

ZYMIC 8 *** Published for OMPA 17, September '58 *** Address indignant notes, cheques, checks, etc. to A. Vincent Clarke, 7 Inchmory Rd., Catford, London SE6.

HELP STAMP OUT CAFIA!

Nov. 17th, 1957.
From A. Vinc/ Clarke
To

BORDER=====

====SKIRMISH====

This is being sent to a short list of active s-f enthusiasts, and should really be headed HELP WANTED.

The OBSERVER of Sunday, November 17th., contains in C.A. Lejeunes film-review column details of the policy of the NEW SHAKESPEARE THEATRE, LIVERPOOL. They show films on Sunday nights to the NEW SHAKESPEARE FILM SOCIETY, and have just issued a brochure giving their policy and general rules. Most of these are aminantly sansible, BUT one quoted by Lejeune reads:

"There will be no war films 'in the present Hollywood-Pinewood sense of the word - or films of violonce, horror, science-fiction or exaggorated sax."

This obviously calls for indignant letters, asking why the category of s-f should be included wholesale. No other address for the NS Theatro is known, but Lejeune (who should obviously receive a copy) would be of OBSERVER, 22 Tudor St., London, E.C.4.

Have a go, if it's only a PC., please!

Sincerely,

To/ The Secretary, Shakespeare Film Society.

Wed., Nov. 20th

Dear Sirs,

It was with some surprise that I read in Miss C.A. Lejeune's OBSERVER column last Sunday that, with other proposals of varying merit, you propose to ban science-fiction films as a class from your Society's cinema.

I am not, of course, acquainted with the personnel of your Society. It may, for instance, consist exclusively of old ladies with strongly religious viows, who would naturally tend to be critical of this particular sub-classification of the Arts.

Given, however, that your Society comprises a normal cross-section of those interested in the Cinema as an Art, like myself, I must say that I can see nothing irreconcilable between this and an interest in science-fiction, in print or on the screen.

Your classification of science-fiction with distasteful sensationalism is insulting, and can only be excused on the grounds of ignorance. Do you really imagine that the stuff Hollywood (and, alas, this country) so often issues under the label of science fiction is unreservedly welcomed by those of us who take an interest in the medium? There is good science-fiction and bad science-fiction, and the fact that so far the latter has predominated is no reason for an uncritical acceptance of a dramatic classification as an act of

BIG ALL-TEXT, OTHER FOLKS LETTERS, ISSUE!

judgement.

I think it quite regrettable that a responsible body, however small its influence may be on the taste of the general public, should exhibit such prejudice in the field of Art. I would have thought that one of the chief tasks of a Film Society would have been to select what it considered to be worth screening as a fine example of Cinema, without reference to the subject used as its vehicle. It is deeply disappointing, when considering your other intentions, to observe this lapse of judgement.

Yours sincerely,

Copy to Miss Lojuno

From A. Mercer to Shakespeare Film Society.

24th November.

Dear Sirs,

Your policy with regard to the films you select for showing to your Society has come to my attention (via the "Observer"), and I note that science-fiction has been put under a blanket embargo together with war films (in the present Hollywood sense of the word), violence, horror and exaggerated sex.

This seems to amount to a complete embargo on science-fiction on the grounds of undesirability. If the tag "in the present Hollywood - or etc - sense" had been appended as it is to war films it would be understandable, for present-day science-fiction-type films are not all necessarily as bad - or as good - as each other. And then there are classics, such as Things to Come, which one would have thought was just the type of film to deserve showing to a serious cinematic society - surely to ban this sort of thing on the strength of "The Vampire from Umpteen Thousand Megacycles" is absurd.

Incidentally, it occurs to me that had a similar blanket embargo been applied in Shakespeare's day, at least half of his own works would have been automatically disqualified on one of the above counts or another.

Copy to C.A. Lojuno

Yours sincerely,

WSFS LETTERHEAD

From John K.H. Brunner to Shakespeare Film Society

19th November

Dear Sir,

While I think the general outline of the policy of your film society is admirable, to judge from the quotations regarding it in C.A. Lojuno's column of The Observer this Sunday, I am disturbed and annoyed to see that yet one more wholesale generalisation has been made about science-fiction. At the time of the purge of obscene literature in pocket-books a few years back, one grew accustomed to this sort of thing from back-street newsagents; to find it perpetuated in the leading Sunday newspaper is altogether another question.

