



LICKS #9 (May 1993) is written and produced by Rob Hansen of 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, UK., for the 223rd FAPA mailing. © Rob Hansen, 1993.

In his apazine FAPAMENTARY, in the last mailing, Brian Earl Brown explains what, from his point of view, the 'Bergeron Wars' were all about. Save for his assertion that the affair Avedon and I had had during her TAFF trip (which is when I first met her) was not widely known about at the time, which certainly wasn't the experience I had (the fannish gossip network worked with awesome speed and range back then), I have only minor quibbles with his version of the troubles with Bergeron. However, his account of 'the Martha Beck issue' is sufficiently at variance with how that issue was perceived in British fandom as to constitute gross distortion. The 'Bergeron Wars' (aka. 'Topic A' and 'Folies Bergeron') and the 'Martha Beck for TAFF' affair were seen over here as a seamless whole, which is why the whole mess is known in Britain as the 'TAFF Wars'. What follows is a slightly edited version of an account of the whole thing that I wrote six years ago (which was part of a larger history of UK fandom, hence my writing about myself in the third person):

THE TAFF WARS

As it had been in the late-1950s, TAFF was the focus of a lot of acrimony in 1984. The race that year was between Rob Hansen and D West, and Hansen won, on the North American vote (they drew in the UK). The North American administrator at that time was Avedon Carol and during her TAFF trip to the UK in 1983 (she was FGOH at ALBACON) she and Hansen had developed a close personal relationship, one which was far from being secret. Over in Puerto Rico, Richard Bergeron - a fervent supporter of West during the race - chose to believe that Avedon had unduly influenced people to vote on Hansen's behalf and, taking an offhand comment about him in one of her fanzines as a jumping off point, launched into a series of attacks on her in both fanzines and in private correspondence. Americans such as Ted White and Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, and Britons such as Chuck Harris and Dave Langford (a group including some of West's nominators), wrote letters arguing that he was mistaken but were unable to move him. A feud was brewing and it started to come to the boil as Hansen was beginning his TAFF trip across the US. Seeing this, Dave Locke and Jackie Causgrove of Cincinnati, fans who had had grievances of their own with the administration of the fund during previous races, entered the fray in support of Bergeron. D West, Avedon's supposed victim, thought Bergeron's charges against her groundless and wrote an open letter dismissing them out of hand, but it did nothing to stop the feud. By this point it had taken on a life of its own. Even so the feud, though the cause of much stress among those caught up in it, aroused little interest among British fans as a whole since most of the action was occurring in the pages of private correspondence. That all changed when the 1985 TAFF race was drawn into the conflict.

Usually those wanting to run in a TAFF race make their intentions known long before the nomination period opens and there are rarely eleventh hour entries, but in the 1985 race there was one. As the nomination period was drawing to a close, the administrators began to receive nominations for Martha Beck. Since one of her nominators missed the deadline date by a week, Beck failed to make the ballot, but that was not the end of the matter. In early November '84, copies of a 'Martha Beck for TAFF' flyer that was being circulated in the American Midwest by Jackie Causgrove were 'leaked' to Linda Pickersgill. This

document urged local fans to vote for Beck by writing in her name on their TAFF ballots, and called her 'the Midwestern candidate'. (Of the other candidates, Rich Coad lived on the West Coast and the Nielsen Haydens on the East Coast, though none of them were actually from these areas originally.) TAFF has never operated on the basis of the candidates representing any particular region of the sending country but there were reasons why Midwestern fans were peculiarly susceptible to such an appeal. During the business session of the 1984 Worldcon, Ben Yalow, an East Coast fan, had suggested that for the purposes of Worldcon rotation the US in future be split into two zones rather than the current three "...in order to eliminate wimpy bids". This quote got somewhat garbled on the grapevine and word went round that an attempt was being made by East and West Coast fans to squeeze out 'the Wimpy Zone', i.e...the Midwest. Much was made of 'the Wimpy Zone' in literature for the Martha Beck write-in campaign, as if a Beck victory would somehow show fans from the coastal regions that the Midwest was still a force to be reckoned with and not so wimpy after all. Needless to say, this appeal to US regional chauvinism didn't go down at all well in the UK since British fans didn't give a damn about such matters. Indeed, they viewed the attempt to swamp the ballot with a massive Midwestern vote as an attempt to disenfranchise them, to render their vote and their voice in this race irrelevant, particularly since no-one involved in the Beck campaign ever directly informed British fandom about it. Beck was completely unknown in the UK and there was no attempt made to start a campaign over here or even to make copies of the flyer available. Noting that candidates Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden had strongly supported administrator Avedon Carol in the still-raging feud, and that Jackie Causgrove had supported Richard Bergeron, many found it impossible to believe that Causgrove's campaign was unconnected with the feud. A British response to all this was inevitable, and it soon materialised.

