

D O C T O R    A S H L E Y    a n d    M R    L O W N D E S

A reply to Al Ashley's curious open letter entitled "Those Amazing Amendments" by Robert W. Lowndes. Published for FAPA, November '44  
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Note the above three slogans. The wording may not be identical with Ashley's, as I've misplaced his statement since drafting this reply, but these above do say precisely the same thing. Upon two of these slogans, I agree completely; upon a third, I agree with reservation. However, the intent of this reply is to show that, despite the mess (and I do mean mess) of verbiage Ashley employs to imply that FAPA either does not enjoy these things, or is in danger of losing such enjoyment, the fact remains that we have these stated rights -- and not only do the two amendments recently approved not impair them, but, actually, FAPA members could not realize these slogans in actual practice before the recent amendments were passed -- either in full, or in part.

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However, before proceeding, I want to make a few general, clarifying statements. They may be superfluous, but it won't hurt to repeat.

1. There is no feud going on between Ashley and myself, so far as I know. Both of us are acting to further the best interests of FAPA, as we see things, and neither of us, to the best of my knowledge and belief, have any personal axe to grind.
2. The proposed article 13, recently defeated, and the two amendments, recently approved, were drafted by Lowndes; those who endorsed the propositions (on the preliminary petition) did so after, not before the fact.
3. I assume no responsibility for other Futurian tempers which may be lost before this argument is over.
4. Say what you will, this argumentation will prove to work out for FAPA's betterment, regardless of whose proposals are approved and whose defeated.

Firstly: Proposed Article 13 (defeated 19-18)  
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Ashley quotes this passage "As Americans, and believers in science, we of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association cannot look upon the theories of 'inferior' races with other than loathing and repudiation, as being both anti-scientific and inimical to the American way of life." He states that this sentence is a "semantic nightmare" and is "untruthful", inasmuch as, he contends, the issue of "inferior races" is a controversial one and nothing has been proved one way or the other. And, he goes on, since this theory does exist, and discrimination on racial grounds is widespread, it cannot be said to be "inimical to the American way of life" -- besides, what the hell is the American way of life, and how can you prove it?

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To begin with: the first purpose of the proposed amendment (my error -- article) was to put FAPA on record, officially, on the subject of racism, for FAPA to have an official attitude, taking a stand against it. Ashley no doubt sees something very sinister in this, but, actually, there would be nothing wrong with such an action, if the majority wanted it! The majority didn't, so that settles it -- until someone else wants to raise the question for vote again.

Secondly, the article proposed that FAPA not only take this official attitude, but do something about it insofar as the official mailings were concerned. If the majority agreed that the theories of "inferior" races, and the promulgation of racist propaganda, or the act of attacking persons or groups, on racial grounds was "anti-scientific" and "inimical to the American way of life", then it would further agree that such material might not appear in any FAPA publication. It proposed to ban such material under any FAPA frank; it did not bar any FAPA member from such promulgation in his own (or anyone else's) publications outside of FAPA. Section three of the proposed article stated so in no uncertain terms.

Simultaneously, the proposed article created the machinery for the prevention of circulating publications containing obscene matter in the mailings. (I'll deal with this section later.)

Ashley contends that my statement that the theories of "inferior" races are anti-scientific is untruthful. The matter is controversial, he states. I think that Ashley will agree, that, if the matter is "controversial", then it is still unproven that there may be such things as inferior races. Yet, all around us, we see in practice all manner of discrimination against persons and groups, on racial grounds, as if it were a fact that inferior races exist. Can such practices be regarded as anything other than anti-scientific?

A basic contention of the "racists" is that various races have discernible differences in blood. "Inferior blood" is a well-known phrase to fascists, and racists of all types. Yet, what has science shown in this matter? Science has shown the opposite; minute experiment has yet to find any difference between the blood of a Caucasian, a Negro, a Jew, a Chinese, or a Hindu (for example). Were you to take samples of blood from a member of each of these groups, not labelling them in any way, and to ask a biologist to tell you which was the "Negro" blood, or which was the "Jewish" blood, or which the "White" blood, he couldn't do it. Your biologist could report upon the condition of each respective sample; he could tell you whether or not each, or all, were healthy, if each or all showed any particular diseases, etc -- but without a label, he still could not pick out the Negro or Jewish blood from the White, and so on.

