

SINGING THE MARSEILLAISE: Remember fandom? Remember cheery ensmallled zines full of (p & t nh) matter, artful triviality, and short letters? You wore knee breeches and I had a sailor hat with ribbons down the back or some such fool thing and anyway you can forget about it, kid; nobody does stuff like that any more. Let's talk about something else.

There's been a lot of discussion of TAFF lately, from representations of the nature and meaning of the tradition to speculations about what the administrators do in their spare time. Too much of it has played fast-and-loose with facts, interpretations, and fact-like objects in matters that should have been approached very carefully indeed. The most charitable word we can put to this is negligence, while the less charitable terms that might conceivably apply don't bear much thinking about. It goes like this: If you're going to start a crusade and set yourself up as savior of something-or-other, you're either sincere about accomplishing good, in which case you have an absolute responsibility to reserve judgement, gather as much information as possible and get your facts straight before proceeding; or else your actions are just posturing and self-gratification, not easily forgiven if by chance the nouns in your sentences happen to correspond to the names of real people and things. For the moment, we are ourselves still watching and listening and taking notes. We'll continue to do so, for a while.

Here, now, we're not pitching into the issues and rumors of issues. There are actually a number of good reasons for this. First, we don't have the resources. We're poor, half-partially-disabled, and still getting settled in New York City. This makes us sitting ducks for anyone more richly endowed with time, energy, and postage stamps, but we simply can't respond as often as we'd like. Second, it's becoming clear to us that no matter how many charges we answer, some of the parties making them seem willing to generate more on the flimsiest of pretexts, so that answering them only invites more. Third, and most importantly, we're TAFF candidates at the moment, and one of the traditional responsibilities of the position is to abstain from mudwrestling for the duration.

But we will say a word on the current TAFF campaign, and Martha Beck's write-in candidacy. We would have preferred having her on the official ballot, and said so when the question first came up -- as did Avedon Carol, the current US administrator. However, what happens in the US is only half of TAFF, and the fact is that the veto came from the British administrators, who were absolutely firm on the point. Britain is its own fandom, with its own customs and traditions that (we say, belaboring the obvious unmercifully) are quite as old and well-established as any in the US. Though we'd have decided the matter differently, we have to respect the legitimacy of the British viewpoint.

The same, unfortunately, cannot be said for those managing the write-in campaign (we absolve Martha Beck from all blame), who don't even seem to be aware that the Brits might take a dim view of having decisions that are theirs by right to make (including, without question, what qualifies a candidate) circumvented by an appeal to sheer weight of numbers.

A quick lesson in demographics: Traditionally, the TAFF electorate has been made up of those people interested enough to vote. As this has worked out in the past, the far greater number of fans on the American side has been counterbalanced by a much higher rate of participation on the British side, and the voting has come out roughly even. But if, at a handful of Midwestern conventions, you conduct a campaign with an appeal based on something other than interest in TAFF for its own sake, you can easily generate more votes than the total number cast in both countries in any previous race. British fandom can't reciprocate; they're effectively disenfranchised. We don't claim to be acting as their spokesmen, but that is how the numbers stack up.

This disregard for British feelings doesn't strike us as reflecting a lot of interest in transatlantic understanding, since it's much more likely to cause schisms and resentments. Which, we protest mildly, is an extremely odd thing to do in the name of TAFF.

It also rankles that the wording of the flyers for the write-in campaign presents it in terms that are distorting, and wholly foreign to previous TAFF races. It urges the election of a "convention fan" (as opposed to one of those fanzine fans). We hadn't realized those were mutually incompatible activities. A great many fans do both, including Jackie Causgrove, who seems to be spearheading the campaign, and also

including ourselves; our souls are in hock to the Atlanta committee at this very moment. It seems a gratuitous way to provide yourself with people to Be Against.

The flyers also present Martha Beck as the candidate of the Midwest, as opposed to the East and West Coast candidates. TAFF has never been contested on a regional basis before; the idea of someone being the candidate from the Midwest or any other area is an invention of the moment, and makes as much sense as voting for the Best Novel Hugo because of where the authors live. And while characterizing Rich Coad as a West Coast fan isn't ridiculous at first glance, we moved to New York this spring, and previously lived in Phoenix, Toronto, San Francisco, Seattle, East Lansing, and Oklahoma City. We don't think we're qualified to be the East Coast candidates. This is, again, gratuitous.

Finally, the flyers make repeated reference to getting in there and proving that the Midwest isn't 'The Wimpy Zone.' Now, as we understand the story (vaguely!), that remark was made at the LACon business meeting during a discussion of bid rotations. The only other thing we know about it is that Ben Yalow insists that he was not the person who said it. How hustling a few hundred TAFF votes will refute this statement, we cannot imagine. No logic at all -- but it is one more thing to Be Against.

Absurd stuff, really; almost funny, except that these allegations, so cheaply and insubstantially constructed, are only cheap to the people making them. Their cost falls elsewhere; real hurt has been done to real people, to their traditions and reputations for personal integrity, and to the sense of good will and commonality that was one of the best and strongest values of fandom. More on this we'll leave to D. West, who has finished being a TAFF candidate and can say what he pleases.

One more thing. We've been in fandom a long time. It means a lot to us, and we aren't going to go away. Neither are the other people who feel strongly about this, nor are the consequences of these doings. The race will end in a month. Our further comments are deferred until that time.

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A STATEMENT ON TAFF by D. West: "As the losing candidate I wish to make it absolutely clear that I have no complaints whatsoever about either the result or the administration of the 1983/84 TAFF election. I consider that the attacks made upon the integrity of Avedon Carol as North American TAFF Administrator are wholly unjustified and unjustifiable and represent nothing more solid than slurs and innuendo arising from personal animosity and malice. To date no evidence at all has been produced to show that Avedon Carol is guilty of any wrongdoing, and I therefore call upon those concerned either to produce their proofs without further delay and equivocation or to make a full public withdrawal of all their allegations. In the event that this is not speedily done I urge fans everywhere to join me in publicly condemning with the utmost severity the behavior of Avedon Carol's attackers." (October 24th 1984)

[D. West to Avedon Carol, November 14th 1984:] "Yes, I stand by my 'Statement on TAFF'. Bergeron's 'revelations' in his HTT piece are even feebler than anticipated and prove nothing except that he is still willing to use every unscrupulous trick of rhetoric in the book to vent his spleen. At the time I wrote the Statement I was not aware of the exact contents of your letter to him, but I took it for granted (from the fact that it was marked DNQ and from Bergeron's own hints) that it contained some less-than-wholly-polite reference(s) to myself. In fact, I was quite prepared for something very much ruder. This might have annoyed me personally, but it would have had no effect on my assessment of the validity of Bergeron's charges. You aren't on trial for being impolite -- the real issue is whether or not you violated the (unwritten) rules of confidentiality and impartiality. Merely making a few rude remarks about a candidate to someone who has already voted (and who is specifically asked not to repeat what has been said) does not constitute a violation. Bergeron's 'case' is complete nonsense from first to last."

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