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fans with a disease that causes them to drown in their own bile?

It hurts to see someone like Bergeron descending to this sleazy level of activity and self-justification: "A number of you expressed reactions from wondering if my remarks /in WIZ #10/ on the sexual appetites of Avedon Carol didn't just possibly 'perhaps skirt the boundaries of poor or at least questionable taste' (Bob Lichtman) to a condemnation of 'unworthy retaliation' (Chuck Harris). Thank God. I was beginning to think you were all moral idiots. It's good to know that all of you aren't. The point was that comment on sexual conduct is beside the point and I'm relieved some of you were suitably outraged." How disingenuous! Apparently Bergeron is arguing that two wrongs make right: an exhibition of what he considers bad taste requires a response in (at least) equally bad taste. That's a curious stance for anyone to take.

But hell hath no fury like Bergeron confronting Avedon's off-hand remark (indeed, framed by parentheses), "I don't know if Cesar is real or not -- or if he's gay or not -- but I don't think he works as a second voice." Apparently what struck Bergeron as a "comment on sexual conduct" that justified his response was the phrase "or if he's gay or not." Whether this strikes you as making a mountain out of a mole hill may depend on how you feel about homosexuality, how you feel about the Laney-inspired wave of homophobia that reached its peak in the 1964 Boondoggle and then collapsed, and whether you're aware of Avedon's own attitude towards homosexuality (which is supportive and not antagonistic).

"Now," Bergeron thunders, "I'd like our Guardians Of The Public Order to tell me what right Avedon Carol had to run that type of scurrility with her Taff report and what level of taste should be expected in a Taff administrator. Or do you think this conduct is fine in a highly visible representative of fandom, but that us lesser lights have to toe a certain line or risk fannish wrath? I would like to know."

Sigh.... One hates to watch one's respected friends making fools of themselves, and I find the sight of Richard Bergeron in High Dudgeon distressing, because he has apparently blinded himself to both perspective and facts. Fact Number One: THE AMNESIA REPORT (in which "that type of scurrility" appeared) is not a TAFF report. It is a four-page stopgap fanzine -- as Avedon put it in its colophon, "the sort of fanzine you do when your regular issue seems like too much work" -- put out between regular issues of her BLATANT. Its first three pages have little or nothing to do with TAFF, but, as Avedon told me, "Since I was planning to put out a fanzine anyway, I thought I'd include the just-counted balloting results rather than waste TAFF money and my own time putting out an additional and separate TAFF organ giving the same information. In view of the fact that the previous TAFF administrator had still not sent me the list of voters promised after my own election, I decided publication of such a list for this race could wait...."

That Bergeron has based much of his ire on his misunderstanding of the nature of THE AMNESIA REPORT is made obvious by his subsequent characterizations of the fanzine: "If she saw nothing morally wrong in accompanying a report of the results of the Taff election with a defense of Ted White against Eric Mayer /this is a reference to the first and major item in THE AMNESIA REPORT, "Ted White's Group Mind," which Avedon insists was not in response to anything by Eric Mayer/, or if she saw nothing morally wrong with conjecturing before the Taff electorate about the sexual orientation of a new fan she doesn't even know...." "She gives one to wonder why pages of The Amnesia Report are devoted to entirely extraneous matters when a fraction of its space could have been devoted to something as simple as a list of the (80?) Stateside fans who (we are told) voted...." (Avedon: "I do not consider the voicing of my own opinions in my own fanzine to be 'ex-

traneous matters.' In the context of THE AMNESIA REPORT, the TAFF results were the extraneous matters and it was very nice of me to use my own time, space, and money to print the results when it would have been easier just to wait 'til Glycer printed them. I saved TAFF some bucks, too.") "As the administrator of a fund to which much lip service is paid as an instrument of international friendship she has accompanied its official report with uncalled for speculations about a fan she does not know and lethal babble anonymously directed at Eric Mayer about Ted White's Group Mind. She chooses to dwell on such moronic concepts and by these actions shows her total lack of interest in developing the good will of Taff or, indeed, tending to its business in a conscientious manner."