Yet this "blood" bunk is a basis of the theory of "inferior" races, which Ashley states that I am being untruthful in terming anti-scientific.

What about the "American way of life?" Well, if a majority of FAPA members can agree upon a general definition, including a list of things which they consider "inimical" to it, they certainly have a right to come to such an agreement. And if they wish to make that agreement an official FAPA viewpoint, they have that right to do so, too -- so long as they keep it within FAPA. Whether or not persons or groups outside of FAPA agree is beside the point. Does Ashley see something sinister in the notion of a group of fans agreeing on what the phrase "American way of life" means to them? I can't answer that question, but it looks as if he does.

However, the crux of Ashley's remarks on the proposed article lie in his quotation of the following section. "It shall be the duty of the Official Editor to refuse to include in any official mailing ... any publication wherein the doctrine of "inferior" races is promulgated, or wherein any person, persons, groups, or nations are vilified, belittled, or are declared unworthy of what the Constitution of the United States of America declares to be the basic rights of all citizens on racial grounds. (Italics mine)

Dr Ashley then launches into a resume of all the things FAPA members couldn't discuss in the mailings, were the sinister Mr Lowndes' proposed article 13 passed. Unfortunately, the good Dr. apparently became so panic-stricken at the very thought of censorship that he failed to read the passage quoted, as his entire thesis is based upon a misreading of it.

The good doctor says we couldn't attack the Japs in FAPA publications, or the Nazis either. We couldn't even say that the Germans had been misled, because that would be belittling their intelligence. And so on, curiouser and curiouser, as Alice would say.

Dr Ashley, I'm going to let you in on a secret: It's sinister, like my proposed article, but you can check it for yourself. There is no Nazi race! Furthermore, to bar attacking a person upon racial grounds does not mean that this person cannot be attacked at all. It means that you cannot attack, belittle, vilify a German on the grounds that he is a German -- or rather, it would, were there such a thing as a German race. There isn't. So, to get down to actual cases, it means that you could not attack a Jew on the grounds that he was a Jew, a Negro on the grounds that he was a Negro, a Mongolian (that includes the Chinese and Japanese for the most part -- although China has been assimilating races for so many centuries it's difficult to say just what race the present day Chinese belongs to. However, Mongolian will do, and is a bit more near to accuracy than "Chinese race" or "Japanese race") and so on, or that you could not state that they were inferior, or basically evil, upon these grounds.

But even if the Germans were a race, and the proposal had passed, their race would not be involved in a statement to the effect that they had been misled. If one were to say, however, that the German is easily misled due to his racial stupidity, that would constitute racial slander.

Now to the obscene matter business. And if anyone thinks I'm not gagging at the necessity of making provisions in regard to it (because frankly, I enjoy well-done obscenity) then they have another think due. But I couldn't let my own personal preferences stand in the way of what seemed like a necessity for the protection of FAPA.

Had the article passed, the Official Editor would have been empowered to take action upon any items which had been adjudged obscene. That is "such as would imperil the mailing privileges of the Association on the grounds of obscenity". It would not make the Official Editor the judge in this matter; no such provision was made. It gave the Official Editor the executive authority to act, if and when such a decision was made. The judiciary of FAPA, Dr Ashley, is the Vice President, not the Official Editor. Should the Editor find something he considered questionable, it would have been his duty to pass it on to the judiciary for a ruling, and to act as the article prescribed if the ruling was against the inclusion of the item in the official mailings.

As to "one officer acting as censor", the Vice President is free at all times to consult other officers, or members, if he chooses before rendering a decision. A Presidential ruling could impel him to do so, in a specific instance.

I regret the necessity of having to take up so much space with something which should be clear to almost anyone except semanticists searching for flaws (it's amazing the way a semanticist can confuse something which, for all that it may be less than perfect in stating, is entirely understandable in meaning to anyone who wants to understand) but this outright ignoring of the word "racial" in part of the restrictive clause of the proposed article has made it necessary.

As the above implies, I make reservations on the freedom of opinion plank. I don't believe that those who hold "racist" opinions should be perfectly free to spread their poison around. But, since the majority of FAPA members (either by voting no, or not voting at all) turned thumbs down on the proposed article 13, Dr Ashley's plank for unrestricted freedom of opinion is in full effect.

Secondly, the amendment to change the mailing dates, and deadlines for ballots. Dr Ashley raises much to-do about the possibility of FAPA either having no officers for a spell, or duplicate officers, as a result of this switching around.

