

PITFCS 142



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by
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FEBRUARY 1962

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE INSTITUTE FOR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STUDIES

"Peace, Land, and Five Cents a Word!"

Theodore R. Cogswell
Secretary
Committee on Temporary
Suspension of Publication

Special Series 142

February 1962
204 McKenzie Road
Muncie, Indiana

FROM THE SECRETARY:

The Powers the Were, Are, and Will Be have politely suggested that I gird what little of my loins I have left and complete my dissertation. As a result there will be a hiatus of a year or so in the appearance of the Proceedings while I turn my attention to That Which Must Be Done. The Institute, however, is not dead -- it is just lying down to bleed a while. In the meantime, if anything comes up of special importance to the membership, I will still be able to send out brief notifications.

A report on finances is long overdue and I've spent the past couple of days trying to find out just where we stand. The following report -- which was compiled from old check stubs, bills, and rough approximations -- shouldn't be too far off, though a number of assignments to one year or the other may be in error because bills contracted during one period weren't paid until later while supplies bought earlier were consumed later . . . or something. I've tried to keep an accurate record of money received but in some cases dates were missing so I had to rely on memory. It would make things much easier once we get started again if some kind and trustworthy soul would volunteer to take over as treasurer.

Although we almost broke even last year, a small deficit still remains on the books from the previous period; that should liquidate itself by a judicious pruning of non-contributing non-contributing members from the mailing list when we commence publication again. If those of you who meant to contribute the last time the hat went around but either forgot or couldn't are in a position to do so now, you will receive a most polite reception. A few of the members have already sent in their 1962 dues. These will be credited against 1963 if there is no objection. Since it may be a year before the next issue appears, however, it will lessen the confusion if the rest of you would hold back until I send around word that publication is about to begin again.

FINANCIAL REPORT -- NOVEMBER 1959 to FEBRUARY 1962

EXPENDITURES	Dec59-Nov60	Dec60-Feb62	RECEIPTS	Dec59-Nov60	D60-F62
Taylor-Martin Paper Co.	66.23	77.67	Domestic dues	118.00	208.00
Adressograph-Multigraph	40.97	75.72	Overseas contrib.	17.00	13.00
Rollers for Multigraph	10.00		TOTAL RECEIPTS	135.00	221.00
Outside printing	40.00	10.00	1959-1960 debit	64.80	
Domestic postage	27.40	39.00	1961-1962 debit		6.39
Foreign postage	11.20	16.00			
Postage scale	4.00				
Labor		8.00			
TOTAL COST	199.80	227.39	TOTAL PRESENT DEBIT	71.19	

NOTE: The last thirty odd pages of PITFCS 141 were omitted because the press broke down. They will be included with this mailing and can be attached to the last issue.

reprint in
Wash.
ask

TEK-DYNE LABS
"In the Shadows of M.I.T."
Cambridge, Mass

Dear Sir:

Are you and your loved ones potential shelter-hoppers? What is a shelter-hopper? It is any person badly in need of shelter during World War Three, sort of a Twentieth-Century Everyman.

We here at Tek-Dyne have been thinking about all the families too big or too lazy or too poor to build adequate fall-out shelters. Is yours among them? If so, you should equip your family with Tek-Dyne Shelter-Hopping Kits, which are remarkably cheap, and which are guaranteed to open any shelter yet recommended by Civil Defence.

Our cheapest kit, selling for \$14.95, consists of a World War Two surplus cylinder of Cyklon-B, made by I. G. Farben, and a shaped charge for blowing the lock on any shelter door. More luxurious kits include C. D. uniforms, sirens for blowing all-clear signals, tape recordings of old A.E.C. speeches on the relative harmlessness of fall-out, tape recordings of beloved family pets scratching to be let in, grenades, bazookas, flamethrowers, and so on.

We recommend that no informed person go anywhere without the basic kit, since the necessity of getting into a shelter is likely to arise at any time. We therefore package the kits to look like attache cases, lunchpails, hatboxes, shopping bags, copies of Dr. Zhivago, and so on.

As a rule of thumb, we recommend that, for minimum safety during nuclear war, each person be equipped to take over at least three shelters. We say this because there are bound to be disappointments -- meagerly equipped shelters, shelters furnished in bad taste, septic tanks mistaken for shelters, and so on.

One town figured the appalling cost of building community shelters, decided instead to buy enough kits to take over the shelters of an adjoining town, thereby saving enough money to send the high school band to the next Orange Bowl game.

With every order goes a subscription to our newsletter, The Minuteman, which tells who is building shelters where, what they are putting into them, how the owners intend to defend them, and so on.

More details on request.

Very truly yours,

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
Manager of Sales

ORTHODOXY

by

John W. Campbell

John Pierce's letter in the last pitfox is a perfect example of the Orthodoxy Effect. And, inasmuch as John is a Research Director for a major science-technology laboratory system, the precisely and clearly expressed attitude of the Orthodoxist he has laid out is a perfect map of the problem I've been trying to call to attention.

The essence of Orthodoxy in any field -- politics, religion, science or elsewhere -- is simply "We know the Truth, and the whole Truth. We possess the Final Truths!" Christianity's orthodoxy is that Jesus was the final, ultimate Prophet, who gave us the final, complete Truth. The Moslem agrees that Jesus was a Prophet. . . but insists it was Mohammed who was the final, ultimate-no-further-ever-to-be giver of the Word.

Orthodoxy is not "I know this . . .", for that must be a basic of any thoughtful process. Orthodoxy is "I know this cannot be true!" Orthodoxy begins where it lays down the Ultimate Boundary of Truth, and says flatly, "There is no possible Truth beyond this." Orthodoxy is not what it says is, but what it says is not.

The basis of science-fiction is precisely contra-orthodoxy: That there are truths beyond the furthest border of the known.

Now John's letter is highly emotional, and consists largely of a personal attack on my knowledge, wisdom, motives, and competence. It is not primarily an argument concerning facts, but an attack on the personality level -- a vigorous statement that I, personally, am incompetent.

There is a basic human reaction mechanism that goes, in essence, "If he knew what I know, he would necessarily agree with me. Since he does not agree with me, he is necessarily ignorant of what I know." John's got that one working full blast. He asserts that it is clear I know nothing of the laws of fundamental mechanics, and that ignorance is proven by my willingness to believe something new could possibly be added.

Let's leave personalities out, and simply cite objective facts. 1. I have a degree in physics from a major university. 2. I have examined the Dean gadget. 3. John Pierce has a degree in physics from a major university, and is a practicing professional physicist. 4. He has not examined the Dean device personally.

Now since John is discussing the basic, underlying primary laws of mechanics in his letter, the fact that I have a degree in physics is meaningful; it demonstrates that I have studied, learned, and demonstrated understanding of those fundamental laws of mechanics. I.e., that I do know what John knows about fundamental mechanics. That it is not true that my disagreement mechanics which he knows.

Certainly John knows a helluva lot more about communications theory, electronic circuit behavior, quantum mechanics, and a vast variety of esoteric matters than I. He can also play the piano, which I cannot. The advanced physics and piano-playing are equally irrelevant to the question of whether or not I know the fundamental laws of mechanics he is insisting I do not know. It is his opinion I do not know them; I have documentary evidence that I do know them.

I suggest possibly our disagreement lies not in what he knows that I don't, but in something I observed that he has refused to.