Linda Pickersgill was appalled by the campaign and determined to do something about it. With husband Greg, she put together a petition that spelled out what was happening and the importance of taking a stand against it. "It is vital that we make our voices heard even though our votes may now seem to count for nothing", read the petition, "...we must register our protests with the TAFF administration over the way our vote is being disregarded". The petition argued its case eloquently enough, but it was reading the copy of the 'Martha Beck for TAFF' flyer attached to it that convinced many to sign. "If the majority of British TAFF voters protest the use of British TAFF funds to support candidates who have no contact or interest in British fandom", concluded the petition, "there will be a mandate for the freezing of such funds until a more acceptable solution is reached". Such was the offense the Beck campaign had caused that copies of the petition rolled in from all parts of the UK, the signatories including most of the best-known fans of the day...and 57% of those who had voted in the TAFF race over here. What with feelings running so high, and all the talk of withdrawing from TAFF and setting up an alternative fund, it was beginning to look as if TAFF couldn't survive a Beck victory. As TAFF administrator, Hansen was faced with a serious quandary. He hadn't been elected to preside over the dissolution of the fund, the destruction of a worthy cause that had endured more than three decades, but could the wishes of a British fandom that had so unequivocally stated its position in this matter be ignored? Whoever won, this was going to be the most crucial race in TAFF's history.

The voting deadline was midnight on 31st December 1984, and the next day the votes were tallied. The final count said it all. In North America, Martha Beck received 183 votes and the Nielsen Haydens 144, while over here the figures were 6 and 117 respectively, which meant the Nielsen Haydens defeated Beck by 261 votes to 189 (both the largest TAFF vote in the UK ever, and the largest overall). It also spelt an end to the feud as far as most of the antagonists were concerned. However, that one half of TAFF thought it was possible to be disenfranchised by a group in the other, and that such acrimony could be generated by something intended to improve the links of friendship between our two fandoms, showed that the TAFF rules were in serious need of another

overhaul. Ironically enough, Hansen had seen the danger of something like this happening and had proposed a couple of changes shortly after assuming office. Unfortunately, Carol vetoed these because Bergeron had just begun his attacks on her and she thought that any tinkering with the rules at that point would have just given him another excuse to pillory her. Hansen had proposed introducing a requirement that in order to win a candidate must secure 25% of the vote in the host country, and was in favour of dropping the write-in vote option, which had always seemed merely a way of avoiding the nomination requirements. Both Carol and the Nielsen Haydens thought the latter would be too difficult to sell to US fandom but a version of the former, modified to the requirement that a winning candidate must secure 20% of the vote on both sides of the Atlantic, was accepted. This proposal was incorporated into the TAFF rules after being ratified at a meeting of current administrators, previous administrators, and founding fathers of TAFF that took place in Leeds at the 1985 Eastercon, the UK National Convention. Greg Pickersgill won the next UK to US race (defeating Judith Hanna and Simon Ounsley) and he too suffered attacks from certain US fans both during and after the race. The pretext usually given for these attacks was that he had written a piece in 1981 in STOP BREAKING DOWN 7 criticising the contemporary state of TAFF. However, since most of these attacks came from those he had opposed by helping to organise the protest petition during the 1985 race, people thoroughly discredited in the eyes of most British fans, they were largely ignored over here. And so the TAFF Wars came, finally, to an end.

...from 'THE STORY SO FAR, a Brief History of British Fandom' (1987).

Brian may protest my account of the 'Martha Beck for TAFF' campaign and claim it wasn't like that, but he would be wrong. How I described it is exactly how it was in the UK. The outrage British fans felt at what they saw as an attempt to steamroller them, to render their participation in that TAFF race totally meaningless and irrelevant, led to a mobilisation over here such as I have never seen in fandom, before or since. There was a grim determination to defeat the Beck campaign at all costs. British fandom was flooded with ballots, and many people used all their powers of persuasion to pull out the vote at every meeting of every fan group they could get the word to.

