

MATTERS OF OPINION #13

THE #13 THERE

indicates that this is a continuation of the sheet known as Ramblings, under a new name which I hope better expresses the nature of the contents. The above title was decided on after rejecting such dillies as Meinungsmatiere and Gebyncaupinge, because they probably didn't mean exactly what I wanted, and were too likely bad German or Anglo-Saxon respectively.

But the first guy that nicknames Matters of Opinion after its initials gets a sock in the mosh.



PICTURE OF SPEER GIVING OFFENDER A SOCK IN THE MOSH.

OVERSIGHT

While we were stenciling the Remarks department in Sustaining Program, we temporarily forgot what we had intended to say about the Ramblings last Mailing. Here 'tis: So having swept thru the fields of epistemology, metaphysics, esthetics, and much of ethics in the previous issue, Speer devotes the meat of all this issue to some questions of human psychology and conduct --it's kind of typical. But, boy, didn't I just get those things about my sovereignty said in time. Already several of the choices have been closed or restricted, with more threatened.

FANATIONALISM

Having studied nationalism as one of the topics in Studies in American Literature, and having just about finished up in the proseminar Gabriel's The Course of American Democratic Thought, I am ready to draw an astonishingly close parallel between large features of the Third Fandom (to some extent previous ones) and modern nationalism as exemplified at various times in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Argentina, Poland, China, Japan, and beaucoup autres. The word "national" here will ordinarily imply two things: homogeneity within a people, and separateness from all others. Despite the tone taken here, my listing a characteristic doesn't necessarily imply that I disapprove of it. Here are some of the things nationalists desire:

A national government: The SFL etc to the NFFF. Need I expatiate?

The homeland: This is impracticable in fandom now. The nearest thing we have to it is the desire for club rooms, in LA, the Slan Shack proposed for Battle Creek, Decker Indiana, the PSFS apartment, Futurian House, the Flat, etc.

A national language: The tongue of tomoro; Ackermanese; the proposed dictionaries.

National religion: We have ghughu and Foofoo, of course. A fuller expression of what is inaccurately called the religious impulse is seen in the various movements which seek a Purpose for fandom. Mention should also be made of the Science-worship ("For Science's sake, guys, let's have order!"), and the concept of the honor of a fan as something to swear by.

The mission of the nation: This involves something of the foregoing. Michelism and Technocracy have been rather direct expressions of the belief in a mission for fandom. It has been best expressed, altho in ironic vein, in Fantastocracy and Fantocracy. The belief in mission was necessary in early United States thought to offset our obvious cultural inferiority.

The chosen people: Fans have at times seriously believed that they are a race apart, and the forerunners of the futuremen. Remember the questions "Are Fans Star-Begotten?" and "Are Fans Slans?"

A national literature: This means fan literature in all the main fields. It

explains the special encouragement sometimes given to poetry, drama, opera, <sup>FE&P</sup> to fan fiction, and to other forms. It is part of the reason, tho quite unconscious, for writing the Konan, and for the many parodies, putting fan words to well-known tunes, which have appeared. There are many parallels to this in the United States between 1775 and 1830.

Promoting national shrines and heroes: <sup>and a history rich in exciting events</sup> The lack of a country/ of our own makes this rather difficult. The nearest we have to shrines are such things as the legendary sign down on Kalorama Road: "Earl Singleton slept here". As for heroes, the efforts of the editors to deify Weinbaum and Nowlan fell quite flat, and it's unlikely that fans will reverence a living person. But I wonder why those WSFC attendees hunted up Gernsback. And why should it occur to the writer in Fantast to mention that HG Wells' house has a green stair-carpet?

The use of education to indoctrinate the young: We want to be one people; we want to be able to allude to something in our background, like George Hahn's dummies, and have all our fellow-countrymen understand us. And in expanding fandom, we want to keep it on the course that we desire. I think something of these ideas is behind the flood of bibliographies, histories, dictionaries, introductory explanations, etc, real and proposed.

Expansionism: Fifty-four forty or fight. Manifest Destiny. Lebensraum. Greater East Asia. Canberra, capital of the Pacific. And the welcoming committee, and dogfans passing their literature on to barracks-mates, and our heartbreaking individual activity at recruiting, and cetera.