I remember, shortly after getting my degree in physics, going back to M.I.T. and asking my ex-physics professor about ball-lightning, having recently witnessed the more than slightly startling phenomenon. After explaining that it was purely folklore and resulted from faulty observation, he showed me the basic proof that it couldn't possibly exist, and wound up with "no competent observer has ever reported the phenomenon."

Inasmuch as I was a graduate physicist reporting the phenomenon, it became evident that "a competent observer" was one who did not report the known-to-be impossible phenomenon.

If they'd listened a bit to "incompetent" observers who did report it, they might have gotten some clues to plasma physics a good many decades earlier.

This Dean argument is about to become completely academic anyway; in about three months from now, I should be able to publish in ANALOG Dr. William O. Davis' material on the Fourth Law of Motion, which he derived not merely from Dean's device, but from thousands of other items of "incompetent observation" that have been well-known for many years as "instrumentation failure" because the results the instruments reported didn't agree with orthodox theories that showed the instruments couldn't observe what they did observe.

The whole problem of Orthodoxy revolves around precisely that type of point: The absolute refusal to consider that there might be four laws of motion, instead of only three. That the three are perfectly valid. . . but that while true, they aren't the whole truth -- that there exists some new law beyond the limits of the known, and yet to be discovered.

That three-body business I threw into the Dean article was primarily intended for one purpose only; to attack the Omniscient attitude of the Orthodoxy -- a matter of "Now look, guys -- you really don't know all the answers to everything in the Universe!" I might just as well have pointed out nobody knows how catalysts work in chemistry, or what makes supernovas explode, or why, when a Pavlovian-conditioned flatworm is eaten by an untrained flatworm, the cannibal turns up about 2/3rds trained! (Shades of "The Golden Bough"! Eat the heart of a brave enemy, and become courageous!)

Re the dowseing rods: I am not going to set up experiments and run them, and submit my data. It's futile. Rhine's been doing it for a third of a century, and gotten nowhere; I refuse to get suckered into the same trap. When Mendel presented his paper, some German biologist said he should perform an experiment with some other plant. . . and named a plant which, unlike sweet-peas, has a horrific mass of recessive and quasi-recessive genes. For the next 40 years Mendel got nowhere; it took some 75 years of development of the science of genetics by many cooperating scientists before that plant's genetics could be untangled!

No amount of data will convince an unwilling mind.

"A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still!" Ted, your opinion re dowseing rods was changed not by argument, not by tables of statistics. . . but by having dowseing rods in your hands do something that you experienced. Argument does not, and never will, alter a sincere opinion; only experience will.

It's necessary, then, to force the unwilling opponent to experience what he is sure is impossible; after he has experienced, then argument can have ~~real~~ value and meaning. Then, but only then, will experimental data-tables be of service.

It's self-delusion to believe that evidence pro and con a sincerely held conviction will be, or can be, weighed with equal honesty by any human mind. In that "Engineer's Art" article Randy Garret did, note that the Yale physicist cited Martin Gardner's "Fads & Fallacies" as a legitimate reference work with respect to a fact-of-nature. This -- in view of the nature of that book -- is about equivalent to the research director of the company laboratory citing the advertising agency's promotion literature as proof that they are turning out a good product. Yet the physicist -- and the psychologist, who certainly should have known better! -- both felt that they were presenting "evidence" concerning the non-existence of the phenomenon when they cited a book of a type that no scientist in his right mind would even consider citing concerning, say, the existence or non-existence of the optical maser phenomenon!

"Enough evidence" is an emotional, not a logical, quantity!

And "uncontrolled experiments" are always sneered at and demeaned -- while far less sold "laboratory evidence" is happily accepted. The non-heritability of acquired physical characteristics was proven by how many generations of lopping the tails off of how many mice? This, Sir, was proof, because it was done in a laboratory. The fact that Jewish boys still have to be circumcised has no evidential value whatever, of course, because it's only been going on for 200 generations, in a test population of perhaps 200,000,000 or so and not in a laboratory.

Sometimes I find it a leeeetle difficult to understand this-here "Scientific Method".

And have you even considered that nobody has proven the heritability, or non-heritability of acquired behavioral characteristics?

Only God Almighty and an Acknowledged Orthodoxy are supposed to know the final limits of the possible.

Now I have precognition. I preken that John Pierce is about to suffer from an acute case of red face when Dr. Davis paper or the fourth law of motion appears. It's so beautifully obvious! You all have, already, all the data anyone needs to see it exists -- particularly John Pierce, in his business! -- but because you have been so damned sure you knew the Limits of Truth, you have missed it.

I'm not stating it here for obvious ethical reasons; it isn't mine; William O. Davis, no JWC, had the brilliant insight to recognize it, and he, by God, deserves full and undiluted credit for that insight. He took those "in competent observer" data from a dozen fields, and found the pattern that no one, since Newton's time, had tried to find.

Oh, one more item: Dean MacLaughlin mentioned the second Missiles and Rockets report on the Dean drive. There was one; it was the Rabinow Report, produced by the Rabinow Laboratories for the Air force under a subcontract -- and that was what I discussed in my previous letter. Rabinow tested the Dean device, without allowing Dean to show how it should be set up. Rabinow reported that he found that the drive clutch slipped under a 10-pound load. . . and then used an 18-pound load to test the machine. For some reason he found it didn't work.

It's truly remarkable how thoroughly scientific one can be in laboratory tests. . . without being at all reasonable!

See for
Wish

But . . . never look at the history of the Jewish people; that would not be scientific! Cut off the tails of a few mice for a few generations, in a laboratory, and get proof!

BRIAN W. ALDISS SAYS:

hey, am I mad! I send in this dam thing about Hothouse in answer to McKenna's dam thing about Hothouse, and what dam well happens? I'll tell you what dam well happens: one whole page of my letter - page 5 - is missed out, just dropped, making complete rubbish of page 19 of PITFICKS 141.

Perhaps I should let it ride and say To Hell with it, and get on with this story I'm writing, but no - I said little enough in defence of Hothouse: here at least is one record I must set right.

So let's take it from the middle of Page 19, and I'll slide in the sheet you slid out when we get to it:

"A few years ago, when the Bretnor symposium came out, the code was that science, scientific accuracy, scientific thinking, were all-important in sf. This was conceded in theory, however much it was transgressed in practice. Then the joints loosened up somewhat. Eventually we had Kingsley Amis pointing out other criteria: satire, for instance. (He was not the first to do this, but the first to do it with grace and authority.) Now already the joints need another loosening.

"The trouble seems to be that we form such a small field -- a paddock, you might say -- that a need is felt for conformity, and for us all to worship one god, world without end. Science, technology, psi, satire, sex, sociology: doesn't really matter what, so long as we all get down on our knees before the same totem. This pressure is less strong than it was a few years back, but it is a form of ideological take-over bidding that is nonsense at any time of day.

"Without going off the subject, let me quote from Kingsley's sf review in last Sunday's (October 1st, 1961) "Observer". Of Arthur Clarke's "Fall of Moondust" he says, "what is distinctive about this book is not its basic strategy, nor, although stereotypes are avoided, any fineness in character-drawing: for reasons one hopes are starting to be appreciated, this is not to be looked for in science fiction." Do you feel a rush of relief to the head, friends, as you read this? Do you say to yourself, "Thank God for that! We can get out the old Grade Three cardboard again"? Maybe you do, but frankly it scores me.

