

Mag Without A Name

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F. A. P. A.

WHY?

JAN 1946

"I don't know why..." begins a popular song and I've been singing that phrase for several weeks now.

At first I was in a quandry as to what it was all about and wrote the Officers of FAPA as follows (partial quotation): "...on just what grounds can the LeZombie litho be considered obscene? Does the main figure leer in a manner unbecoming? Are the blood-shot eyes offensive? Has one of the figures a symbolic meaning to Speer unseen by over 900 other recipients of the fanzine ((The Fmz has been circulated to the subscribers of FANEWS and to the NAPA and this is the only comment we have had that did not praise the effort.))"

Ashley did not reply to the letter. Tucker replied only with the blanket ruling that Speer was "upheld". Stanley spent three sessions with the litho and finally found an appendage on the upper center figure - if placed in another position might appear to be a representation of the male organ of reproduction. Warner thought that Speer had made a mistake and probably meant the VOM litho.

...and through it all one thing stuck out predominantly - one man's view, unhampered, unchecked, without any appeal or recourse to review was, is and will be allowed in the future to ban any fmz from a FAPA mailing. HMMMMMM! Interesting!

February 4th (according to AP reports from Washington) "The supreme court struck down a post office department attempt to bar Esquire magazine and its lightly clad ladies from use of second class mail.

"Justice Douglas delivered the high court's 8 - 0 decision. Justice Jackson took no part in the case.

"Douglas said:

"To withdraw the second class rate from this publication today because of its contents seemed to one official not good for the public would sanction withdrawal of the second class rate tomorrow from another periodical whose social and economic views seemed harmful to another official."

"Congress", Douglas added, "has left the postmaster general with no power to prescribe standards for the literature or the art which a mailable periodical disseminates."

I suppose I could consume reams of paper and hours of time arguing pro and con but it would probably all be wasted. Speer is stuck with his view and, incidentally, so are all the members of the FAPA.

I did one obvious thing with the Fall mailing that Speer neglected to do I turned the entire mailing over to the District Postal Inspector. Thereby getting the form letter and ruling Speer got as well as the benefit of a personal conference about the matter. The Inspector pointed out that none of the mailing was objectionable, in as far as he could see (he had the mailing for 10 days) but he found two drawings, neither in Mag Without A Name, which might be objectionable to a "blue stocking". ((The FA was removed from the mailing so that the Inspector would have no indication of any previous opinions on anything.))

At the same time I queried the officers I wrote to Hannes Bok, explained the situation and asked if I had missed out on some interpretation. I also enclosed a copy of the letter to the officers. His reply follows:

Open Letter to Jack Speer:

Mister Speer!

Rumor hath it that my drawing of a LeZombie cover in "Mag Without A Name" was labelled, by you, "obscene".

Webster defines obscene as -- "Foul, filthy, disgusting; offensive to chastity or modesty; impure."

To the pure, all things are pure. So I can't offend your purity. As for views on chastity and modesty, please do me a favor and have a nice long heart-to-heart talk with a competent psychologist. Your ears will probably turn red; and maybe you'll blush, but I'll wager the psychologist will tell you that if I could offend your modesty and chastity, I might be doing you a favor. What was chaste, pure and modest in 1870 is not such NOW.

Remember that obscenity is only a point of view varying with each man's "personal equation". If I disgust you, I'm sorry -- I didn't intend to do so. As a matter of fact, I didn't even know you existed. I'm interested only in constructive activities.

But you disgust me with your fault-finding! And you know I exist -- or you couldn't find fault with me ARE YOU SORRY?

Years ago I used to be somewhat perturbed by people who found "phallic symbolism" in my work. I had not intended such symbolism, but I thought that it might have come from my subconscious, and that at heart I must be a vile monster.

Later I learned that any vertical line can be classed as phallic, and that any lush curve could be called vaginal. And I learned, too, that the fault lay in the observer, not in the artist. Those who see sex in inanimate objects are obsessed with sex, not the objects. If I wanted to, I could get very perturbed over the shape of the Empire State Building -- and I could shudder with horror at doorways -- and I could blush with shame at beholding such things as hot dogs . . . onions . . . flowers . . . roots . . . flagpoles . . . figs . . . pears . . . shells . . .

Remember that only very repressed individuals go about looking for dirt in others' work. It's a form of indirect exhibitionism. A common phenomenon is the repressed woman who subconsciously desires to be raped, and therefore satisfies this craving going about noisily fearing that all men are pursuing her. The person who seeks the lewd where it is unintended is really advertising his own sexual inadequacy. I don't claim that you are seeking such lewdness, but if the shoe fits . . . if there's smoke . . .

I wouldn't bother writing this except I don't want Dunk to have to answer for MY work. As far as I'm concerned, in a hundred years nobody will know you ever existed. Therefore you're so vastly unimportant in a Constructive Scheme of Things that you're not worth bothering about.

Let me conclude with this happy thought:
IF YOU GO AROUND POKING YOUR NOSE IN THE GUTTER, DON'T COMPLAIN OF THE SMELL!

Yours mouselessly,

/Hannes Bok/