In-dependence: We are secretly resentful of our dependence on the pros as a source of new blood; we are aware of the dangers of that dependence, too. We want to be Self-Sufficient.

Loyalty: The Poll Cat almost asked fans to which they felt they owed the greater loyalty--their fellow-fans or the United States Government.

Folkways: We instill our customs and traditions in the young; we also try to establish new ones among ourselves. There must be some kind of fan gathering every year. Merit should be recognized by the competent giving of medals, laureates, or what have you. Our folkways are in large measure personified in the slitley pathetic but thoroly lovable figure of Joe Fann.

#### PARENTHESIS

I think these stencils are going to print very well. They're those queer ones that you've no doubt seen, which have a sheet of cellophane over the writing surface, and the pressure of your keys thru the cellophane cuts the letters. It evens the stroke somewhat, does away with goeing up of the type face, and gives an easily read stencil. My stroke is cutting holes in the cellophane frequently, but unless some of the little pieces fall across the letters in mimeoing and prevent the ink from coming thru, that should cause no trouble.

#### QUOTATION

For a considerable time, the idle remark of somebody in Fantast that he could not see that any of the explorers, from Columbus to the first men in the moon, have contributed anything or opened up anything of real value to man except a little economic advantage which has been mainly seized by the few, has been rankling in my mind. Recently, in digging a quotation out of Adams to use with reference to Noah Webster, I came across the passage I had thot of then. I give it to you here without comment; it's too meaty for me to try biting into now. It's from Henry Adams' History of the United States of America During the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison:

"The idea that Europe was in her decrepitude proved only ignorance and want of enlightenment, if not of freedom, on the part of Americans, who could only

excuse their error by pleading that notwithstanding these objections, in matters which for the moment most concerned themselves Europe was a full century behind America. If they were right in thinking that the next necessity of human progress was to lift the average man upon an intellectual and social level with the most favored, they stood at least three generations nearer than Europe to their common goal. The destinies of the United States were certainly staked, without reserve or escape, on the soundness of this doubtful and even improbable principle, ignoring or overthrowing the institutions of church, aristocracy, family, army, and political intervention, which long experience had shown to be needed for the safety of society. Europe might be right in thinking that without such safeguards society must come to an end; but even Europeans must concede that there was a chance, if no greater than one in a thousand, that America might, at least for a time, succeed. If this stake of temporal and eternal welfare stood on the winning card; if man actually should become more virtuous and enlightened, by mere process of growth, without church or paternal authority; if the average human being could accustom himself to reason with the logical processes of Descartes and Newton!--what then?

"Then, no one could deny that the United States would win a stake such as defied mathematics. With all the advantages of science and capital, Europe must be slower than America to reach the common goal. American society might be both sober and sad [It was not -- ~~it~~], but except for negro slavery it was sound and healthy in every part. Stripped for the hardest work, every muscle firm and elastic, every ounce of brain ready for use, and not a trace of superfluous flesh on his nervous and supple body, the American stood in the world a new order of man. From Maine to Florida, society was in this respect the same, and was so organized as to use its human forces with more economy than could be approached by any society of the world elsewhere. Not only were artificial barriers carefully removed, but every influence that could appeal to ordinary ambition was applied. No brain or appetite active enough to be conscious of stimulants could fail to answer the intense incentive. Few human beings, however sluggish, could long resist the temptation to acquire power; and the elements of power were to be had in America almost for the asking. Reversing the old-world system, the American stimulant increased in energy as it reached the lowest and most ignorant class, dragging and whirling them upward as in the blast of a furnace. The penniless and homeless Scotch or Irish immigrant was caught and consumed by it; for every stroke of the ax and the hoe made him a capitalist, and made gentlemen of his children. Wealth was the strongest agent for moving the mass of mankind; but political power was hardly less tempting to the more intelligent and better-educated swarms of American-born citizens, and the instinct of activity, once created, seemed heritable and permanent in the race.