"Kingsley, I know, was aiming his words at a snooty reader rather than an anxious writer. But this assumption that something is proven can be perilous. It's yet to be proved to me at least that you can't get lively characterisation into sf. If you aren't so wallowed away behind your own personality problems that you can't appreciate the flavours of other people in real life, then it seems natural to recreate their essences in your fiction (as well as the other things you may be doing). Now by lively characterisation I don't mean (for instance) the bunch of irritable and vulgar seniors drawn with such citrus affection by Angus Wilson in "The Old Men At the Zoo" (set in 1970 with World War II as background and therefore(?) science fiction), but something perhaps less elaborate but no less vivid; Graham Green's characters, for example -- often they consist of little more than an attitude and an itch in the crutch, but by heaven, the work marvelously.

"If the creation of such characters is to be achieved in our medium, it will mean writers will have to take a joy in creating them -- but why take less joy in creating a being than a planet? Sure, it's harder, for complicated, but how is it less "scientific"? I have argued elsewhere -- dash it, I'm such a peaceable man, yet I always seem to be

arguing! -- that sf has produced several acceptable characters, but it is well nigh impossible to create a credible character without other characters near at hand to throw back reflections and round off the image; there is no reason why this sort of character-building should not take place in sf along with all our other juggling tricks, except that sf consists so largely of one or two isolated men in scrapes. Okay, then the basic situations need freshening, and better character-drawing will follow. Then maybe our audience will widen."

If anyone is interested enough, they can go back and read the rest of what follows on page 19 of your last issue.

Having worked off some of my ill temper on the typewriter, I will soften up enough to say how delightful was the photograph on your cover. The Good Doctor is just the grand old patrician figure we fans have always pictured. Ah that brow! -- Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair! All the more strange then to find the Master inside wistfully asking why he is so non-controversial. Really, venerable doctor, don't you know the way children take their parents for granted?

Yes, one more grumble before I go. Geoff Doherty is billed on the cover; seems all his letter got lost?

J. Martin Graetz: You're dead right about those moans about the largely illusory Golden Age. though you'll never cure it: it's part of a sort of womb-fixation, and we all have that. In the end we die of it; perhaps that's why we die. (Story idea, anyone?) Anyhow, what I was going to say was I'm sorry to hear about the trouble you're having with your cat and the bathtub. Try filling the bath with water. Cat shit has a lower specific gravity than water, and can thus be skimmed easily off the surface with a butterfly net or colander. Or you could try house-training the cat.

Hon. Sec: Just to show I bear no lasting malice over the sabotage of my letter, on account of how you have one hell of a tough job anyway, I enclose song supposed to be sung by the tummy-bellies in HOTHOUSE.

SONG OF THE TUMMY-BELLIES

All the backs of the tigerflies turn yellow and black,
Yellow and black in turn, making stripes.
Who knows what the tigerflies like?
On our backs are making similar stripes at the back,
Cruel stripes from the whip of cruel happenings
That we know we always do not like,
Not ever. And not ever do the happenings lack
A smack at us poor lovely tummy men
Who only want no happenings or smacks!

 Ai eee! Ai eee! The sharp happenings beset us!
 Who let us be among them, who let us
 Kind tummies have sharp things round to get us?

Cuddle up, cuddle up, fat brother, to huddle from the bad
Things that we wise chaps know are never good.
How wise and kind and lovely we all are,
Singing and laughing and crying in a world that never had
One other lovely thing lovely, kindly, or wise!
The whipping reward of the world
Smites on our backs and on our tummies. All the land
Where stalkers stalk has only shadows in it, or shadows
Of happenings we can't understand.

Ai ee! Ai eee! Why don't many things delight us?
Who makes the cruel happenings that bite us
Kind tummies, and happenings that fright us?

With dreadful sandwiches Gren came to take
All tummies from their lovely tummy-mummy tree
Where tummies grow so fat and sly and nice
Where liquids lick and lizards lie and shadows shake
On hot fat tummy bodies in the fat hot sun.
Woe! Woe! Now lots of living tummy-men are dead,
And the only place where happenings can't cruelly
Happen lies inside their cold fat heads.

Ai eee! Ai eee! No more the hot womb-tree and foetus!
Who brings these happenings that eat us
With their cold cruel winds that smack and beat us,
Never to feed and heat us?

ISAAC ASIMOV SAYS:

A murrain upon thee and a pox as well.

From whence did you inherit your devastating sense of humor?

Here I have spent twenty years listening to young lady fans approach me and say:
"Are you Isaac Asimov? I always pictured you as an old man with a long white beard!"

I have tried various retorts. At first I was polite and said, "No ma'am. It's just my stories that are old men with long white beards."

Then I was contemptuous and said, "Come to bed, sister and I'll give you with an old man with a long white beard so you'll be hobbling for a week."

Finally I was angry and just knocked them down.

Now with that frontispiece picture of yours, how will I ever persuade anyone I am not an imposter?

But on the other hand, it could have been worse. At least the white-bearded gentleman is a man of imposing presence and dignity. Suppose my name had been put under the face of any of those three obvious degenerates who are also in the picture. I don't mind denying my age since there are a number of ways in which I can easily do so. --But to deny the marks of vice and crime that leer out of every line and wrinkle of those malevolent physiognomies might be harder to do.

Besides come to think of it, the imposture will never wash. Everyone of the gentlemen in the photograph is drinking and as is well known to all and sundry, I never drink. Nor do I smoke, gamble, or use strong language, so that you can imagine the charm of my shining and ingenuous face, unspoiled by all non-biological vice, and compare its luster with the dour and viciously ill-assorted collection of features to be found above the neckline of the three to the left in the photograph.

I've thought of another curse. May the bloody flux seize upon thy vitals, Ted.

JIM BLISH SAYS:

After a dust-raising library expedition I have located the article which I used in the background of THE TRIUMPH OF TIME, which I mentioned in my remarks addressed to John Pierce. If the stencil isn't cut yet, I'd like to run in the specific reference. It is:

Adolf Gruenbaum: Time and Entropy. Amer. Sci. 43:550, October 1955.

Gruenbaum in those days was professor of philosophy at Lehigh; don't know if he's still there.

F. BORDES SAYS:

I got Pitfcs 141. I have no time to say much, and, after all, perhaps I simply have not much to say. Except some comments.

Brian Aldriss: I enjoyed Hothouse very much. But, man, McKenna is right on some points! When I find inconsistencies in a SF story, it makes me mad at the writer, and especially when the writer is a good one, and the story fine. Reminds me of a fine painting on which there would be one tree upside down! And that has nothing to do with the question of romantic versus clerk stories. I would rather say that, the more romantic you get, the more important are the details!

Algis Budrys: Rogue moon. I only read the magazine version. Looking of F&SF, I find that I rated it A, that means that I liked it well enough (very few stories rate and A+ or A++), but it was difficult reading. And I am not sure that I understood it completely! Perhaps a matter of coming from a different culture.

Poul Anderson. Thanks! When you come to France, we will have some beer! By the way, who said that there is no good beer in France? It is as stupid as to say that there is no good wine in the USA.

I don't think that Hitler's coming has much to do with the depression. The roots were there before, from the german inflation times.

As for the Campbell business, I agree with you. I work in a science where there are many amateurs, and damn few good ones!

Asimov. You know, there is a lot of people here that agree with you about the Berlin business! 1933 was the time for the germans to fight for freedom.