It is no fairer to class (for example) Devil Girl From Mars with The Day the Earth Stood Still than it would be to lump John Ford's Stagecoach in with Roy Rogers & Champion Meet Abbott and Costello and condemn Westerns. As a writer of science fiction myself I would remind you that the same man (Ray Bradbury) did the screen-play for both Moby Dick and It Came From Outer Space. Having seen both, I'd say the latter was better integrated as a film.

Please think again, and this time bear the facts in mind.

Yours faithfully,

To ~~1/2~~ The Secretary, from S.L. Birchby, B.Sc.Tech, A.M.I.C.E.

23/11/57

Dear Sir,

Out of context the most reasonable arguments tend to assume a Humpty-Dumpty illogicality. I assume, therefore, that you had adequate reasons for phrasing the policy of the New Shakespeare Film Society as you did, or as the "Observer" quoted you as doing, but as the quotation is all I have to go by, these reasons escape me.

I refer you, Sir, to Miss C.A. Lejeune's column in 'The Observer' of November 17th., in which your Society is quoted as saying that it will show no films of "violence, horror, science-fiction, or exaggerated sex."

No doubt good taste dictates what should or should not be shown to a cinema audience on a Sunday, or failing that, the Watch Committee. I admit that I myself would not think of joining any film society that made a practice of showing some of the current lurid drivel from Hollywood.

However, I am curious to know why you include the category of "science fiction" along with those of "violence, horror, and sex." As one who has for thirty years been reading science fiction with no marked crumbling of morals, I find the association odd.

I wonder if you have in mind that type of film commonly advertised by means of posters showing bug-eyed monsters chasing blondes? I agree that there is little artistic merit there, but I should imagine that you have your other categories in mind for such films. After all, the mere fact that a film deals with, say, a monster emerging from a flying saucer, does not make it "science-fiction", any more than a handful of classical allusions make 'Titus Andronicus' a great play.

The treatment is all. It is surely possible to make great plays and great films out of any subject, from the G.P.O to the Gold Rush. Could you seriously contend that the whole field of science has inspired not one film worth showing again?

I am, Sir, Yours etc.

From Walter A. Willis to The Secretary:

Gentlemen,

It is sad when Hollywood producers bill cheap horror films as "science fiction", but it is alarming when a film society lets itself be taken in. Your attitude is all too reminiscent of that of literary snobs to the film itself twenty years ago.

The impact on society of scientific and technological development is surely a subject with vast potentialities for the making of good films.

Yours etc.

Copies of other letters were received, notably from Ron Bennett and Dave Cohen, but unfortunately the copies have been mislaid; things do get mislaid with three faans living together. However, Ron's did elicit a reply from Miss Lejeune herself, the only one received. It may have been because Ron addressed her as 'Mr.' The reply:

"Thank you very much for your courtesy in sending me the copy of the letter to the New Shakespeare Film Society.

"I was extremely interested in what you say about science-fiction, and although the subject doesn't fascinate me myself (perhaps because I'm a woman) ((dig)) I know what very wide appeal it has, and feel that the Wanamaker people are misguided in putting a tabu (if in fact they have done so) on all films of this kind. You are most correct in pointing out the difference between a Wells, let us say, and a Cat Woman from Outer Space. I know the New Shakespeare Theatre has had other letters on the same lines."

Yours sincerely

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Letter from The New Shakespeare Theatre Club. A typewritten but virtually identical letter was sent to all those who wrote to them:

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of ---- and appreciate your kindness in making suggestions regarding our proposed film programmes as outlined by Miss C.A. Lejeune, and we enclose a copy of our current brochure which will no doubt interest you.

The first General Meeting of the New Shakespeare Film Society was held yesterday when the question of the content of films was briefly referred to and it was clearly the feeling of the meeting that each film should be judged on its merits. This means that while the so-called science-fiction films frequently shown in the commercial cinema will be ruled out, any serious science-fiction film of good quality would not be excluded solely on account of its subject matter.