Sigh again. What does it do to Bergeron's case against Avedon if he admits that THE AMNESIA REPORT was not an "official report" to "the TAFF electorate"? From here it looks like Bergeron's entire argument is seriously undermined.

I suppose I should comment, in passing, on Avedon's "Ted White's Group Mind," since it is in this piece that she "conjectur(ed) ... about the sexual orientation of a new fan...." According to Avedon, "I started thinking I had to write it back around the time of ConStellation, because something Patrick said to me really pissed me off. I believe it was, 'Yeah, but your opinion doesn't count to them either, because they think you're just another apologist for Ted White.' I resolved definitely to write it at Lunacon when the Nielsen Haydens and I had a related conversation regarding yet further charges about us of the same nature. We're all sick of having our opinions dismissed as just more apologia for Ted -- this insult is not an attack on Ted, it's an attack on the personal and intellectual integrity of Patrick, Teresa, and me. We don't like being lumped in with someone we frequently disagree with just because we sometimes agree with him. At that time, I was unaware that Eric Mayer might have been one of the people who felt that way about us, and in fact to my knowledge he has never accused me of being in TW's Group Mind." (According to his letter in THE MOVING PAPER FANTASY, Eric lumps Dan Steffan, rich brown, and Terry Carr in my Group Mind....)

Here's how Avedon opened the piece:

"Over the last couple of years I've been noticing talk of Ted White's Group Mind, which apparently includes not only Dan Steffan but Patricia Nielsen Hayden (nice kid -- I wonder what she does with all those postcards), Richard Bergeron (I don't know if Cesar is real or not -- or if he's gay or not -- but I don't think he works as a second voice), and sometimes even myself on special occasions. I gather that anyone who has ever agreed with Ted on any subject, or anyone who disagrees with someone who disagrees with Ted, can easily qualify as a member of Ted's group mind. I guess rich brown is. I wonder if Terry Highes is. I think I recently heard Terry Carr lumped in there. Anyone care to add Linda Blanchard? Hey, this is fun -- how many members of Ted White's Group Mind can you name? Is Jerry Kaufman one? How about Greg Benford? Certainly Paul Williams must be. Has Stu Shiffman escaped the lethal mental vacuum cleaner? Lucy Huntzinger? Bill Gibson? God, who's left?"

I can't argue with the premise. It is insulting to say of anyone that if he shares my opinion about something, or defends my stand on something, it is because he has somehow fallen under my sway. And I suppose it's ironic that what we are now witnessing is a falling-out of two of the principals in my "group mind." Had I really any influence over these people, this would not have occurred.

Years ago, when Les Gerber was an active fan, the term "Gerberize" was coined to describe his over-enthusiastic defenses of various people, defenses which sometimes seemed to bury the very people he was supporting. In Avedon's effort to prove she's not my lacky or sychophant, I feel she comes

close to Gerberizing me. But to characterize the piece as "lethal babble" (did Bergeron pick up the word "lethal" from Avedon's phrase, "the lethal mental vacuum cleaner"?) seems excessive.

It appears to me that Bergeron has exhibited a form of style-deafness. THE AMNESIA REPORT was the first fanzine Avedon did after collaborating on RUDE BITCH with Lucy Huntzinger, and there is some carry-over (particularly in the section on p.3 titled "What Can You Expect From A Rude Bitch?"). Avedon's style is often sarcastic, lippy, and ironic; the whole "rude bitch" schtick grows out of a silly attack on Avedon by Frances Jane Nelson, to which Avedon responded with humor rather than vitriol, siezing the apallation of Rude Bitch for herself. Okay, so Avedon can be rude. Bergeron admired this quality in Ratfandom and Avedon practices it better than most Americans. But what Bergeron understands and accepts in a Roy Kettle he seems bewildered and angered by in Avedon. That's unfortunate, for had he considered the context and the style in which she cast her remarks (both in THE AMNESIA REPORT and in her letter to him), he might not have reacted as he has.