"Compared with this lithe young figure, Europe was actually in decrepitude. Mere class distinctions, the patois or dialect of the peasantry, the fixity of residence, the local costumes and habits marking a history that lost itself in the renewal of identical generations, raised from birth barriers which paralyzed half the population... Church ... State ... wars ... aristocracies ... Picturesque and entertaining as these social anomalies were, they were better fitted for the theater or for a museum of historical costumes than for an active workshop preparing to compete with such machinery as America would soon command. ... but besides their bad economy they also tended to prevent the rest of society from gaining a knowledge of its own capacities. In Europe, the conservative habit of mind was fortified behind power. During nearly a century Voltaire himself--the friend of kings, the wit and poet, historian and philosopher of his age--had carried on, in daily terror, in exile and excommunication, a protest against an intellectual despotism contemptible even to its own supporters. Hardly was Voltaire dead, when Priestley, as great a man

if not so great a wit, trying to do for England what Voltaire tried to do for France, was mobbed by the people of Birmingham and driven to America. Where Voltaire and Priestley failed, common men could not struggle; the weight of society stifled their thought." This was written in 1889.

#### TO INCREASE FAN PRESTIGE

Ekklesiastes takes for his text this month the first book of Caliban,, chapter 8, vss 8-16. "In the meantime, I have a few vague ideas of my own. These are not, it is true, directly related to fandom; but since the fans continue to talk about better world conditions without doing anything about them, it ought to fit in nicely. There is no reason to believe that the fans could change world conditions on a large scale, but there are some things right here at home which definitely should be changed, and which the fans as a whole might be able to have some small effect on. What about the World Calendar movement? What about having the metric system accepted as our legal standard? Not that the fans are going to be able to do a whole lot toward having these reforms carried out, but they could do something. This something would be mainly along the lines of a little propaganda spreading, probably. If every one of us talked these matters up wherever we happened to be, and kept pushing them all the time, perhaps some of this push would be translated to others. These changes are, after all, inevitable, but the sooner the better; and the more favorable publicity they receive, the sooner they will be brought about."

Very sensibly spoken, Hermit. Incidentally, the metric system is already, according to Ripley, our legal standard; but it's true that it's not used by government agencies as much as you'd expect it to be. I saw the report of a War Department representative to a Metric congress in the early twenties--it was in the open files, so I guess it's all right to divulge the content. He said that the men appeared to be level-headed people, worth listening to. He criticized them for apparently wanting to force their ideas on the nation by legislative order, when if the metric system is really to be adopted, it ought to come through the people gradually turning to it, not led by their government. He further said--oh the folly of it!--that since world affairs then were so disturbed, with the nations recovering from the Great War, that reforms like this should not be pushed. And speaking of attempted reforms--when Theodore Roosevelt was President, he ordered the executive departments to employ simplified spelling, along the lines laid down by advocates of simplification from Franklin and Webster to the present-day reformed spelling societies. Conservatives got all het up and Congress refused to pass essential appropriations until the order was rescinded. TR took it in good humor: Some time later, at a regatta, the corps of reporters sailed past him with a sign lettered "PRES BOT", and Teddy threw back his head and laughed. But I wander from my subject. (That preacher doesn't?)

The unseen snag in your paragraph, hermit, is the phrase "favorable publicity". Let people get the idea that you're a reformer, a crusader, and most of them won't listen to you--unless it's a matter of possibly life or death, like the post-war world setup. People have an unholy horror, to a degree justified, of the man with a Cause; he's always buttonholing them and talking about something that might be nice but would probably be a lot of trouble to get and anyway isn't near as important as lots of other things they have to worry about. Sometimes, after fifty years of individuals devoting their whole energies to some particular reform, it will be pushed thru. I am not sure that such reforms can be helped much by liberal minded people who will take them up and be sympathetic to them, talk them up a little, but not really put their whole weight behind them; possibly I'm mistaken here. Men of influence will have some

respect for people who are devoting their whole lives to some change they think is worthwhile; few men of influence will weaken their standing by supporting every desirable reform movement that comes along. As for people of no standing, young fellows like us, if we go around talking up every good idea that appears, our fraternity brothers, fellow-workers, schoolmates, neighbors, elders, girl friends, patrol members, etc. will quickly set us down as mildly crackpot and not listen to us. We won't be getting favorable publicity for the reforms.