We hope that you will continue to take an interest in our Society and if you are ever in Liverpool we hope you will take the opportunity to visit the New Shakespeare Theatre.

Yours faithfully,

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FASTER

THAN

SHHH-H-H!

The Science Correspondent of the London EVENING NEWS ("World's Largest Evening Sale"), one Robert Chapman, reported from The Hague (and presumably from the '58 Astronautics Congress held there) a most peculiar thing. Dated Friday, Aug. 29th, the story was based on state-

ments from two of America's Top Brass in the astronautics field; James G. Fulton of the special committee for Astronautics & the Exploration of Outer Space* and Admiral Haywood, Chief of U.S. Navy research development, as reported by Fulton.

* It would be interesting to trace the origin of that tautology, 'Outer Space'. Was it Hollywood's contribution to 20th Century Americanese ?

It's difficult to see from Chapman's report if he's just having his leg pulled at a hotel bar after the serious business of the day has finished, or not. "Perhaps the world's greatest scientific secret - a break-through into new technology by U.S. Navy research men. Even the code-name is closely guarded." ((My u/line))

Fulton says that It's a new development in the field of ion-emissions and electronics. ((These are different fields?)) The "ion-emission monitor" was developed from ideas that first occurred to German and Japanese scientists, but "it has nothing to do with radar. It goes beyond radar." American scientists are using the moon to observe what is going on in other countries. "Our results come quicker than the speed of light - 186,000 miles per second. They are virtually instantaneous."

Chapman gives the impression that the mysterious ion-emitter uses reflections from the moon, and hammers in the point about instantaneous reception only two or three sentences after the previous mention:

"What about the speed of light - is that maximum?"
"We don't think so any more," he replied.

Admiral Haywood's contribution to the discussion is the simple simon-pure statements "We have it in our power to monitor the whole world" and "We do not have to wait for the production of satellites in orbits or moon shots, or landing on the moon'." These are the sort of wish-fulfillment fantasies that any of America's top-brass would be glad to embrace after a glance at the latest news from Russia, but Fulton's statements are something else again. Say that Professor Floodlenik has invented a widget capable of emitting ions, electrons or wee glass marbles at the Moon, reflecting same from the Moon to Earth, and picking up the reflections from Earth to Moon again, you have "virtually instantaneous" transit of something over approx. 1,000,000 miles (4 times between Earth & Moon). This is going some. It would take light nearly 6 seconds for the journey.

Something discovered tootling along at 6c or thereabouts would leave Einstein's Theory gathering dust along with phlogiston and the Pilt-down Man. It'd be nice if it were so, from the viewpoint of pure science, and even nicer from the viewpoint of embryo Kimball Kinnisons. A journey to Proxima Centauri would take about 9 months with the Floodlenik drive, and no silly stuff about attaining infinite mass either.

Personally, I'll take this thing with a barrel of salt, but you people might like to keep your eyes open for reports on "ion-emitters" and whether a Congressman named Fulton has been put against a wall and shot...I'm doing so.

-A LETTER FROM C.R. HARRIS ESQ

Dear Vinc and etcotras,

25/2/58

I trust that it isn't too late to comment on SFN No 15? I did wait a week in case No. 16 was in the mail, but if it's going to be a few more days I thought I might just as well comment on each issue separately.

I usually make a point of not commenting on fanzines, but SFN is a sort of tradition of fandom, and I thought I'd like to acknowledge it. After all, I'm one of those oold-timers who can remember way back to No. 14 (Ghod the postage due on those stone tablets!) and, after I pass on to my reward, there will be no one left in the pub to scream "Liar" when the neos assert that it's just

another one-shot and that the index number is a hoax.

It seems different now though. No balloon theory, no letter column, (whatever happened to young Verne who used to write in so enthusiastically) ((turned pro)) and a whole blank sheet of paper at the back. And no S*x either.

Why is this, dear boy? Why can't we have a glimpse of silken thigh or a port tip-tilted what'sit occasionally? Even Ted Carnell is at last learning a little lechery helps the circulation, and if you'll hop aboard the gravy train along with the rest of us you could probably triple your circulation.