Again, our Vice President has failed to read the proposition (which passed 24 to 13) correctly. Two quotations can clear this up.

"The ballots shall be counted by a committee delegated by the President, which shall notify both outgoing and incoming officers ... as to the full results of the election within two weeks after the ballot deadline."

"Officers shall serve for one year beginning August 22d, or, in the event that the ballot deadline is shoved ahead, upon notification of their election by the ballot counting committee."

In plainer English: my term of office expires August 22d, 1945 -- unless the ballot deadline has been changed. In that event (or in any other type of delay) I serve until the ballot-counting committee reports the result of the election, and my successor is named. Since the report must be made in full, all four offices are vacated by incumbents and taken over by electees simultaneously.

Thus FAPA is free from the danger of duplicate officers and official chaos centering around the election, so far as the constitution is concerned. If unforeseen difficulties arise, common sense can straighten things out, providing it is called upon by those who act.

Third, we have the amendment to alter form of petitions. All I have to say about it is that, in its present form, it provides FAPA with freedom from minority rule and compulsory vote. A majority "yes" vote, rather than a majority of "yes" votes within a majority ballot return, is now required, and no one is compelled to vote, nor can any penalty be imposed upon members who fail to vote.

Let's preserve FAPA from the inadequacy of Dr Ashley's good intentions by retaining these two amendments.

And let's make the ability to read a matter of concern in electing future officers.

Much has been said about the sinister possibilities which might arise had article 13 passed, and a "venal" editor been in office. The sensible reply to that is don't elect venal officers. However, what the members who raised that particular hue and cry overlooked was that a "venal" official editor would not have to wait for the passage of article 13 to do dirty work. Our "venal" editor could reject almost any issue of Guteto on the grounds that it did not pertain to fantasy; he could have rejected Unger's FFF Presents on the grounds that it did not substantially represent Unger's work. If he were "venal" enough, he could simply withhold any publication he didn't like and blandly deny having received it, were questions to be asked.

Need I go into detail on what a "venal" Vice President, Prexy, or Secretary-Treasurer could do, regardless of the passage of this recently proposed legislation?

Finally, there is the business of "rushing through" proposed amendments. It has been stated several times that I objected to the petition to oust Degler, on the grounds that there hadn't been sufficient time for discussion, then went ahead and presented these three items cold. Gentlemen, if any FAPA member can show me any statement wherein I objected to the Degler petition, on the grounds that it was rushed through, I will donate \$5 to the FAPA treasury before my term expires. Don't look up the Futurian Statement on Degler "Let's Give Degler His Due", because that was stenciled December 1, 1943, and the ouster petition was in the June 1944 mailing. The opinions on Degler I held as of December 1943 did not apply to June 1944, and my objection was solely on the grounds of minority rule; I didn't consider the issue of Degler important enough to "rush through" until majority rule was established.

And at the risk of an impeachment petition from Laney, I repeat that, for all my dislike of Degler (and if anyone can find any statement from me saying I either liked Degler or supported the CC, I'll give him a year's subscription to Astounding), and my relief that he's out of FAPA, I still consider his minority-rule ousting as a blot upon FAPA's records, an act as reprehensible as any Degler himself has been accused of doing, or has done in fact.

No, I don't think FAPA members are morons. The business of racism had been under discussion for some mailings before the presentation of proposed article 13; I believe FAPA members are capable of making up their minds on a proposal when they have a month in which to consider, as they did on these proposals. True, there are people who seem to lose their heads almost any time, as Dr Ashley's thesis shows, but that can't be helped.

One last word. While I don't propose to dictate to any member, or to any fellow officer, I'd like to suggest to Dr Ashley that the purpose of the judiciary, FAPA's Vice President, is to clear up confusion, not to create it.

Yours for common sense and an end  
to legalistic mumbo-jumbo in FAPA

Robert W. Lowndes

PS - Incidentally, I protest the ruling against a member's changing his vote. So long as a ballot is identifiable, and the change gets in before deadline, I see no reason for denying it. Had I been in a position to rule on it, I'd have said okay, even if it meant that every member who'd voted aye on the proposals decided then to change their vote to thurbs down. You see, gents, I believe that the constitution and rules, and interpretations of them exist for the purpose of aiding the members in doing what they want to do. Just the difference between the democratic approach and the rigidly legal one, I believe.