Blish. I'm not astonished by your reaction. But I think you got me wrong, or perhaps it is my insufficient knowledge of English. I never said that I did not want intelligent or well thought stories. I said that I did not want "bigheads" stories. I was thinking to Fred Pohl's Gravy Planet, for instance, or, alas! your own Triumph of time! Here are two bighead stories by two otherwise intelligent writers! I am probably treading on the tail of a tiger, but it is what I think. Please do not get mad at me: I like very much your other stories, the Okies, or "Surface tension", etc. But I am afraid that, with "Triumph of time", you began to "think". As for "A case of conscience", perhaps there are only two departures from the catholic dogma, but, living in a catholic country, among catholic friends, even if I am an agnosticist, I feel something wrong in your book.

About what you say to Damon, you are 100% right!

Campbell: If "mere human reports. . . are absolutely of no value", why then bother us so much in Ast. . . 'scuse me, Analog about the Hyeronymus machine?

Well, if somebody says that he has found something that defies all the known scientific laws, perhaps he is right, but the burden of the proof is on him!

M. Allen de Ford. Thanks.

Fritz Lieber. A pity I did not know you are living in Chicago when I was there, in the fall of 59, teaching at the department of Anthropology! I would have loved to meet the father of Fafhrd, the Gray Mouser and other memorable folks!

Sam Youd. My boy, we have here a saying about "l'infirmier qui se moque de l'hôpital". La whisky française, indeed! Even in Switzerland they know better! I don't give a damn if my english is not perfect, it is good enough to be understood in english speaking countries. I write my novels in french, you knew, and I don't care to be taken for english. And why not indians among us? Are you a racist, by chance?

General: one of the things that irks me most in SF is the general ignorance of anthropological subjects (with notable exceptions, like Sprague, Schuyler Miller, Chad Oliver and some others). All the authors who wants to have man coming from another world have a lot of explaining to do! And, in Pohl and Kornbluth's WOLFBANE, for instance, are queer habits which have no integration: for instance this spinal fluid drinking. I know of some rather disgusting habits in some human cultures, but they have a reason and a meaning, even if, as it often happens, the true reason has been forgotten. In Wolfbane, one gets the impression that the authors only wanted to shock the readers.

I have just read the first part of Clifton's "Pawn of the black fleet" in Amazing.

If this long and overdone attack against the inefficiency of administration opposed to the efficiency of private business is "the new blood" of SF, bring back the Galactic Patrol and the Lensmen!!

Well, as you see, I had not much to say.

JOHN BRUNNER SAYS:

Arrives PITFCS 141, so. . . You know, the more I think about it, the more I feel that controversy about the world as it is, in the sense of argument about political and national attitudes, is one of the kinds of discussion least suited to being put on paper. It seems to require a two-- or three-hour bull session at the least before even a minimum two people can get an exact picture of their views across to each other -- but perhaps we might except people whose minds are made up according to a preconceived plan, of whom I know very few, praise be.

I'm particularly interested by the comments which have been made on the last letter of mine you published, regarding communism/capitalism/liberty/oppression and suchlike loaded concepts. In case I didn't then make my point clear, I went -- or meant to go -- out on a limb in several of my remarks to see what pigeons would rise.

I like very much Poul Anderson's point that the issue is between totalitarianism and liberty not communism and capitalism, and I wish this fact could be got through the heads of such people as the Senator Thomas Dodd quoted on the inside front page this issue. But very briefly my own view on this is that whereas in an authoritarian (better in this context, I think, than totalitarian, as a label) society social criticism is a privilege accorded by a regime currently strong enough to accept a measure of disagreement, in a genuine democracy this is the individual's binding duty. Just recently, in a TV programme about the protest movement against nuclear weapons now growing so strongly here, Robert Bolt -- "Man for All Season", the playwright -- drew a neat distinction between a situation of incipient evil (he selected as an example Germany during Hitler's rise to power), the time when everyone can and must protest, and a situation of actual evil (e.g. when Hitler was installed with his full machinery of terrorism), the time when only the rare saints and heroes can be expected to resist.

C. P. Snow said something to the effect that when men start to think that events are too big for them, they are beyond hope. I feel that the same goes for anyone who thinks that what he has is incapable of improvement, either because (in his view) it's already perfect, or because he feels impotent in face of the forces ranged against him on the side of the status quo.

But I must say I completely disagree with his statement that the danger lies in the armed forces of the totalitarian countries. So does James Kennan. May I cordially recommend the last chapter of "Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin" for consideration; it's there that Kennan explains the opposing view and gives what I feel to be very important evidence for it. What alarms me is not the prospect of even literal physical occupation by an enemy, but the prospect that through reliance in this nuclear age on old-fashioned concepts of military strategy we may find -- those few of us who are left -- that we're too busy scrabbling for food to worry about abstracts such as liberty and democracy.

Change the sentence to "the danger lies in the armed forces, period" -- and I'll go along. Except that it's really the mentality which regards armed forces as a usable instrument in an era of weapons of mass annihilation which is dangerous.

Jim Blish: you're damned right about vocabulary! I'd have thought that since the nineteenth-century foul-up which almost resulted in an Anglo-French war (owing to some idiot translating "demander" as "demand"!) this point would have got across. But it hasn't.

JWC on Chan Davis: I go along here too. But let's introduce a further distinction which mustn't be overlooked -- courtesy of Kennan, who in the item mentioned above lays much stress on it. People make an all-too- ready confusion between the ideological aims of communism and the national interest of Russia as a geographical entity. Whatever political creed was accepted in Russia, much of that government's strategy would be dictated by the same motives as at present. I feel it is just as wrong to judge Russian society by the Berlin wall as it is to judge American society by Little Rock -- and just as right to criticise both. Just as essential to criticise both.

Avram Davidson: hey! I object! (Well, one moment: I should have said some of the staff of the Soviet Embassy in London. Yes.) No, please: I'm not swallowing anybody's camels -- I know a little about Russian and Soviet history, I know about the Hitler-Stalin pact and the purge of the kulaks and the Chechen-Ingush and the failure to relieve Warsaw during the uprising and the Jews at Babi-yar and the partition of Poland and the welshing on the promise not to resume nuclear tests and the rest of it. (I also know about Suez and Cyprus and Kenya; the abandonment of the Congolese by the Belgians and the Angola affair and so on and so on.)

I got fined, too, for taking part in a protest demonstration at the Soviet Embassy against their resumption of testing. But not because I'm anti-Russian or pro- or anti-American or anyone in particular. Pro-human, maybe.

And I guess there's one advantage in having both feet firmly planted in mid-air. If you stand high enough, you can see over the whole forest, and not be too close to the individual trees.

Sprague de Camp: yes, you're right about the all-too- easy transition from noble liberator to tyrant. But I'm not so sure about Batista's start as a liberator -- certainly it didn't last long. And if he'd proved himself so conclusively to be a tyrant, there was no excuse whatever for trying to help his former associates to return to power. C. Wright Mills -- as far as I can tell -- seems to have made most sense from the same point of view as the Cubans' own, out of all the people who've written about Castro. Shaw ~~went~~ to Italy and came back saying Mussolini was wonderful, of course. Which goes to show that the judgments of history are the only ones we have worth a damn.

Lowndes: if I've followed this right, one comment might be added -- to the effect that in the case of pot vs. kettle, the blackness is not an exclusive characteristic of either.