But then, Bergeron is adept at manipulating style to his own ends. Consider this passage:

"Avedon knows exactly through which ribs the knife should be inserted in order to penetrate the heart most quickly. Before she slips on the pool draining from the deft incision inflicted on West, she also allows as how she found it 'refreshing' that she was 'unfamiliar with the normal run of local fanpolitics' (having already forgotten that anyone might be running against her ex-roomate)."

There is little in that passage but venom. Its context is Bergeron's attempt to prove that everything Avedon did as a TAFF winner and administrator was underhanded and designed to sabotage D. West's TAFF campaign. Thus, Avedon's AlbaCon report for ANSIBLE ("lifted directly from my journal notes and unedited") is seen in a sinister light, and Avedon's remark about West's domino playing, "I do wish, however, that D. West would take up a game which makes a more interesting spectator sport," is viewed as a murderous stab to West's heart. How melodramatic -- and how silly.

Unfortunately, Bergeron's case against Avedon rests on such hyperbole.

To buttress it, however, he resorts to quoting from private letters not intended for publication. Avedon's was explicitly DNQed; mine (not attributed to me but to "an associate of Avedon Carol's" -- now I'm in her Group Mind!) was DNP. "In February, 1984," says Bergeron, "I was one of an alarming number of people who voted for D. West. I say 'alarming' because shortly after mailing my ballot I received an astonishing and agitated letter from Avedon Carol appraising me of the drift of the voting -- a drift which she makes abundantly clear was not to her liking. She analyzes the reasons for and the sources of West's support and laments with some feeling the trends in the voting. She even projects a possible victory for West. In retrospect, I believe this letter was nothing more than a devious bit of manipulation intended to lull West's supporters (with whom she might have assumed I was in general contact) into a false sense of success and spur Hansen's supporters into voting. The major part of the letter is DNQ..." One wonders how Avedon expected to manipulate Bergeron, and, through him, "West's supporters" with a DNQ letter -- unless, of course, she somehow knew he'd not respect her DNQ, as indeed he has not. "...but I would question whether a DNQ should have force in a matter which I regard as nothing less than a betrayal of public trust," Bergeron continued. He says he regards her personal and private and explicitly DNQed letter as "a campaign document." Why?

Avedon says, "I was surprised (not 'alarmed' or 'agitated') when Bergeron voted for D. West, because at that time the interplay between them seemed to suggest that Bergeron did not feel West had a properly fannish attitude about things like reading old fanzines. I was frankly curious about

his reasoning, since in this regard he seemed to be in agreement with Rob's attitude. Now, that's just an inference, but I'm sure I'm not the only person who was surprised when Bergeron came out in support of West. As soon as I got Bergeron's ballot, I wished I could call Ted up and spring the surprise on him and see what his opinion was." (If she had, I'd have told her I already knew Bergeron was supporting West and I wasn't surprised. Bergeron and West enjoy a curious relationship in which it appears that the more West excoriates him, the more Bergeron respects him for it. West himself appears to find this puzzling, but a not-unenjoyable game.) "Many people had given me their (unsolicited) reasons for the way they voted," Avedon continues. "(What alarmed me about the people voting for D. West was not the number, but the reasons they were giving. More than one ballot had arrived (as well as some phone calls) bearing information that this vote was not so much a vote for West -- or even against Hansen -- but rather a vote against Ted White. West was feuding with White, and as one voter put it, 'Anyone who's feuding with Ted White can't be all bad.' D. West is a fine writer and he deserved to be voted for on that basis, among others. But I was appalled at the notion that people were treating the race like some sort of grudge-match against someone who wasn't even in it. To me it was Rob Hansen, Jophan himself -- and I'm not the only person who sees him this way either -- versus Anti-fan, or at least anti-American Fan, and if West wanted to run his non-campaign that way, that was his business, but if Rob lost because people didn't like Ted White, that was disgusting.)" (I'd like to point out that I don't regard one exchange of letters two years ago in WARHOON as an ongoing "feud," and I seriously doubt West does either. Anyone who voted for West for such silly reasons is, in my book, a prime fugghead. But let's get out of these parentheses and back to Avedon:)