The introduction for instance. This Gothic stuff just doesn't sell. Ghod! if Spillane saw this he'd clobber you insensible with the current WATCHTOWER. Wise up, Clarkie, and let Ol' Uglyhead start rearing.....

"She was everything a man desires and never gets. Her red-gold hair fell to her flawless shoulders like tiny serpents, and in the depths of her azure eyes there swam a promise of paradise on earth. As she leaned across the chaise-longue the mandarin-styled robe gaped open revealing a cleavage comparable to that of the Grand Canyon, Ariz. His arms went about her and his bruised mouth found haven in her hair until her lips came up to meet his. There was something about her that twanged the inner core of his being, a subtle electricity that seemed to bind them ever closer together. He pushed her backward gently and those trusting eyes stared deep into his as his hand found the silken tie that fastened her robe. Slowly, lingeringly, he pushed the thin silk from her shoulders. There, nestling like a jewel between those perfect thrusting breasts was that which he had scoured half a continent for. Pulse pounding like a trip-hammer, hand trembling uncontrollably, he picked up..... RUNE No. 15"

(And, I only hope he dropped it promptly on the floor, said "There's a time and a place for everything, buster" and reached for the light switch.)

As for the rest, only the hallowed "I liked it but I can't think of any comments on it" will suffice....

Umm, I would like a London clubroom myself, but it's so difficult to arrange. In Liverpool I expect all the members live within a bus-ride of the club room, but in London I imagine at least half the members would live five miles away from any chosen site....

The only solution I can see is for one of us to land a top pools dividend and then use the money to build a fan village complete with clubroom, convention hotel, eight postal deliveries a day and a Gestetner branch on the corner. (And, I should point out, it is useless to rely on me in this matter because I indulge in the pools only very occasionally and, when I do, it is only one 6d line on the 4 ways. It seems unlikely that I shall ever win £200,000).

Bestest

As you may remember, ZYMIC is primarily intended as my 'ideas/discussion' OMPA-zine, and LAUNCHING SITE is the reviewzine. I'm reluctant to merge their purposes at this late date, but, not for the first time, I'm wishing that I had the time to issue both together. Failing that, I'm making an oblique (courtesy WAW) statement of my feelings regarding John Brunner's description of the Aldermaston march by printing the following letter which I wrote to Dave Riko, publisher of RUR, back in May. Dave had taken part in a similar type of march at the same time, and Mrs. Gem Carr wrote in a letter charmingly querying if he was aware that he was taking

part in a Commie-inspired demonstration, and generally implying he was either stupid or wanting to deceive the fans.

Now, there are a number of things about RUR and its companion FANAC which I am growing more and more to dislike...I like old-fashioned things like truth and straight reporting in my newszines...but Mrs Carr's letter stuck in my craw, and I had to pen an answer to certain points, as follows:

..".To criticise one of Mrs. Carr's letters is almost impossible for anyone with a knowledge of logic and simple semantics; the front of illogic, non-sequiturs, loaded words, unreason and sheer blind dogmatic prejudice is so wide that it's like confronting a fermenting manure-pile with a toy spade...one hardly knows where to begin, and whether the job's worth it in any event.

" However, it's possible to discern that she is for the continuance of Nuclear Tests. She doesn't actually say so in so many words...that's not the Carr way... but she says with approval that "the US experts in the field, such as Teller himself, assure the public...the tests are necessary." Why she uses the words "the experts in the field" is difficult to explain on any grounds other than those of self-deceit; plenty of experts ...and not only American...are convinced that the tests are harmful. Citing Teller is stupid; as the AEC's political/scientist front he'd hardly say that his job was as a leading propagandist for slow murder.. and that is the meaning of the accusations being uttered by the anti-testers.

"Mrs. Carr, with a magnanimity which must have given her a pain, admits that the majority of those in your particular protest march believed that it was a protest. I presume she thinks that the minority were Communist subversives anxious to get their pictures in the press and their deceptions in Hoover's records. However, if you protest against the opinions of your Leaders, who Know Best, you are "fuzzy minded, emotional do-gooders and wishful thinkers." "Fuzzy minded" is good, coming from such a source. What's fuzzy-minded about being alarmed about a subject on which scientists are divided? In the latest Gallup Poll published in this country (today) (+ 20th May)+) 43% think the US and Britain should stop now, and a further 19% after the present tests are complete. This is quite simple, and I wish I could reduce it to one-syllable words for Mrs. Carr's benefit: 62% of those polled want Nuclear Tests stopped, now or in the near future. Is that clear enough for her, do you think?

