



LICKS #8 (February 1993) is written and produced by Rob Hansen of 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, UK., for the 222nd FAPA mailing. © Rob Hansen, 1993.

BACK IN THE USA

Well, unless something unforeseen occurs Avedon and I will be visiting America at the end of May to attend CORFLU and DISCLAVE. CORFLU is, of course, the fannish fan convention par excellence, and by far my favourite annual convention. It will be held this year in Madison, Wisconsin over the weekend of May 21 - 23. DISCLAVE will be held in DC the following weekend. Since we'll be visiting DC the week after CORFLU in order to see Avedon's folks, the timing makes DISCLAVE too convenient to miss. We'll be glad to see any of you who can make either.

MAILING COMMENTS

Katz: "Quite a few fannish fanzine fans have become non-fiction writers, reporters, and such. Harry Warner, Ross Chamberlain, Rob Hansen, and Joyce Katz are a few FAPAish ferinstances."

At first I was a little puzzled by my inclusion in your list, Arnie, since the only writing I've ever been paid for is the entries I wrote for the forthcoming second edition of Peter Nicholls' ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, and that hardly seemed enough to warrant it. Then I realised you must be thinking of the technical documentation I've been producing for my employer over the past two years. Funny thing is though, for some reason I've never really thought of it as professional writing (but as I'm being paid for doing it, and paid well, it obviously is). Since someone in the mechanical engineering department of my company was going to have to write the documentation, and since they knew that I could string words together to form coherent sentences (unlike all too many engineers, as anyone who has ever received an official letter from one will appreciate) I was the obvious choice for the task. It meant a two-year secondment from my regular job, and is, frankly, some of the easiest money I ever earned. My work on the project got glowing reports, too.

As to favourite fanzines, I've only seen copies of about half the fanzines you list, those I've sadly not encountered despite my 17 years in fandom being VOID, XERO, FRAP, LIGHTHOUSE, METANOIA, PSYCHOTIC, SPACEWARP, and THE CELEBRATED FLYING FROG OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY. My own all-time favourite fanzines, many of which you won't have come across, are HYPHEN (of course), WRINKLED SHREW (Pat & Graham Charnock's superb genzine), TRUE RAT (containing some of the funniest writing I know of, fannish or otherwise, from editor Leroy Kettle), TWLL DDU (the fanzine where editor Dave Langford honed his fine fannish writing skills), STOP BREAKING DOWN (the quintessential Greg Pickersgill fanzine and probably the one I've re-read most often over the years), SEAMONSTERS (Simone Walsh's short-lived genzine), DOT (from Langford's partner in crime, Kevin Smith), PONG (the Ted White/Dan Steffan fanzine so central to the thriving transatlantic scene of the early 1980s), and IZZARD (the excellent Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden zine). You'll note, Arnie, that only one of the fanzines on your list that I've also encountered made it on to mine. Different strokes, and all that.

Enye: According to my dictionary (CHAMBERS TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1972), to be patriotic is to be "actuated by love of one's country; directed to the public welfare", whereas jingoism is defined as "chauvinism". These seem pretty

much in keeping with the descriptions I used in LICKS 6 and, though saddened by it, I wasn't really surprised you should think them "some unusual use of the word 'patriot' that I haven't encountered before". In so far as I could make sense of what you wrote in the rest of your mc to me, I actually agree that when it comes to the 'cock-up' and 'conspiracy' theories of history, most of what happens is more sensibly explained by the former than by the latter, as does Avedon. Most, but not all.

Bangsund: Greatly enjoyed your account of your early days in fandom and of how you became an editor. My interest in fanhistory is no secret, and I've always been a sucker for stories of fannish first contact.

Hlavaty: I suppose the UK must have some third and fourth generation welfare recipients, but if so they're statistically insignificant and certainly too few in number to constitute a 'welfare class'. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, we had more jobs than we did workers (having lost more young men during WWII than the US did - from a population one-fifth as large - and having an immense amount of rebuilding to do), hence the government-encouraged immigration by people from the New Commonwealth during that period. Subsequently, the UK had close to full employment until the oil crisis of 1973/4, which increased energy costs and drove a number of companies to the wall. In the thirteen years of Conservative misrule we've suffered to date there have been two huge surges in unemployment; the first in the early 1980s, and the second over the past two years. The 'shake-out' of the early 1980s, in large degree the fault of government policies that even Sir John Harvey-Jones (the former head of ICI) has called "insane", cost us almost a third of our manufacturing industry, while early indications are that the fruits of the current situation are likely to be even more bitter. As in the US, the jobs that have been lost aren't coming back. So, though we don't have a significant number of third and fourth generation welfare recipients, I suspect we have a growing number of the second generation. And it appears that both our countries face a future in which the permanently unemployed will be a large constituency, and that dealing with the attendant social problems and potential for unrest will be one of the major problems facing our governments as we move into the twenty-first century.