The anger of British fans wasn't directed at Martha Beck herself, who was regarded as an innocent dupe in this affair, but at those of her campaign managers who were believed to be using the race to settle other scores. If Martha Beck was indeed the widely-respected and well-loved individual described in the flyer - and no-one in Britain had any reason to believe she wasn't - then it really was incredibly nasty of her campaign managers to put her in a position where her winning a TAFF trip would be greeted, as they must have realised, by almost universal hostility in the host fandom. I have no doubt that most of those in the Midwest who voted for Martha Beck did so because they liked her, and that they were unaware of the actual agenda behind the campaign, but in seeking to render the British vote irrelevant Beck's campaign managers gave Midwestern fandom a dirty name in British fandom that persists in some quarters to this day.

Brian's assertion that "the official nomination period and balloting periods for this election were improperly short and had been negligently promoted" is just nonsense. Four of Beck's five required nominators got their nominations in in good time, but the fifth was late and thus, under the rules, Beck's candidacy was disallowed. (Some leniency over deadlines has traditionally been allowed when there were only two candidacies, for obvious reasons, but the Beck candidacy was only one of three in this race.) It was reported in Midwestern fandom that the final nomination was only a day late and thus that the administrator was being unduly harsh in disallowing it. Not so. I was the administrator that nomination was sent to and I received it a week after the deadline. Nor was this a fuck-up by the Post Office - it was postmarked after

the deadline. Write-in votes were eliminated at the insistence of British fans, who saw them as nothing more than a way of circumventing the nominating process, but not until some years after the 1985 race. It was the 20% rule that was introduced in the wake of the Beck affair, to ensure that such a situation could never arise again. TAFF wouldn't survive if it did.

The reason I didn't write anything about this last time is that the whole affair was one of my worse experiences in fandom, and it's not something I care to revisit. When I wrote that brief history of British fandom in 1987, I had no choice but to cover these events, hence the excerpt above, and now that I'm writing a fuller history of British fandom I shall have to delve into my files from that period before the end of the year, files that have been sealed since early in 1985. This is a prospect I view about as enthusiastically as I would taking a dip in a vat of toxic waste. The only reason this piece is being run through FAPA now is to counter what I viewed as an egregious distortion on Brian's part.

MAILING COMMENTS

Feller ct. me: I've yet to see the new Dracula movie, but reviews over here commented on the horrible 'English' accent affected by Keanu Reeves (some even going so far as to compare it with Dick van Dyke's in Mary Poppins, which is regarded by connoisseurs of the form as the worst atrocity of an English accent by an American actor ever captured on film), so to read that an alleged 'Texan' accent in the film is also offensive to real Texans is quite a revelation. Who'd've thought anyone could have put together a film with vocalisations that were offensive to people on both sides of the Atlantic? It's quite a feat, when you think about it.// ct. Indick: A modernised version of an old opera about a vampire, The Vamphyr, was shown on TV here a few months back.// ct. Warner: You might also have pointed out to Harry that whether or not use of a drug has been criminalised is a purely legal distinction and often has little to do with how dangerous or addictive that drug might be. All the evidence I've seen suggests that marijuana is less harmful than either tobacco or alcohol, and certainly less addictive. It's also less addictive than another widely used drug. When Ted White was incarcerated a few years ago for selling marijuana he discovered that being deprived of the drug, of which he had been a regular consumer, produced no withdrawal symptoms at all. What did produce severe craving was being deprived of the cola he used to drink several bottles of each day. Anyone else who has tried to kick caffeine will sympathise, I'm sure.

Speer: "As confusing as Celtic". Umm, what language are you referring to, exactly? The Celtic languages of these islands include Welsh, Manx, Cornish, and Gaelic. I'm afraid your comment makes about as much sense as saying something was "as confusing as European".

Originally, I hadn't intended being in this mailing but Brian didn't really leave me any choice. Only two of these pages actually constitute new material. Since I don't really have anything else to say I'll finish it here, but before you go I'll just take this opportunity to remind you again that avedon and I will be visiting the US at the end of April and look forward to seeing any of you who can make either CORFLU or DISCLAVE. See y'all next mailing.

....Rob Hansen, 21 April 93.