And -- well, hi, Sam! I just added that address of yours to my Xmas card list; I was going to have to ring Ted Carnell and ask where you were because somehow I never did catch up. (Better be a big card, come to think of it -- no, change that: a small one, so I won't even be tempted to start an argument by post. Maybe it can be picked up in the Globe some time.) Seriously, though -- howls of anti-American vituperation? Dear Sam, I am not John Osborne and on't ever expect to be. This country, Britain, is a pretty good one. For all the things one can (and -- see above -- I think has to) criticise we have a lot worth having, keeping, improving. And yet. . . I remember one time we brought a West Indian friend home from a party we were at, just after the Notting Hill race riot (if that's not too big a word, but it was the first considerable affair of its kind in Britain, as far as I know). He was half angry, half scared, and wholly drunk, and kept telling how if there was more trouble over Notting Hill he was going to buy himself a razor and carve up a few whites in return. Well, we heard him out and put him to bed in our front room, and next morning he was apologising all over the place -- but it was a kind of shock to think that this guy, this nice guy, could be put in a state like that by something which had happened here, in my country.

So when Conor O'Brien for example lets fly at the government of Britain and appears able to back his attack with solid evidence, I think it unforgivable to try not to listen. Since Avram Davidson mentioned gnats and camels, I'll mention moths and beams.

Another thing that comes to mind is the long argument my wife and I had with a Russian friend about the extension of the death penalty under the Soviet penal code. Their prison system is in some respects very advanced, but as far as I'm concerned the use of the death penalty is a confession of failure on the part of society. We couldn't get him to see it, but I think he was maybe a bit less satisfied with his reasons for not agreeing when we got through with him. And you can't really do much more than that in an evening.

One interesting by-product of that argument, incidentally, was to emphasise how completely modern psychology, Freudian and post-Freudian, is a western concept -- this whole area of thinking is essentially meaningless to this Russian as far as I could tell. This sort of thing one knows and doesn't know at the same time, largely because till something like that happens you don't know how effectively psychological theory has coloured your own viewpoint.

No, I think being anti- is negative. I try and be pro-. As I guess I've said before.

Sam, I find it interesting that it's in your letter, from Guernsey, CI, GB, that this phrase "howl of anti-American vituperation" occurs. I thought at first I knew what it meant -- on reconsideration, though, I'm not so sure. Who or what is "anti-American"? Cuban sentiment, perhaps? Well, yes. Good grounds are given in "Listen, Yankee" as to why this may be so. But the phrase generally implies hatred -- honest, burning hate which equates America with incarnate evil. And this isn't a sane point of view, even in a Cuban or whoever. My personal view is nowhere near here, fortunately. As I read it, the ideals for which the "free world" (those quotes exclude such places as Spain!) is supposed to stand can be seen at their clearest in men like Jim Peck, who's been mentioned in PITFCS already, in Earle Reynolds of the "Golden Rule", in Garry Davis -- currently, until next week, living two blocks away from here -- in people like those who exercise to the full their right, or privilege, or duty of taking individual action in support of their ideals, rather than in Governor Faubus or General Norstadt or Robert Welch.

And the country that's produced such men, and a lot of others in not such a very long time since its foundation, is a country worth being proud of, and I hope one day fairly soon to be able to visit it and travel around.

But -- and it's a big but. Supposing I'd married a Chinese girl, say, or an Indian girl (mmm! Bee-yootiful!) why the hell does it have to be illegal for me to sleep with my wife in too damned many states of the USA? I mean, this sort of thing bothers me. I know how the situation arose -- I can read up on it. But I don't have to be happy about it, any more than I have to be happy about the Warsaw uprising or the Russian resumption of nuclear tests; about the Hungarian revolt or the fact that there are now so many homeless people in London that the emergency accommodation centres are full to overflowing. (Hell of a Christmas some people are going to have!)

In passing: I guess I should apologise for thinking that criticism of the handling of the Cuban fiasco was not intense; I learned afterwards that it was far more so than I'd understood from the reports I'd read. (US criticism, I mean.) I imagine people were just dazed for a while at first. I remember a lot of people were at the time of Suez, over here.

Did you hear this story? I had it off one of people who marched from San Francisco to Moscow (a wonderful crowd, most of them). Seems a party of American tourists were being shown over the Moscow underground -- all marble and gilt and chandeliers, you know! So the guide takes them down on this magnificent station platform and spouts the official statistics about how many cubic metres of earth were shifted and how short a time it took till the tourists get restive. One of them sees that the platform is getting fuller and fuller of people, and says, "Say, when's the next train due?"

More statistics. Tourist says again, "When's the next train due?"

Still more statistics, and a scowl from the guide. More people on the platform. No train.

"When's the next train due?"

Guide, hot under the collar and starting to bluster: "Ah! But in America you lynch negroes!"

For me, that story makes a lot of sense.

I promised myself when I started on this that I'd chip into a discussion about sf at some point before I reached page 4. I'm now on page 6. Which suggests to me that maybe writing sf is easier (pace Fritz Leiber) than arguing about the real world. And have you ever thought what the effect is going to be if, somehow, we achieve a world-wide integrated society in which everyone of however many billion individuals is highly educated, efficiently educated, aware of the world, capable of making individual decisions based on rational reasons at least to some extent, at least partly freed from the perennial overriding instincts such as hunger? Would someone care to try and depict the totality of a society of billions of such people? Right now, so far as most people are concerned, we can hang labels on whole areas of society and compute with a minority of significant individuals only. Maybe this is the only feasible procedure -- in which case the techniques currently being forged in China for coping with hundred-million population groups are going to be crucial (and before anybody says anything I borrow that idea, not in so many words because he was writing before WWII, from J.B.S. Haldane's "The Last Judgment").

The more I think about either of those possibilities, the more depressed I get, because so far every new thing I've learned about people in this world has shown me some other set of things about which I'm totally ignorant (did you know that there was a cult of antique collecting in ancient Assyria? Recent digging has turned up what seem to be local-made fakes to satisfy such a cult!).

Maybe I'll chip in about sf next time round.

And I thought I was thru. . . Now I remember making a note of that solicitation about the BBC evaluation.

Well, my main feeling is one of relief. Mr. Warren Michael pays so little attention to the factual basis for his remarks about the BBC that I feel confident anyone comparing my out-on-a-limb remarks with his will place mine on a level with Holy Writ for accuracy and content.

Ah - well, I don't have TV. My view is you have TV in an apartment, or you have a hard-working writer who is sometimes only kept at the typewriter because there's nothing to distract. Also I work best in the evenings. But the content of BBC (and even commercial TV) programmes, which I read about in Radio Times, has often tempted me to break that long-standing rule.

Stuff skunks? What good would that be in Britain? We haven't got any skunks over here! (Animal kind, that is.)

Right, now (all together, Aldiss, Amis, Carnell, Crispin, etc. . . one, two, three): WHAT ABOUT QUATERMASS? Generally conceded that Nigel Kneale's TV serials have been about the finest sf ever screened; they were well done, too -- I went to watch them at a neighbour's. The BBC's most recent effort, "A for Andromeda", contained a magnificent idea wrecked by incompetent scripting, but it was something.

As for TV in the hands of the educators: will someone please send Mr. Michael a tape or film of -- for example -- the programmes compered by Professor (or is he just Dr?) Bronowski, or some animal programmes by Armand and Michaela Denis, or the historical lectures by A.J.P. Taylor where he just goes on before a blank curtain and talks -- and people watch? Or the only TV panel game I ever went out of my way to watch, "Animal Vegetable or Mineral?", in which the standard pattern was for a museum to challenge a team of archaeologists to identify its rarest exhibits? That one was wonderful! It put archaeology really on the map, and made Sir Mortimer Wheeler a national figure like no one in his line since Woolley dug the foundations of Ur. Or Patrick Moore's programmes on astronomy, the last of which I watched was about Saturn and included the first TV screening of the rings as seen through a telescope.