"I don't know what an "emotional do-gooder" is in Mrs. Carr's lexicon of abuse; put it against its antithesis, "emotional evil-door" and you can see how much it means. As for "wishful thinkers," as far as I'm concerned this refers to people who hope that "wishing will make it so." Taking part in a protest march such as this may be futile when you have a body of frightened men to convince (such as those who believe that H - and A-Bomb testing is in some way a deterrent) but it certainly doesn't rate in the same class with sitting back on your rear like Mrs Carr and hoping that your particular set of Authoritative Opinions are right.

" The issue of H- and A-Bomb tests cuts right across political prejudices for anyone with a spark of common sense; cancer is no respecter of creeds, whether you're Communist or Capitalist. If you argue that the risk (and the undoubted fact that the radio-activity level is increased with every explosion, with the statistical certainty that each one causes injury and death at some future time) is justified by the ends you hope to achieve, exactly the same argument can be used to justify every cruelty committed in the name of political evolution. I wonder if Mrs. Carr could understand that...that Nuclear Tests as a way of ensuring the continuance of one's Way of Life are on a level with Soviet concentration camps and

NKVD purges?

"In any case, Mrs. Carr has one hell of a nerve shooting off her mouth in this matter. I don't know much about her, but I'm sure she's past the age of child-bearing. She need have no fear that any offspring (if she were capable of having any) would be a mutated monster. By the same token, she is old enough in relation to most of us in fandom to have less future before she dies, with consequently less chance of incurring some type of radiation disease. This is an argument by and for the young, Mrs. Carr, and any of us are perfectly justified in telling you to keep your mouth shut unless you have something of positive value to contribute to what to you must be an essentially meaningless debate.

"Hell, look at me on this soap-box. Trouble is, I like fandom and don't like to see it contaminated by intolerance and stupidity. If you can't use the above, Dave, you might find some way of passing it along to GMC....."

It wasn't printed, and I don't know if it was passed along to GMC 'cos I had no reaction from her, but it still represents my feelings on the subject. Since the above was written we've had the Geneva Conference and also Teller's resignation.

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 "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed.

"The cost of one modern bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities; two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population; two fine, fully equipped hospitals"

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MORE HARRISIANA

24/4/58

"I've been spending weeks cutting a million zillion stencils (this is going to be a Monster Issue) (A free dinosaur with every copy) and I'm sick of the sight of the damn things...

"Funniest thing at the Con happened on Sunday morning after breakfast when Archie Mercer tried to enlist my aid in collecting 49 Gideon bibles for the next OMPA mailing. I still giggle whenever I think of Archie standing outside my bedroom clutching his bible and making the suggestion.

"I only stayed over the Saturday night, but managed to get nicely squiffy at the party and initiated a Project to circumcise Burgess at midnight and raffle the proceeds in aid of TAFF. It was rather dirty, but funny without being obscene. Everybody was helping out with suggestions, and I was a little sorry in the end that nothing ever came of it. So was the girl who suggested that we could jog Hammott's elbow at the Crucial Moment and then have a Big Raffle with two consolation prizes.

23/8/58

"I know that I owe you all letters and I'm sorry about it. I'm sorry that this isn't a proper letter too. The trouble is the car, of course. ((Chuck passed his driving test first time, and I hope WAW will get around to publishing Chuck's report of the test sometime)). I am still in the first stages of enchantment and have to go out and obscenely fondle the bumpers or pat the radiator every five minutes or so. I've done 1,200 miles already in it, and when I'm not driving (ha!) I'm either cleaning it or peering into its guts and trying to puzzle out what the little bits are. I hold to my old theory that malevolent demons are intimately involved in it somewhere, and the only actual dismantling that I have attempted so far is to remove the dipstick but I have every intention of becoming all mechanical eventually, and even went so far as buying a screwdriver from Woolworths last Saturday. This should give you some idea of the enormous change the horseless carriage has made in my personality." END