It's not an easy thing to figure out. Wells, Stapledon, Huxley, and others in Britain proposed a Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals, and drew up a basic platform of reforms which it was generally accepted were desirable, and on which the different reform groups might assist each other. Tomorrow circulated a copy of this to SFA members; so far as I know, nothing more came of it. For my part, I espouse and practice the reforms when I can, but I try to employ my very best judgment and decide in each case whether it's better to put the ugh on tho, to place the date after the month, to speak of moving over a couple of millimeters or moving over an inch, to brand a Saturday Evening Post advertisement as twaddle, etc. As a general rule, I can judge pretty well where to stop in order to stay within the pale. It always tickles me to think how George' kid sister didn't discover I was an intellectual until her last evening in town. Then I told the story about the little boy who was walking down the street (see bakover of Fall SP), and mentioned that I had rendered it into the fonetic alphabet. She looked at me like she'd just found a bug in the spaghetti, and said she'd heard that I was a bookworm.

I see I am being so unclerical as to tell my anecdotes in the first person. Well, here's another: Last Sunday evening I heard one of the fellows on the Indexing skeleton force remarking that that dictionary was a mine of information. Toward quitting time I ambled over and picked up the dictionary, which I once spent several hours getting familiar with, and thumbed thru it as tho I'd never seen it before, happened to come to the page with the Internatl Phonetic Alphabet on it, and made amazed/amused remarks about it to him. I let it go at that; I may have aroused his curiosity about the alphabet; at any rate, I don't think I could have gone any further without turning him somewhat against the idea. It may be a propos of that to say that I think people will react better if they know something about a reform before you start advocating it to them; and sometimes you can do the best thing by just giving them a little information on it and leaving it for some later reformer to do the urging.

To touch on the title of this sermon for just a moment: We want to have more fans in fandom so its value for us will be increased, and so we can find more of the particular kinds of fans we especially like. A few of you, of the Futurian type, would be satisfied with a smaller fandom; but I think the great majority of us want the field to grow. That involves, among other things, fair, factually accurate publicity, of a sort that will attract active mature minds (we speak much of fandom becoming more mature); we want the falseness of writeups like the Time story, and the not-quite-so-bad one recently in the New Yorker, to be readily apparent. We can't keep fandom from having many little details that super-sophisticated writers can pick and choose to give a picture of us as a lot of adolescent crackpots, but we can make them no more true than Life's picture of Oklahoma politics. I don't advocate a cringeing respectability, either. There is all the difference in the world between the respectability of a Milquetoast and that of an Emerson. Naturally we must ~~to give some line and~~ stand up for important principles. But we ought not to thoughtlessly antagonize opinion, and we ought not be eccentric for eccentricity's sake. We shouldn't write CHICAGO simply because

everyone else writes Chicago. Occasional whimsey like this is all right; it oughtn't to be a general practice. Expansionism isn't the only reason for striving to increase our prestige. We want to be able to talk scientific ideas freely with our friends. And we want people to listen to us when we're showing the advantages of calendar reform, Esperanto, &c.

I am very sorry to have kept you overtime. We will sing the Doxology and dispense with the recessional.

#### ON CHARITY

Thanks are due Morojo for bringing up an interesting problem by publishing the OBCollier article. It isn't just an abstract problem to play with, however; last week the Red Cross came around and said please, and there's the Community Chest once a year, and a few other charities which are well-organized emuf to do more for their objectives than against them. Will you give, and if so, why?

I felt like Collier does about charity some five years ago, as I remarked in a letter to Wollheim. Sure, get at the root of the thing: change the system, and we won't need charity.

Changing the system hasn't been as easy as it has always seemed it should be.

Two-three years ago, in the summer session, I took a course in applied psychology, having earlier taken the elementary. I enjoyed the course very much; applied psychology seemed to be a powerful instrument for the improvement of the race. You find out people's capabilities and direct them how best to apply themselves. You untangle tangled lives. You find out what causes maladjustments and abnormalities, and correct them. It was swell. Then one day it occurred to me that many, if not most, of the agencies which apply applied psychology were supported by charity.