You put a competent educator and a TV camera together and you've got something more worth watching than the Perry Como show, goddamn it! And this, praise be for the declining intellectual level of mass entertainment over here, is something the BBC is rather good at.

Declining intellectual level? Well, in case you had not heard, over here people are leaving home in the evenings again -- not even TV keeps them there any longer -- and going to Bingo sessions. This is a moronic gambling game, regrettably legal, otherwise known as Lotto or Housey-Housey or Tombola, in which you have a little card with an assortment of number on it, and the compere draws numbered balls from a cage, and when all the number on somebody's card -- come to think of it, why am I explaining it? I've seen signs up advertising AMERICAN BINGO, which I understand is the variant which includes a snowball prize, so you must know about it.

This gets people out of their homes now. And if TV is already failing to hold them, then that's not because the programmes are too highbrow or dull or whatever -- it's because the formulas on which the master-minds are leaning so heavily are wearing out.

If it were even poker (cancel that "even"!)) -- but it has to be Bingo. Ah, well, Get this one. It appeared in the papers here a few months ago. A man went into a Bingo hall at the start of the session, just to see what would happen and shouted out that WWII had started and Russia and America were going to bomb each other. Somebody said, "Jolly good!" Most people took no notice. They went on playing for rest of the three-hour session, and then, and only then, asked about the war.

You remember MAD and its beautiful item "Newspapers!"? You remember squinched up small among the furniture ads on page 240 or wherever there was this little tiny news item about the start of another world war which in the view of experts could lead to the destruction of humanity?

Anyone still laughing?

I think, reverting to the original point, that if someone scripted a TV show entitled "How to Stuff Mr. Warren Michael" he'd be assured of a significant audience for the whole two hours.

GROFF CONKLIN SAYS:

Boy, did you get me out onna limb with the cover pic on PITFCS 141! I have been in almost monthly correspondence with Isaac for a year now, over a new collection I've done called GREAT SCIENCE FICTION BY SCIENTISTS (Collier Books, 1962, 95¢ -- adv.) But I haven't seen him for 'I would estimate) 5 years. So I fell into the Beard Trap. Who IS M. le Beard, anyhow? Or should I know??? You I recognize, and Avram; never met Randall best as I can recall; and as for the Santa Claus, who in H is he???

Somewhat in vague connection with the current war going on between Campbell & Jenkins on one side, and Asimov, Anderson, Blish, etc. on the problem of scientific orthodoxy etc., I would like to mention a highly sensitive area in which, today, there is considerable fun & games going on between the orthodox medical profession and organizations on the one hand, and the unfortunately often crackpot nutrition crowd on the other: including, oddly enough, a couple of MD's among them, too -- fellas who are mavericks. (Whether there is enough connection here with science fiction to make the analogy worth publishing is problematical; I'm sending it in anyhow!) In particular, I am thinking of Taller's "Calories Don't Count" (Simon&Schuster, this year) and its promotion of the high-unsaturated-fat, high-calorie, low-low-low-carbohydrate diet for permanent, comfortable, longrange, and definitely healthful weight reduction for the obese. Book is in the medical doghouse, more or less, because of the author's naivete in presenting his diet practically a la Houser, Gayelord (who, incidentally, does have some good stuff in his spiel!) to the general public directly, rather than through proper medical channels. I'm working 4/5ths full time with American Diabetes Association as a writing and science consultant (plus X!) and happen to know that as far as basic science goes Taller is definitely on the right track, since his diet has many excellent parallels with the (or one of the) approved weight-reducing diets for diabetics (weight reduction being their major problem in the years after 35 or thereabouts). Also some experts on obesity per se have recommended this sort of diet, although I cannot at the moment recall any names.

Okay, so Taller has something on the ball, but presents it in a fashion such that it is bound to alienate all the medical pundits in the business -- particularly since damn few doctors have ever had any courses on nutrition at all, much less any advanced stuff on modern metabolic theories. Book has no bibliography, no "scientific" apparatus, etc.; quotes very few sources; and sells the diet on a sort of overpopularized basis rather than trying to get scientifico-medical acceptance through the use of all the often necessary (I think) apparatus of experiment and test by impartial sources. Result? A lot of ordinary folks are taking up the diet -- which works, remember -- and are thereupon getting kicked in their several asses by their personal physicians when they tell 'em about it, said physicians never having had the diet promoted to them (far as I know, anyhow) through the pages of JAMA or elsewhere, either by proper scientifically oriented laboratory and clinical testing, or by some of those awful, horrifying advertisements the JAMA ed. bd. accepts for some pretty damn untested drugs, etc., which most MDs swallow literally from head to tail in one gulp. So here both sides are partly wrong! -- the scientifico-medical Vested Interests on the one hand, and the maverick attic inventor type physician-nutritionist on the other.

And god knows the physicians have reason to be wary of nutrition fanatics! I cannot go into case histories on some of the items on which I have personal knowledge, since they are too recent and too hot to handle: but the facts are, as we all know, that the low-calorie food advertisers, the yoghurt-and-brewers-yeast boys, and even way-out (or is the proper term a.d. 1961 "far-out"?) promoters of human chorionic gonadotrophin (which is a hormone extracted from the pee of pregnant females, ugh!) for shotgun weight reduction programs -- and, believe it or not, recently as a "cure" for certain types of diabetes! -- are all of 'em a lot of either completely unscientific, or mumbo-jumbo pseudo-scientific operators, many of them quite sincere, who waste people's money by the millions and in not a few instances hurt their health, (end of sentence, I hope!) So the doctors have Sensitive Feet on these hot coals of special reducing diets and health foods (including, natch, such Big Names as the Mayo Diet, which really doesn't work forever unless you don't mind quietly starving to death!) -- and I swear I don't know where the Right and Proper and Democratic and Humanitarian emphasis should be put! Of course (in closing, I hope) it is true as I said earlier that you get much more deeply into unprovable "scientific" theories when you hit biology, psychobiology, and whatever else you can think up in this area than you do in the physical and meta-physical (my bow to the Dean Drive!) world.

All I say is that I think there is Right on both sides, and damned if I know how to solve the problem other than to get a billion-dollar budget from the National Science Foundation to check out on a basic and honest-try basis ALL crackpot idea that are offered -- just the way National Cancer Institute has been checking out (or at least probably will) the cancer "cure", Krebiozen. And who would ever expect to get that kind of appropriation through our AMA-ruled, and other-sciences-organizations-ruled, Congress? Und zo? I geev opp and wish you a 1962 that lasts throughtout 1962, we hope. And a deep, deep bow of appreciation to Gerard Piel for his new book, which should be MUST reading to anyone interested in continuing to live out his or her normal life span!

AVRAM DAVIDSON SAYS:

The new PITFCS arrived today, and, while I smiled benignly at the cover photo, which it reveals -- perhaps for the first time -- the REAL Asic Isaamov; and while I did skim throu the issue, nodding here, snorting there, -- still, I was unable to give it my full attention. This may perhaps be due to my having learned

But does it? It seems to me that the *raison d'être* of the bazooka is that of throwing a projectile which increases its velocity after leaving the muzzle of the projector, thus saving a great deal of strain, wear, and tear, on the projector support -- in this case, a man. Granted, in a closed tube the expanding gases would behave like those in back of a cannon shell, not like those in a bazooka. But -- the rocket shell would still continue to accelerate after leaving the muzzle, and its muzzle velocity would be higher than that of a bazooka shell. It appears to me that what has been done here is to ask the man holding the tube to put up with a little more strain in order to increase the final velocity of the shell. In the so-called recoilless cannon, this principle is reversed by utilizing some of the shell gases to act as a rocket jet out the rear of the projector in order to neutralize the recoil.

