

ZAPP 1, August 1978

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Mai Ling Comments

As I have spent most of the last week, or so it seems, struggling with the regulations of Australia Post pertaining to the posting of registered publications, and have still not mastered the system, I can not say that I am sure that by the time members of ANZAPA read this they will have seen some comments on the 62nd ANZAPA mailing in CHUNDER! I hope so, and I hope members feel that there may be some value in describing the contents (or part of the contents) to potential members. One can not really regard the passing remarks in CHUNDER! as mailing comments, of course, so here is a second serve.

JOHN ROWLEY In your comment to Kevin Dillon you note the problem of the fixed-membership apa - that whenever someone new gets in it is necessary for someone else to be thrown out. In one sense I strongly agree, and for that reason I'll be interested to see how the new unlimited membership apas (like APPLESAUCE) make out: while searching for something else recently I uncovered a fanzine which makes clear the length of time Australia's first unlimited membership apa, APA-M, lasted. There was a ninth issue of a David Grigg fanzine. (APA-NOVA may actually have been earlier than APA-M, but it only lasted about three mailings/collations, as I recall - corrections, JB, BRG?)

On the other hand I don't quite agree with your description of the process: new members get in only when old members are so little interested in the apa (either financially or through contribution) that they can be thrown out. It isn't really very helpful to have fabulous deadwood in an apa, though of course every now and then they might snap back to life.

Your last page on Zero Mostel meant a good deal more to me this year than it would have done last year since I saw my first two Mostel movies (THE PRODUCERS and THE FRONT) only this year: I guess I see about as many movies as you do.

JOHN BANGSUND A Moving Story was, as you remarked yourself, delightfully out-of-date. The letter from UNICON IV was charming in its tastelessness. Do I quite mean that? Yes, I think so. But were the authors, who retained common-law copyright, asked for permission before you published this?

ERIC LINDSAY Well, if you get thrown out of ANZAPA I shall send you a copy later anyway.

I do wish that more fans in Australia had your 'hanging back' syndrome. (Has science yet found a cure for this mysterious malady, which afflicts young and old alike? Stay tuned.) Aldiss and Retaler both seemed to be overexposed to those with the inverse affliction. I can not think of an immediate solution, since it may be that some of the most eager crowd-

around are precisely those who have had least previous contact with fandom. This isn't universally true, of course.

Your comments on UNICON/SYNCON fill me with gloom (and it is getting crowded in here). I don't think it is simply a matter of getting stuck in and telling the university people more about the problems of cons: too many university fans (apparently) have a direct line to God and so don't need advice from anyone. The important thing, it seems to me, is to make sure (as sure as is anarchisticly possible) that each convention committee has on it at least one person who has previously been on a convention committee of a suitably-sized convention. One thing which can be set down fairly easily, however, is the kind of structure which is useful in running a convention. Many convention committees seem to think that programs just happen: what follows is an outline of the structure used to run the program at AUSSIECON: not much of it should have been visible, and parts of it will not be necessary for a smaller convention.

HOW TO MISORGANIZE A PROGRAM (OR, AUSSIECON FOLLIES)

1. At AUSSIECON, at the level of individual items, each person on the panel or whatever had been contacted at least a month (usually much longer) before the convention and the program item set up, names of other panellists and that of the moderator given in advance. All of these people (whether speakers, panellists, or maderators) therefore would have known their commitments well in advance (and would have had specific times notified also).

2. On the day before the program item (or in the morning if it was a late item) all the people appearing were gathered together over coffee or a meal to discuss the program item and how it should work by someone (usually not the moderator) who had complete responsibility for that particular program item. In addition to arranging this meeting, these item organizers had the job of getting the people to the church on time, getting them off on time, and checking that any special equipment was provided if required. (For the record, the item organizers at AUSSIECON were, so far as my notes show, Robin Johnson, Leigh Edmonds, John Foyster, Peter Millar, Peter Darling, Dennis Stocks, Bruce Gillespie, Carey Handfield, Shayne McCormack, Christine McGowan, Bill Wright, David Grigg.)

3. Next step up the ladder were the daily co-ordinators, who had responsibility for just one day of convention program: they had to co-ordinate the items (in particular handling any re-scheduling of times or persons) and generally negotiate between the program items. We figured that about one day was as much as one person could take of that (and I think those who were daily co-ordinators - Peter Darling, John Foyster, Bruce Gillespie, Carey Handfield and Robin Johnson - would agree. Five people for a four day convention? Foyster and Johnson split one day between them.)

4. Next up was the program organizer (JF). I had to do the between-days shuffling and all that stuff, and generally watch out for fuck-ups (the daily co-ordinators did most of that, however).

One of the exciting parts was keeping track of who was doing what: two weeks after the 'final' programme had been prepared, I had to publish a closely-typed page of amendments.