Burke: Yeah, I certainly agree with you about the number of proof-reading and other errors in books nowadays, Peggy. Once upon a time a reasonable knowledge of English was considered pretty much essential if you wanted any sort of professional editorial position, but no longer it seems. I remember Robert Holdstock telling me years ago that he regularly inserted the line "their screams were terrible to behold" in stories to see if he could get it past editors. I imagine he would have succeeded many times over by now if he was still doing it. And if, like me, you read the entirety of John Byrne's run on SUPERMAN, you too must have winced at his numerous references to Superman's "alien physiognomy".

Chauvenet: ct Indick: I first encountered your joke about the Sabra Major and the Gonorrhoea about 20 years ago, in high school, only the version I heard was about Al Capone and his girlfriend.// ct Feller: Actually, the correct term is 'Scots' or 'Scottish'. 'Scotch' is a whisky, as my Scottish friends are always quick to point out.

Silverberg: ct Richards: I don't like Orson Scott Card's homophobia either, though I accept his right to hold such views and to express them if he so chooses, which won't surprise you if you've already read my essay in LICKS 7 (enclosed with this same mailing). However, once he had expressed those views I was then faced with the question of whether or not I wished to continue supporting him (however insignificantly) by spending my money on his books. I

decided that I didn't, and haven't bought anything by him since. This is a purely personal decision, as all such decisions should be, and I certainly wouldn't support an organised boycott, of the sort so beloved of the religious right, against an individual, since to my mind that would amount to an attack on his freedom of expression, using financial coercion to try to muzzle him. Speaking personally, I wouldn't seek to stop someone being a GoH because of his views, but I might not want to work on a convention that had him as a GoH.

You criticise Mark for not wanting to hear the views of those who are 'reactionary' but, in the case of homophobia, it isn't simply a matter of a mere difference of political views. What you believe is a matter of choice, and thus fair game, but being gay or not is no more a matter of choice than the colour of your skin, which is why many of us equate homophobia with racism. (Remember, the pink triangle worn as a badge of pride by gays today was first pinned on an earlier generation in Nazi death camps.) Though of a generally left-liberal bent, I'm perfectly happy to read (and often enjoy - I think P.J.O'Rourke's work is wonderful) stuff with a right-wing viewpoint since it can be both challenging and stimulating and can force you to reassess comfortable assumptions and long-held opinions, which is always useful. However, I draw the line at the homophobic and the racist. You criticise Mark for not wanting to work on a convention with a homophobic GoH, but if you were into convention organising would you be prepared to work on one with an anti-Semitic GoH?

Metcalf: When I was a teenager, and at that stage of SF reading where you suck up everything that comes your way, I picked up the two-volume SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME anthology edited by FAPA's own Bob Silverberg. This, as you're doubtless aware, is a collection of those pre-1965 short stories rated by contemporary SFWA members as the best from the pre-Nebula Award days. I was impressed by the collection (still am, actually) and I've always regarded it as one of the absolutely essential works that anybody new to SF should be advised to read immediately. However, there's one story in that collection whose inclusion I've never understood, one which you alluded to in your zine: Heinlein's 'The Roads Must Roll'. As a teenager I was relatively unsophisticated and almost apolitical and, like anyone who was even marginally sentient in the strike-ridden Britain of the 1970s, deeply ambivalent about labour unions. Even so, 'Roads' struck me immediately as little more than a crude and simple-minded piece of anti-union propaganda. I also thought it was very poorly written.