It is a common argument of conservatives that a people doesn't get any better government (or economic system) than it deserves, and that you can't change human nature by changing the laws. The answer to this may well be that people are getting worse governments and economies than they deserve, and that bad laws and systems (such as bicameral legislatures) tend to thwart the essential goodness of human nature. Nevertheless, there is considerable truth in what the reactionaries say. You can't build Utopia out of ignorant peasants starved in soul and body; the Russians found that out. The most desperately bad off people don't start revolutions: it was the French, best off on the Continent, who cracked the Old Regime. Even when you get away from the starvation level, you find many of the New Deal's plans, such as rural electrification, falling short of their aims, because of the material they have to work with. The weakness of the average man has kept the cooperative movement from getting very far in this country.

That system which is best for full-grown men to live under probably would not work with our present manape species. We can change the system somewhat, to one which will raise the quality of the average man a bit. Then it will be advisable to make another revision, upward of the system. But it's hard to make even the revision immediately before us, when we have, in normal times, one-third of the people in the world's most fortunate nation ill-clothed, ill-housed, ill-fed; --and, I mite add, ill-bred, immoral, miseducated. The Red Cross and the Community Chest agencies are fighting those conditions, and thus working, within the framework of the old order, to make people fit for a new order.

WELCOME THRICE WELCOME

to the newest member of the EAPA Brain Trust, Norman F Stanley. I'll take up here some of the points I didn't want to squeeze into my Sustaining Program department.

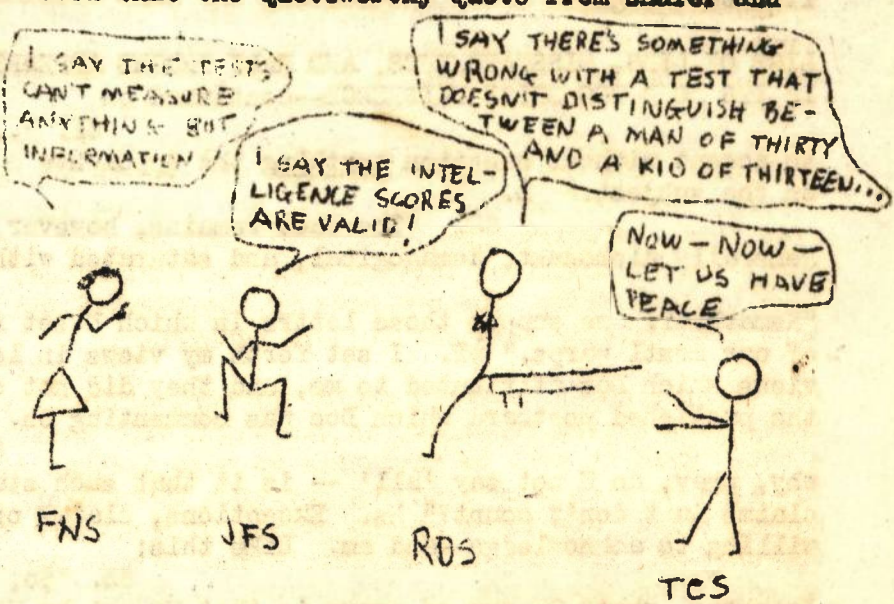
You had your finger right on the point, and then missed it. When we fotograf a present scene, the camera takes in a representation of everything within its field and focus. But if it's to fotograf the future of that which is before it now, what shall it show the future of? The background, the main object, or the wind which is blowing by? These things will be far apart tomorrow, or whatever time in the future the picture is supposed to show; so it can't show their futures all. I am reminded of an objection that troubled me on reading the Skylark of Valeron. You remember they came out of the Fourth Dimension so far away from where they went in, that even an object-compass focused on the entire mass of the Galaxy didn't register. Well, I wondered; if that indicator had pointed to the entire mass of the Galaxy, I wonder what the needle would do when the ship got inside the Galaxy. Similarly, if the camera had been focused on the front window of a newspaper office, what would it have shown the future of if some bad person had come along and broken the window and scattered the pieces?