5. At the top was RERJ, who had to make any final decisions. But Robin had also to manage all the other subsystems which have been omitted here - such as hotel liaison, travel, art, publicity, publications etc.

If you've been wondering why the programming at AUSSIECON didn't get stuffed up, this will give you at least an idea. I don't think one can run a convention for 600 people with less organization than this, if the con is at all formal.

But back to my mailing comments, and in particular late opening shops as described by Eric Lindsay. Higher costs may not be an inevitable result of late opening but I think they are likely to exist in the foreseeable future. You have argued that if sales do not increase (the most likely overall result) then the customer density will drop and therefore fewer staff will be needed at any one time. That may be true, but you ignore some other significant costs which are constant (or may increase slightly) outside 'regular hours' - lighting and heating, for example. Lighting for twice as many hours (if the example is 24 instead of 12) costs about twice as much, and this must be amortized over the constant sales volume. Similarly, there are probably administrative economies of scale which would continue to exist in any capitalist or statist environment: if you need a store manager on duty all the time, then instead of amortizing a single shift salary, you must do it for two or three shifts' salary.

Now, if you can manage without lighting or heating or freezing (etc) and reduce administrative and other associated costs in proportion to the sales density, then you'll manage to keep prices down. You will also shortly be a millionaire.

(Still with Eric Lindsay, for readers who have lost the place) I was interested to see your discussion of the motions passed at UNICON, and that there will be a lot of stuff about changes required to the constitution. This results particularly from my appointment at the UNICON business session to a committee to look at the constitution, and about which I have heard nothing further.

The UNICON IV concommittee only made two mistakes in handling the awards and the business session: firstly they ignored the constitution (which doesn't worry me terribly) and secondly, having made decisions (for example, on awards) they refused to stick to them (and that does). Sometimes it is the duty of a con committee to act like bastards - which is what they should have done on the awards question, for example.

I'll be interested in how the Sydney people plan to get around the problem of separating awards committee from con committee: I don't think it is quite enough to appoint someone associated with the committee as an awards committee. Similarly I feel that one must be at least mildly morally moronic (this phrase copyright) to count the ballots for an election in which one is a candidate. (Hi, Bruce!)

Yer page on AUSTRALIA IN '83 was interesting - here we are in July, and I've heard nothing about the PLANS except for a brief mention in ASFN

by Mervyn Binns.

The present Australian government may be the best money can buy, but don't you occasionally feel the price was too high?

Okay, Eric, that's enough comments to you.

JOHN BROSINAN The death of the late great Sir Robert brought about a touchingly close mement between my father and me: I happened to be visiting my parents on the evening of the great man's funeral. My mother was suitably touched, but my father was able to restrain his emotion. I therefore remarked to him that, so far as I could work out, Menzies was personally and directly responsible for the deaths of more Australians than any other Australian: he mused for a moment on Billy Hughes's endeavours in this direction, but finally had to admit that Ming took the cake. // Some rowdy papers (the kind I am sure you wouldn't want to read) even took the opportunity to discuss Sir Robert's extracurricular sexual activities - so much for reds under beds.

One of these days I must write to John Baxter: why don't you drop a current adress into your next ANZAPAZINE?

IRWIN HIRSH If I don't spend as much time on KALESPHEARE 2 in CHUNDER! as I would like to, and if I seem to short-change you here, I guess it is because while I find K 2 immensely readable, it doesn't really generate comments. I guess it would be obvious from the previous pages that I could have gone on and on talking to Eric, but that arose out of tiny matters - and in many cases Eric had only made a passing remark. In K2 you write for the most part about your personal experience, and while you do that very well, it isn't quite the thing which sparks off comments in all directions.

Then, when you did discuss a specific matter, it had to be on the organization of UNICON IV, and in a manner which I found myself in total agreement: what can I say after, I agree?

DECIDEDLY DECIDED raises a problem in reporting election results which I must admit I hadn't expected would occur in ANZAPA, where we name those who vote - that the results would reveal exactly how we voted. I find it peculiar that the person proposing a change cared so little that he did not vote.

PAUL ANDERSON If ever a word was misused, it is in your description of how people are listed - you say that they are listed 'merely' according to the page average attained over the current length of their membership. That really is a difficult order to work out. However, if you want to fill the gaps in your list, Petr "right-Smith was from Queensland, Alex Gas from Victoria, Ken Bull is a Victorian, it is Neil Rahman, Alan St Baker was/is NSW, it's Mervyn Barrett and Mark Lawrence, Michael Cameron was Queensland, Jean Jordan was NSW (now, I think, Florida) and 'Bailey' I don't know. What about Bernie Bernhouse, co-founder of ANZAPA?