I don't know whether such a device as the Rogers bazookannon (if I may coin a term) would work more efficiently or not, but it seems to me it would. I specifically ask Our Dr. Stine to enlighten the Honorable Members on this.

In Department X (Proceedings of the Institute, No. 141), the discussion of Our Mr. Budrys's Rogue Moon was handled beautifully by Our Mr. Dickson. That was not quite the way the book struck me, but Our Mr. Budrys gives the reason for that: Like St. Paul, it is all things to all men -- or, more explicitly, a different thing to each man. Therefore, while I cannot agree with Our Mr. Dickson's interpretation of the work -- nor even Our Mr. Burdys's! -- I can agree that it is a fine work.

Our Mr. Aldiss, I fear, has left himself open to the charge of reading as in-exactly as he writes. I quote his first sentence: "The main charge that Mr. McKenna levels against the Hothouse series is that they (?) are not written by Isaac Asimov." Our Mr. McKenna, who is anything but unclear in his writing, said no such thing. He merely used Our Dr. Asimov as an example of that large group of writers who would not have allowed a series of stories with so many glaring inconsistencies in them to see print. (The question of whether I, myself, can be classified in that group will be left to others of the Honorable Membership.)

Our Mr. Aldiss divides science-fiction-fantasy writers into two groups, the Clerks and the Romantics. "The Clerks," he says, want everything cut and dry; the Romantics work better in chiaroscuro. The Clerks need blueprints; the Romantics work indirectly, by impulse, by suggestion . . . "

By his choice of words, Our Mr. Aldiss seems to plant himself firmly in the Romantics camp, on a peak in Darien, perhaps, where he can look far, far down on the antlike creatures crawling about in the camp of the Clerks. Certainly his choice of the word "chiaroscuro" in the above quotation indicates that it is the sound of a word rather than its meaning that governs his choice. Blueprints, I might point out, are one of the purest forms of chiaroscuro work.

But the Romantic, as Our Mr. Aldiss seems to define him, is much akin to the class of people which I call the Greenwich Village Modern Artists. (This is a name applied simply because this group exemplifies the people I'm going to discuss. Certainly not all artists who live in The Village are of this type, and there are many who belong under the heading who are not in the field of art or writing at all.) The identifying characteristic of this group is a refusal to attempt to learn the rudiments of art, a denial that there is any necessity whatever for discipline in any art form. This is called "freedom" and "self-expression".

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today that, Bob Mills having decided to agent fulltime, Mr. Jos. Ferman has entrusted me with the White Staff of Office. In other words, I am ye new editor of F&SF. This all seems not quite real, on the one hand, -- I mean, me? the mantle of Anthony Boucher on my shoulders? and on the other hand, it may be so much overweening self-confidence as to paralyze my Sense of Wonder, -- or Oh well.

No meself tonight, chap.

I'll

keep in touch.

I hope that all the Members of the Institute, including the Hon. Sec., will favor me with their patronage. No considerations of race, creed, nationality, or choler of politics will obtain: all they got to do is write stories I'll like.

What could be fairer?

MIRIAM ALLEN DeFORD SAYS:

Report of progress: this time PITFCS ruined a day of the first draft of my forthcoming short history of prison.reform. (Advt.)

Relieve my mind! Was that picture a hoax? I've never happened to meet in the flesh any of those portrayed. Is that really Isaac? (Not surprised that you're so young and handsome.)

Poul Anderson (I could do this viva voce, but it's more fun to argue in public): O.K., so you think you have as much freedom of thought and expression as Americans had in 1910. Sexually, yes: a lot more. But suppose (as a mere example; I know you wouldn't) you wrote an s-f novel of the future which postulated a Communist world and approved ot it highly. Do you think you'd ever get it published? I wrote political and economic stuff in 1910 and got it published that I could never write now. (I probably wouldn't want to, but that's beside the point.) Anyway, how do you know? You weren't here in 1910.

Isaac Asimov: Three cheers. People have awfully short memories. I'm writing on the 20th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. Since then our bitter enemies have been transmogrified into our dearest friends, and vice versa. Berlin and Tokyo are the two cities I'd least like to die for. There was a German song I learned about 60 years ago, which ran:

"Du bist verrückt, mein Kind;
Du musst naçk Berlin --
Wo die Verrückte sind
Auch musst du dahin."

The way things are going at present, Washington should be substituted for Berlin.

Damon Knight: There is just one way out of your dilemma. Learn to type as well as a professional. I've never paid anyone a cent to type any of my manuscripts, but then I once earned my living as a public stenographer. I even published a "Little Blue Book" once on how to teach yourself speed touch-typing, and I'd send you a copy if I had an extra one left. Take six weeks' intensive training in a business school -- that's all I ever had -- and you'll never have to pay for typing again.

Finally, I have a gripe I'd like to utter. (This applies to magazine sf stories, not to books.) Why, almost invariably, do astronauts and other space travelers and explorers have Anglo-Saxon names? Why are characters in stories of the future also almost always obviously English or American? It's an exhibition of chauvinism -- analagous to the lion who, if lions were sculptors, would have modeled a statue of a lion with his foot on a man's neck. I've gone out of my way in my own stories to make it plain that people of every nationality and race will visit extraterrestrial planets and people the future, as a small contribution to the concept of One World.

HOWARD DeVORE SAYS:

A close look at the front cover of #141 convinces me that Asimov probably is the world's greatest lover -- it's the beard and those piercing eyes that get 'em.

G. C. EDMUNDSON SAYS:

I find myself in agreement with Rog Phillips' first graf. sf & I are growing old and the monumental apathy with which I view the burning issues has driven me to photography's more predictable grumpkins via 2 pix & caption on HOW TO REPLACE THE 'O' RING SEALS IN A MODEL B CLOOGE.

Damon Knight worried about typing. Solving this is rather like choosing a wife but, my personal working habits for all the good they may do:

I once built a refuge from my ironheeled little monsters. After much experimentation I can state categorically that there ain't no such thing as a sound-proof room. Next it was a trailer in the back yard. This worked fine save that the stove, sink, &c. were more conducive toward coffee than cliches. The trailer, incidentally, awaits visiting pros providing they come in groups of 6 or less & with 30 mins warning. I must stipulate also that whisky drinkers will not be tolerated since Mexican whisky is undrinkable. Other boozes will be furnished in sufficient quantities.

At present I'm in a separate bldg out back. It has many windows and each window has many coats of paint. A tin stove keeps temperature in the 90's. Like crickets, I become inactive with cold. However, I digress.

The studio has a door with 1 key, cobwebs, a file cabinet, desk, a navy hammock, and a Stenorette. The latter is a tape recorder. the 1/2 hour roll is reusable & to fill it is a damn good day's work. Mike has 2 buttons, one to start it and another to repeat the last sentence when one's been woolgathering & can't remember just where the hell. . . Judicious use of these buttons allows one to over & over the same passage, searching for just the right word.

An ordinary tape recorder is useless. The sight of reels spinning inhibits. My god! Life's blood dripping away & I'm not saying anything! The start-stop on the mike of a good dictating machine makes the difference. More important, it allows me to stretch out in the hammock, in total darkness.

