, if we can, do something about.

For the past month the NM Civil Liberties Union has been conducting a campaign to try to make people aware of the dangers involved in just that sort of thing and in the improper use of computer data banks and in the various experiments being conducted around the country on mind and personality control. The theme has been "1984: Ten more years and counting." The local campaign is supposedly a pilot for a nationwide campaign to be conducted later on in the year so you'll probably be getting it in Colorado one of these days. The implications are, of course, rather frightening and they are supposed to be. Because we do have, unfortunately, far too many "people in authority" deciding what is best for you and me. There are too many laws being passed to protect us from ourselves, to protect us whether we want to be protected or not. Is there an actual conspiracy? I doubt it. Not in the nature of a select number of people getting together and

COME TO MIDDLE-EARTH!



* KANSAS CITY IN '76 *

Despite its stereotyped cowtown image, Kansas City, Missouri is a modern, dynamic metropolis located on the Missouri-Kansas state line. It is easily the most accessible location ever offered as a site for a World Science Fiction Convention, being only 200 miles from the exact geographic center of the U.S. As an independently organized group, the K.C. in '76 Committee is composed of members of the Kansas City Science Fiction and Fantasy Society (KACSFFS), which actively supports the K.C. bid for the 34th Worldcon. Our proposed hotel facility, the nationally known Muehlebach Hotel, has already made available its massive 51,000 sq. ft. convention center, and has also blocked 700 sleeping rooms for the '76 convention. Because the preceding only begins to outline the many details of the Kansas City bid, we invite you to write and request a FREE copy of our bidding information brochure. Find out for yourself why Lazarus Long traveled 200 years in time, and countless light-years in space, to come to Kansas City. Could he know something that you don't know? Please address all correspondence to:

deciding to do this or that. Other than, maybe, to make sure we keep spending those dollars on crap we don't need.

[I happen to be a member of the ACLU -- not a terribly active one, but I do firmly believe in its principles. And if that sounds like a contradiction to what I was just saying about popular government, it isn't really (though I have no horror of contradictions). The ACLU is fighting to preserve constitutional democracy, with the emphasis on the first ten Amendments: the Bill of Rights, which I have asserted (because surveys have shown) that a majority of the people would prefer to scrap.

The ACLU's legal and educational approach could turn out to be productive, given time (I fear there won't be time). But IF a majority of the people could be persuaded to put the principles of liberty and justice (yes, I'll buy Roger's definition--the protection of individual rights) and simple fairness ahead of hatred and prejudice and narrow, short-sighted self-interest, then I would not be afraid of popular, majority-rule government. In fact, if a majority of Americans (or any national population) held such enlightened ideals as those espoused by the ACLU, there would be no problem of who controls the power. Such a population (I feel) would be able to find the power source and take the power upon itself. Don't ask me how--I'm just dreaming. It'll be a long time before any national majority will even be that concerned about government.

Roytac's remarks about "too many laws being passed to protect us from ourselves" send my mind shuttling back to my discussion with Darrell Schweitzer, and while it's back there I'd like to add a comment or two for the purpose of clarification (what the actual effect will be remains to be seen). I asked some rhetorical questions: should sports be outlawed? should cars be outlawed? how far should the government go in protecting us from ourselves?

In two of those questions (I hope) a negative answer is clearly implied. The third one implies still another question--what should be the purpose of government?--which was at the heart of Roger Sween's discussion.

But I guess I'm not ready yet with a definitive answer to that question. I think I have the beginnings of one, namely that a function of government should be to protect people from each other--that is to protect the weak and helpless from the strong and merciless, but I can't see that any ideal function of government has to do with protecting people from themselves.

Thus, as applied to sports and automobiles, I do believe in rules and protective equipment in football (but of course not outlawing the game) and I believe in speed limits and strict enforcement of traffic regulations (I would like to keep the maniacs off the highways entirely, and I think the emphasis on mandatory seat belts and super-safety built into the cars is entirely the wrong approach; if the psychopaths could be restrained there would be no need for the armor; as it is, anyone who ventures onto a highway without buckling his seat belt is an absolute idiot, but that should be his business). But of course I don't want to outlaw driving.

In the matter of drugs and drug abuse . . . Well, what we have now is a situation that is sort of comparable (only sort of; don't hold me too closely to this analogy) to what might happen if cars and driving were outlawed. People would still drive and own cars (but they would have to buy the cars from criminals at exorbitant prices and with no guarantees as to quality or safety; all fuel and parts also would have to be purchased from criminals). All driving would have to be done at night, with no headlights, and at reckless speeds to avoid detection and pursuit. The police would be kept so busy trying to stamp out the auto traffic that other kinds of crime would rage out of control. And most of the police efforts would be futile anyway. They would manage to catch a few retailers--people who pushed cars and fuel to help

pay for their own habit, and they could of course pick up the crash victims and toss them in jail (with their injuries untreated, for the most part) for good long terms, and society could feel very moral and upright about it . . .

. . . It has just occurred to me, because I'm awfully slow sometimes, that what I'm playing with here is the idea for a science fiction story. So I'm going to quit until I have time to work on it from that angle.

Maybe I can end on a cheerful note. Roytac's letter contained a comment which I censored, to the effect that if I don't know who I am by now I have really got a problem.

Well, I want to announce that the problem HAS been solved.

My wife works part time at the Westminster library. When people check out science fiction books she sometimes tells them about DASFA or gives them one of our cards. (For a non-fan, she's an effective recruiter).

Last month, at the dead dog party following the meeting, I was approached by a scruffy-looking kid who asked me my name. I told him, and he said, "You teach at Metro State? A science fiction course?"

I confessed that I did.

A light went on behind his eyes and he pointed an affirmative finger at me and announced for the entire gathering to hear:

"Then I know who you are. You're the librarian's husband!"

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I also heard from: Brett Cox, Frank Balazs, Sheryl Birkhead, Don Ayers (a long, wonderful letter that he considered turning into a loc-zine and which I may do yet), Sutton Breiding, and Eric Lindsay. (Sorry if I missed anyone).

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ART CREDITS: Cover by Ted Peak; Gail Barton--pages 2, 11 and 13; Sheryl Birkhead--pages 5 and 8; Grant Canfield--page 7.

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