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What about Roman Orszanski? (No doubt, etc)

I disagree (not unsurprisingly) with your description of the contents on PERHAPS IT'S SOMETHING IN THE WATER. I think if you were landed with the job of running a convention (under certain conditions which had been outlined to you) and then found someone else was declaring that the convention should be run in another way (as he wanted it) then you might find yourself a little short-tempered, too. However, I think you would be hardpressed to find evidence that Bangsund and Mason put as much time and money into finding out what ANZAPA members wanted for their convention as did Edmonds and Foyster.

Your ignoring of the deadline for reply is an interesting ploy for two reasons:

(i) it means that your opinion of what kind of convention was wanted was ignored - Leigh and I were (I think reasonably) unwilling to rely upon the uncertainties of Australia Post and CBEs in organizing a convention: by cutting the problem down to one doubtful quantity, we may have halved the delays.

(ii) of course a con of the type envisaged at the meeting does not take five months to prepare, but the kind which Bangsund and Mason, who didn't attend the meeting (or, apparently, bother to find out what went on at it) were beating their chests about does.

You ask whether I have any favourable comments to make on UNICON IV. If I say that, if one wished to pursue that line of argument, that Derrick Ashby's comments in THE HAG AND THE HUNGRY HOBLIN 2 were too lily-livered, does this get across my view? On the other hand one might equally pursue other approaches to describing UNICON IV, and there certainly were ways in which UNICON IV was a success - it got together an awful lot of science fiction fans, for instance. (But it also got together an awful lot of science fiction fans.)

With respect to your comment to Irwin Hirsh about Lee Harding's contribs to ANZAPA, I don't supposed it would break a confidence too greatly to state that not everything published under Lee's name in ANZAPA was written by him...

I disagree with the suggestion that we don't need a DITMAR for 'Best International SF' - in many ways this is the most important DITMAR (do people really care about stories and articles published in fanzines?) both because it is often announced before both Hugoes and Nebulas and because, a long time ago, it used to avoid the repulsive grovelling to the cash register which has marked recent awards.

Business sessions usually are taped (I don't know about UNICON IV) and it is important to have someone taking notes. At BOFCON and ACON 7 I was landed with running the business sessions at the last minute and to my knowledge only I took notes. This tended to slow down the business meetings...

The TERRA AUSTRALIS awards may be a good idea, but they won't get far until the people running (?) them get some idea of how to conduct voting

MARC ORTLIEB I'm not sure that this emphasis on 'worst sf' stories isn't a ploy to direct attention away from the godawful stuff which pretends to be good.

I guess the business of being trapped by one's own body (dualistic pig!) does come across in those lines of Robyn Archer's. I guess also that I reckoned it was pretty cheap dope.

An interesting point about YGGDRASIL and ENIGMA (and also GLASS KEYS, for that matter) is that, so far as I can make out, they are substantially supported by us good old taxpayers - if they win DITMARS, should the crazy grazier stand up there with the editor? (If so, I want to tomato concession.)

LEIGH EDMONDS I'm not sure that one becomes a fuckwit just by proposing a constitutional amendment: as I recall, being a fuckwit is a pre-requisite for proposing the amendment, and the amendment proposal is merely outward evidence of one's inner fuckwittedness. But I don't want to be dogmatic about this.

Your description of the UNICON voting problem seems pretty apt to me. In particular, you identify the problem as an unwillingness by various people to take public responsibility for various aspects of the con. That was probably the one which worried me most.

ANDREW BROWN Wherever you are, I have read only (I am pretty sure) MARTIAN TIME-SLIP out of your list of the Basic Brown Library.

On the other hand, I do much better with your list of movies (p 4) and have actually seen 2001, Casablanca, A Night at the Opera and Key Largo!

CHRISTINE & DERRICK ASHBY Dear folks, you may be right. Right about there being something wrong about ANZAPA, that is. However I think you are more right in labelling ANZAPA memners as 'not fanzine fans' and not really apa fans, than in your suggestion for a no-limits apa. But APPLESAUCE already exists - why turn ANZAPA into another APPLESAUCE? ANZAPA is not likely to change very quickly (as Leigh Edmonds has pointed out) and the kinds of change you seem to propose would change the nature of the apa very greatly.

Surely the main difference between Ashby Scrabblers Almanack & The Universal Baseball Assoc, Inc was that Ashby is about scrabble (or 'Scrabble', as it is known in the trade) whereas TUBAI is not about baseball.

In re ANZAPACON. Self-evident truth of the month: those who protest most loudly about no smoking rules are those who, because they are chain smokers, are most likely to offend non-smokers.

I don't believe that official ANZAPA business should be conducted other than by mail: conventions are not OAB, nor is the drafting of constitutional amendments.