The books and short stories of Robert A. Heinlein were among those I devoured, for the most part uncritically, during my late teens. I was aware that he was highly regarded in the SF community but, though I mostly enjoyed his stuff, there were many SF authors I preferred and whom I considered better writers. I read 'Starship Troopers' as straightforward adventure without noticing any particular political overtones (though I much preferred Harry Harrison's satire of the book, 'Bill The Galactic Hero', when I encountered it a few months later) and if pressed would probably say I enjoyed 'Double Star' most among his books. I first came across 'The Roads Must Roll' in a 'Best of...' collection of Heinlein's short fiction, and found it the worst story in the book. So you can imagine my surprise when it then turned up in 'Hall of Fame'. Still, it's been nearly twenty years since I last read 'Roads' so, knowing I'd be writing this mc, a couple of days ago I re-read it. And I still think it's crude, unsubtle, and simple-minded. I didn't believe a single character in the whole story, thought the dialogue was ludicrous, and was repelled by Heinlein's vision of labour relations. The story was published in 1940, written maybe as much as a year earlier, and is clearly a thinly-disguised commentary by Heinlein on the US labour troubles of 1937 when there were strikes by workers in the auto, steel, electrical, rubber, textile, and radio industries with auto workers adopting a new tactic: they occupied their plants. These strikes were ended by negotiation, with most of the workers' demands being met, but Heinlein seems to prefer the

approach used during the US labour troubles of 1919 when armed federal and state troops were used against workers whose outrageous demands included an eight-hour working day and a living wage. The troopers killed 18 workers.

I remain puzzled as to just what SFWA members (and others, it must be said) see in 'The Roads Must Roll'. To them it's one of the best SF stories ever written but to me, even leaving aside the odious politics, it's a sorry piece of work.

Tausch: Good grief! This shared-world fantasy stuff is not for me, I'm afraid.

Feller: Personally, my favourite period of LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES is the first half of Paul Levitz's run. I feel the same sort of nostalgia for those by Edmond Hamilton that you do, though many were pretty silly, and would be tempted to buy the archive-quality, hardback reprint volume DC has published recently, if they weren't so expensive. Not that this stopped me buying the GREEN LANTERN volume in the same series. If I was being a scientific purist, however, I suppose I could justify this because of the connection with Alfred Bester (who, among other things, came up with Green Lantern's oath) and the early influence the character had on a number of SF writers, which I believe was behind Larry Niven's decision to write a recent Green Lantern story.

Lindsay: Well, as you doubtless know, "the useless bunch of tossers on the right" were reelected over here last April even though all the polls had indicated that "the useless bunch of tossers on the left" would get in. They accomplished this remarkable feat by saying, essentially, "hey, we may be bad but the other lot will be worse", and the British electorate, to their eternal shame, fell for it. This result gave George Bush heart in his darker days during the US Presidential election but, fortunately, the US electorate proved to be less foolish than their transatlantic counterparts. The Tories sold themselves on the basis of their competence, which was shown to be a sick and hollow sham during the Sterling crisis a few months back when the pound lost twenty percent of its value in a matter of days. Instead of leadership we were treated to the unedifying and far from reassuring spectacle of the government flailing about in a manner that recalled those old saws about headless chickens and boats with no-rudders. It seems inconceivable that, so soon after an election, a Prime Minister could achieve the lowest approval rating of any since polling began, yet John Major managed this remarkable feat. It would be almost funny if we didn't face the grim prospect of this sorry bunch 'leading' us for the next four-and-a-half years. Groan.

Warner: ct me: "Rob seems to think the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights are two different things. Of course, the latter are a series of amendments to the former. I'm not sure if 'Bill of Rights' is an official designation for these amendments."

Actually, Harry, I was fully aware that the Bill of Rights is a series of amendments to the Constitution. I always refer to both so no-one can think I'm referring to the latter alone. As to the status of the term 'Bill of Rights', my source in these matters, the excellent 'World Almanac' (I bought the 1990 edition on my visit to DC that year) states that: "The first Congress, at its first session in the City of New York, Sept. 25, 1789, submitted to the states 12 amendments to clarify certain individual and state rights not named in the Constitution. They are generally called the Bill of Rights." Which suggests that it's a matter of common usage rather than official designation. 'Bill of Rights' is certainly what I've always known the ten amendments that were eventually ratified as.// 101 Wagner St was Lee Hoffman's address, of course. But Box 260?

STOP DUPE: We were burgled yesterday, and I'm writing this while waiting for someone to come and repair our front door. More next time. 7 Jan 93.