"Since Bergeron had already voted, I couldn't influence him, so I wrote and asked him howcome (in my usual laid-back and genteel style, being the well-known ladylike person I am). I thought he'd say something like that since he wasn't meeting him he was interested in the trip report and thought West's might be better, or that he just thought the weight of West's work was great enough that it balanced out Rob's fanac, or something like that -- all perfectly legitimate reasons. That's what I meant by 'and you wouldn't be meeting him anyway.' Meeting the candidate is one of the primary reasons for the way people vote for TAFF. But I'm well aware that the report, as well as whether it is felt the candidate deserves the honor, among many other things, all play a part, and I have never argued with these reasons. While I am aware that some people have voiced the opinion that someone who won't be meeting the candidate shouldn't really have much say in the matter, I think this is silly. Written fanac has always been of great importance to TAFF voters, and as fanzine fans I can't even imagine why we would make such an exception. What I wanted to know from Bergeron was why, if he disagreed so strongly with West's philosophical stance on matters of fanmanship, he was still voting for him. Well, I expected him to respond that he didn't take that issue as seriously as I may have thought, and that it didn't outweigh his respect for West's writing ability. What I got instead -- and this did surprise me -- was not a pro-West sort of explanation but rather an anti-Hansen response. He had completely misinterpreted that old TAFF-and-the-Welsh joke, which I had caught on to a long time ago, even though no one explained it to me and I had no idea what it referred to (geography is not my strong suit anyway, and I had no previous knowledge of the River Taff), and this, among other things, had apparently made him unwilling to vote for or support Rob." This echoes the anti-Hansen tone of both Bergeron's letters to me on the subject, and the anti-Hansen material which began appearing in WIZ. To date Bergeron has yet to print Hansen's well-considered response to these public jibes, a copy of which I have. Back to Avedon: "I

was surprised at Bergeron, since this Taff/Welsh joke was not exactly a big secret. Funny how Langford's jokes left less of an impression on him than my tired and unmemorable domino jokes that I was too unoriginal and forgetful to refrain from repeating three or four times. At any rate, I wrote back to Bergeron with an FYI sort of letter explaining the joke about TAFF and the Welsh to him -- I figured he might be embarrassed about having missed something so obvious and by telling him now I could save him the further embarrassment of making this oversight public."

Bergeron makes much of Avedon's query, "Why in God's name did you vote for West, when you know damn well he doesn't even really want to meet anyone in the US, and you wouldn't meet him anyway?" First he argues that "with West one is never sure what he's thinking from moment to moment," a line of reasoning that does not bear close examination -- or the rereading of West's work, which follows a consistent line throughout. Then he confuses West's British convention attendance with his antipathy for meeting U.S. fandom, arguing that Avedon is "so determinedly convinced he is completely anti-social that she overlooks what can be inferred from his indefatigable convention mongering." Bergeron at this point has overlooked the fact that Avedon has met West, and that she has never accused him of being anti-social. As for his anti-American attitudes, Bergeron thinks that "Perhaps West finally decided he did want to meet some US fans," a clear indication that either Bergeron never read West's self-authored TAFF platform, or didn't take it seriously enough to consider any of its implications. If West had changed his mind and really wanted to meet American fans he chose a genuinely perverse way to reveal it to those fans.