"A continuum of three spatial and two temporal dimensions" I like very much. I have one amendment to offer, however: that there are three temporal dimensions. I seek no explanation for precognition and prophecy because I don't believe in them. Skeptics have pretty good answers for things of the Nostradamus type (see deCamp's letter), and I've heard no unquestionable example of precognition. As to the idiots savant in mathematical sense, I'm not quite so skeptical, but I'll have to hear more about them before I'll bother making place for them in my philosophy. ("There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, ...")

A note to Widner here to save making a new heading: I overlooked in typing Remarks my objection to his assertion that the Quoteworthy Quote from Shafer and Santayana was full of semantic blanks. It was all quite meaningful, tho I grant that it may have been somewhat over the audience' head. As proof that it wasn't unsemantic, I could give operational definitions of any expression in it. Incidentally, fantasy is very useful in suggesting operational definitions for things that the average fillisofers must find hard to imagine demonstrations for.

THE BASIC QUESTION OF ETHICS

is raised by Phanny's challenge to me to find something to fill the place of "the greatest good of the greatest number". Well, I have not formulated it,



but here are some ideas:

First, a recognition that personal and public aims are not the same. Heinlein has said that any theory of ethics which disregards absolute standards (since they do not exist, must be some form of eudaemonism, ie, happiness-seeking. This is so basic in human psychology that we can get nowhere if we try to ignore it. But there are two kinds of happiness, which were distinguished in Test of the Gods. I forget the name of the first; it consisted of gross and sensual pleasures--the Khayyam ethics. The other is epicureanism (which has nothing to do with food epicures except philologically), directing the search to what are called the higher pleasures, art, learning, sublimations of the lower instincts; these are believed to be more lasting. Considering that directly pursuing happiness is seldom successful, I have modified this somewhat, but I'm on Epicurus' side. I think that if we set up worthwhile goals, which are capable of partial attainment, and pursue them, happiness will come incidentally but quite satisfactorily. I have been so impressed by the range of things that make different men happy that I have come to think that what makes you happy is almost arbitrary, that you can like almost anything if trained to it. It may occur to the astute that if this is so, it would be nice if we trained people to find happiness in those things which contribute to the general good.

But what is this general good? What I've been talking about are the considerations of an individual in deciding for himself what he'll do. But you can't use arguments based on selfishness in debating before a crowd. What principles shall guide us in public argument, and the statesman in his decisions? I am strongly inclined toward the ideal of Beyond This Horizon, namely survival value, because it is the one Purpose which is written into the fabric of the Universe as the Darwinian principle. Perhaps if it is interpreted broadly enuf, keeping in mind what I said in the last Alpha and Beta about offsets to combativeness, it will serve. At least I am experimenting with that line of thought.

LIST OF LIES, MISSTATEMENTS, AND HALF-TRUTHS APPEARING IN LE VOMBITEUR  
IN ITS NOLE TOO BRIEF EXISTENCE--continued on

61. "... although he does not hesitate to accept without question anything the opponents & enemies of Marxism have to say on the subject." L.

62. "The fact remains, however, that Speer's writings are generally dishonest, demagogical, and saturated with fascist philosophy." L.

63. "Remarkabl! we suppos those lettrs in which U set forth Ur views r mer figmts of our mentl warps." MT. I set forth my views in letters, but they were not the views which Doc attributed to me, and they did not contradict those expressed in the published postcard which Doc was commenting on.

64. "Or sinc U say 'most' -- why, pray, do U not say 'all' -- is it that such statmnts U kno wuld prov our claims just don't count?" Ms. Exceptions, claims of theirs that were true, I was willing to acknowledge--and am. Like this:

65. "So, Ethiopia & China r other mattrs. Intrstng, what? Th cue of cours is that Ur not an Ethiopian or a Chinese. Or perhaps, even if U wer, U could put asid such earthly things as emotns & agree that it was just that U & Ur peopl shuld be bombd, gassd torturd," Ms. What Doc says here is-almost exactly what I would say. It ties in with the discussion at the top of this page.

JACK F SPEER  
MAR 13 / F 43