But finally Bergeron gets to his real beef: "The balance of that sentence, 'why in God's name did you vote for West...you wouldn't meet him anyway?', is staggering in its implications." Punctuation sic. Then he mounts his soapbox and begins preaching on the subject of how no one ever questioned his support in previous TAFF campaigns and allied fan funds even though he wouldn't be meeting the winner, so why object to his support for West now? He has a good point. It isn't relevant to Avedon's query -- as she's already pointed out above -- but it is relevant to the reactions he received from some others -- including myself.

"Concurrent with this letter from Avedon I saw questions raised about my participation in Taff with even more frequency than one might encounter references to dominoes since Avedon's first trip to England. I begin to smell another rat. And the rat is that part of the campaign to defeat West was an attempt to discredit my voice in Taff on the basis that I wouldn't be meeting the candidate and that my support for West was 'irrelevant and intrusive. In February, 1984, an associate of Avedon Carol's (I omit his name, though I invite his response in these pages but let's not be coy: it was me, and as it turns out my response is here in these pages) wrote to me. He said, 'In recent in-person discussion with various fans I've encountered some resentment of your promotion of West for Taff: "What does he care? He won't be meeting the winner!" is about the way it is usually expressed.' He also attributes this sentiment to two other friends of Avedon's...."

Does Richard Bergeron really think that there existed a Conspiracy to Defeat West which felt the need to "discredit (his) voice in TAFF"? Does Richard Bergeron really think that his support for West was crucial, and would determine the outcome of the voting? This is, sad to say, sick stuff from one of fandom's best minds. The egotism and arrogance implicit in much of this conjecture about TAFF politics amazes me. Frankly, I've never taken it that seriously, and neither has anyone else I've known. Had West won, I would have looked forward to meeting him -- albeit with slightly less enthusiasm than I have for meeting Hansen. I have been pushing Hansen's TAFF candidacy for several years -- I wrote to Rob to suggest it in 1982 -- simply because I wanted to meet him. (I suggested Joseph Nicholas run in a

future TAFF race, because not only would I like to meet him, I think he should have a first-hand look at Imperial Amerika. So far, Joseph has declined to run.) When Bergeron began supporting West, I was not surprised. What surprised me -- as it did Avedon, although she never told me about her correspondence with Bergeron at the time -- was Bergeron's overall tone, which expressed a rather open contempt for Hansen, belittling him at every turn, as though if Bergeron did not totally discredit him, Rob might defeat West, a fate which appeared to genuinely horrify Bergeron.

But why? Why did Bergeron seem to have so much emotion invested in this TAFF campaign? Was it loyalty to West's "supporters" (the Nielsen Haydens and Tom Weber were his American nominators; it's hard to think of any other West supporters here, and I didn't notice the Nielsen Haydens or Weber getting hysterical in their support for West)? If so, I think it was misplaced. (I know the Nielsen Haydens are very unhappy with Bergeron's attack on Avedon, and I don't think the anti-Hansen material overjoyed them either.) Last January I went to Corflu in Berkeley. Bergeron's rabid support for West was a minor topic of conversation, and, exactly as I told him, there was resentment and the sentiment was expressed by more than one person that, after all, "What does he care? He won't be meeting the winner!" Needless to say, we would.

We were not saying that Bergeron had no right to support whomever he wished to support. We were expressing our feeling that with so little at stake -- since he'd meet neither candidate -- his tactics made no sense. Bergeron was acting like a fervent partisan, someone with a huge personal stake in the outcome, and we could not understand why, when he was at such a remove. I still do not understand why, and no amount of flag-waving is going to change that. Not once in the pages of WIZ did Bergeron embark upon a straightforward explanation of his support for West and his belittlement of Hansen. Instead he has treated us to a farrago of rhetoric in support of his right to support whomever he likes, and, one presumes, use whatever tactics he likes without regard for fairness.

What is unconscionable is that Bergeron has taken legitimate (and, until now, personal and private) expressions of opinions from people like myself and attributed these opinions to Avedon Carol. He labels me "an associate" of Avedon's, and he labels those to whom I attributed similar opinions "two other friends of Avedon's." Well, Avedon has many friends, and we are all among them, but he might as easily have labelled the three of us (myself and Avedon's other two friends) "Richard Bergeron's friends," for we are that, too. I'm not impressed by this ploy of Bergeron's; it comes too close to guilt-by-friendship.

As Avedon puts it, "Other people wrote to Bergeron expressing an opinion which he attributes to me but which I did not share. Amazingly, he perceives this as part of a plot by me to get other people to voice my opinion for me." I question whether anyone wrote to Bergeron on this subject besides me, since I am the only one quoted, but Avedon's point remains valid. "Wow, I sure am powerful. I control Ted White!"

Bergeron has extended Avedon the courtesy of an advance copy of WIZ #11, but with her Express Mailed copy he sent a letter. Here is its opening paragraph: "Your statemrnt at the end of The Amnesia Report that 'Everyone knows Dominoes is a boring spectator sport' has inspired an investigation of your term as administrator of Taff which has culminated in my painful conclusion that it would be better for Taff if you resigned as US administrator." That is shocking. It is shocking not that Avedon is being asked to quit her TAFF position, but that Bergeron would take his personal and misguided vendetta to such extreme and unsupportable lengths.

"In Wiz #11 I am presenting the results of that investigation and explaining the compelling reasons which argue against your continued handling of the fund," Bergeron continues. But his "investigation" is a sham and a

mockery of the word, arising as it does out of personal pique, spiteful mis-readings of material, and a complete misapprehension of the nature of THE AMNESIA REPORT. The "investigation" took place entirely in Bergeron's mind, where conjecture met rumor and one plus one added up to three.

"My conclusion is based on your conduct of the recent election in outright bias in favor of Rob Hansen and open opposition to D. West.

"It is also based on your willingness to reveal details of the voting as the campaign was in progress despite the fact that the Taff ballot pledges you to secrecy. This was a fundamental betrayal of your mandate." Bergeron never proved that charge in WIZ, pointing only to her DNQ letter to him, and conjecturing, "If anyone seriously thinks that she would only be indiscreet with me /whom Avedon had trusted to be discreet/ (when she was several light years closer to Rob Hansen or Lassie, say) and can convince me of that, then I will appear at LACon on a flying pig where I will serve as one of the native bearers pulling her and Rob into the main convention hall seated on the back of a golden ass (hammered together from the passé breast ornaments of the Taff dancing girls of the 50's)." Pungent rhetoric, but not very convincing as proof. I for one look forward to seeing Bergeron in LA.

"It is also based on your questioning the participation of myself in Taff on the basis that I would not be meeting the candidate. ... Your attitude attacks the basic structure of Taff itself.

"You have chosen to politicalize /politicize?/ Taff and squander its good will by accompanying your announcement of the results of the election with anonymous attacks on Eric Mayer and gratuitous remarks which may or may not be embarrassing (a point of obvious little concern to you) directed at people you do not know.

"The evidence I present in Wiz #11 is as astonishing as it is conclusive and as painful as it is sad. When you have read it, I believe you will agree with the conclusion I have reluctantly reached."

WIZ #11 is indeed astonishing, although hardly conclusive of anything but Bergeron's rage. But it is "as painful as it is sad," though hardly in the way Bergeron thinks. In WIZ #11 we have watched one of the best and most important fans of this and several other eras go 'round the bend, losing all grasp on reality and perspective and unleashing upon the fanworld one of the most petty and vindictive attacks in recent memory.

That Richard Bergeron has caused pain for Avedon Carol is unfortunate, but that he has inflicted such a major wound upon his own credibility is a real tragedy. He owes Avedon at the very least an apology. He owes himself much more. One can only hope he will heed the counsel of his friends, among whom I remain (although saddened by the need to publish this issue).

"...the ultimate birdbath?"

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