Afterward, I transcribe on typewriter. Earphone & foot pedal let me take one word, or even 1 syllable at a time. Sometimes I can snip the teletype paper from the mill into convenient lengths & mail. Otherwise, recopy and carbon. If the first draft goes I spread it over 5 or 6 feet square of floor and photograph from ceiling height. Negs on file for enlarging just in case somebody loses a MS.

They don't pay me a commission & I'm not particularly in favor of their past political experiments but I own a German made Stenorette for same reason's I have a Jap camera: Cheaper & better than anything local. (Comes a Blintz-wagen, I'll buy one.)

Big flap here now. Bookstore test casing local dicks over Henry Miller. 2 newsmen in a neighboring country wh I charitably refrain from mentioning scragged last week for offering a political opinion. Wife's cousin dead in 3 places a month ago. Same reason. Myself, I ain't talking.

May thy seed be fertile!

Hasty addendum to last night's diatribe.

Somebody in #141 commented one way or another about outsiders in the club. I think they should be excised like so much carcinoma. In this town which I refrain from naming since copies of this sort of thing always fall in the wrong hands, we had a nice little group. Not sf writers, but a little of all kinds of fictioneers. Only requirement was some ability and past performance as a pro. We relaxed this requirement just once & -- you guessed it. Every goddam meeting's taken up by this bloody old never-sold-a-word who's still heading 'em off at the pass. We're looking for ways to get rid of the nice enough guy but totally incompetent, infuriating & time wasting amateur who's loused up everything. Mineself, I quite going after the 10Mth redskin bit the dust. Much safer in the long run to chop off that toe before the instep gets past the threshold.

Also, the invitation to sleep in the tin yurt, eat my grub & drink my booze stands for all writers. Let's be big, I'll even include editors. But please, keep my address out of the sheet or some goddam shithead of a fan will get it. I grow old & tired & cannot take many of these. I rely on your discretion. Feel free to give the address to anyone reputable coming this way. I ask only that they observe the usual amenities and refrain from seducing my minor daughters. Or sons.

You should live for 140 years & then meet a nice girl.

RANDALL GARRETT SAYS:

First, in reference to the reprint (Proceedings of the Institute, No 140) of Our Mr. Campbell's editorial in the June 1945 ASF. It is astounding to note (if the Honorable Members will pardon the term) how often Our Mr. Campbell has been right in his predictions. I call your attention to the sentence: "My own hunch is that too few people will buy the expensive, four hundred dollar television receivers to support the commercial advertiser's very expensive show." (Underlineations mine.) Our Mr. Campbell was absolutely correct.

May I say that I agree with Our Messrs Bretnor and Clarke, and those others of Our Gentlemen who are not in favor of widening the membership of the Institute, nor sending copies of the Publications to those outside this august body. They are not, after all, Our Gentlemen. (Lest those of the somewhat fairer sex take umbrage and feel slight where none is intended, I hasten to append that I include in that generic term Our Ladies.)

Speaking of Our Mr. Campbell, I notice that Our Mr. McLaughlin seems to delight, lately, in sniping at Our Mr. Campbell. He is not, of course, alone; nay, he is merely one of the more vociferous of that clique.

Not, be it understood, that I always agree with everything Our Mr. Campbell says. I find a great deal of his speculation thought-provoking and some of it just plain provoking. But I never find it necessary to scream wildly and rush blindly at him with fangs bared and claws dripping venom.

Our Mr. McLaughlin says: (Proceedings of the Institute, No. 140) "Why do I refuse to believe? /in the Dean device/ Well, I do prefer a nice, comfortable universe where everything behaves the way I always thought they would, and by-the-bootstraps-lifters are a little beyond the pale. But more important, I have yet to be given a really good reason to believe."

First: Our Mr. Campbell has not, to my knowledge, asked anyone to believe anything -- except, perhaps, that one should believe that when an apparent anomaly is discovered in what one already believes, one should investigate it, not smother it or try to shout it down as a damnable heresy, the perpetrators of which should be burned at the stake.

Second: I have not had the good fortune to live in a universe where everything behaved the way I always thought it would, and I hesitantly suggest that perhaps Our Mr. McLaughlin hasn't either. Be that as it may, I certainly do not believe that the discovery of a principle apparently contrary to the laws of nature, as we know them at any given time, will cause the universe to crumble to dust about me or vanish in a puff of smoke.

As a rather young boy, I read an elementary textbook which gave Newton's laws of motion and Kepler's laws of planetary orbits. I was impressed with the nice clockwork precision with which they made things work. When, in high school, I heard about the anomaly of Mercury's orbit and the explanation given by Dr. Einstein, I found that the universe went on as usual. Nor did the disproof of the Principle of Parity a few years back cause any perceptible tremors in the fabric of the cosmos. At any rate, not my cosmos.

As far as the Dean device is concerned, I do not see that Newton's third law of motion is any more sacred than his law of gravity. Leges naturae leges Dei non leges hominum.

I strongly suspect that what can be actually always has been -- we just didn't notice it. As Our Dr. Asimov pointed out in one of his articles, both plutonium and neptunium have existed on Earth for several billion years, the supply being constantly renewed by the same process that our atomic reactors use to make them. Atomic piles are nothing new on Earth; they have been here since long before Man came into being. They were simply so diffuse that nobody noticed them until lately.

I do not hesitate to say that, if further investigations show that the Dean device does, in fact, work, then those same investigations will show that the principle involved has been in operation for 10! these may multimillenia. And my universe will still be here, just as it has always been.

I, like Our Mr. McLaughlin, shall wait.

Our Mr. Sanders raises an interesting point -- several of them, in fact, but I shall be content with this one -- in reference to the *much*-vaunted invention of the bazooka in Armageddon 2419. He says: "And lo, Buck Rogers did not have a bazooka. He had a closed tube from which rocket shells were launched, thereby missing the entire *raison d'etre* of the bazooka."

But does it? It seems to me that the *raison d'être* of the bazooka is that of throwing a projectile which increases its velocity after leaving the muzzle of the projector, thus saving a great deal of strain, wear, and tear, on the projector support -- in this case, a man. Granted, in a closed tube the expanding gases would behave like those in back of a cannon shell, not like those in a bazooka. But -- the rocket shell would still continue to accelerate after leaving the muzzle, and its muzzle velocity would be higher than that of a bazooka shell. It appears to me that what has been done here is to ask the man holding the tube to put up with a little more strain in order to increase the final velocity of the shell. In the so-called recoilless cannon, this principle is reversed by utilizing some of the shell gases to act as a rocket jet out the rear of the projector in order to neutralize the recoil.

I don't know whether such a device as the Rogers bazookannon (if I may coin a term) would work more efficiently or not, but it seems to me it would. I specifically ask Our Dr. Stine to enlighten the Honorable Members on this.

In Department X (Proceedings of the Institute, No. 141), the discussion of Our Mr. Budrys's Rogue Moon was handled beautifully by Our Mr. Dickson. That was not quite the way the book struck me, but Our Mr. Budrys gives the reason for that: Like St. Paul, it is all things to all men -- or, more explicitly, a different thing to each man. Therefore, while I cannot agree with Our Mr. Dickson's interpretation of the work -- nor even Our Mr. Burdys's! -- I can agree that it is a fine work.

Our Mr. Aldiss, I fear, has left himself open to the charge of reading as in- exactly as he writes. I quote his first sentence: "The main charge that Mr. McKenna levels against the Hothouse series is that they (?) are not written by Isaac Asimov." Our Mr. McKenna, who is anything but unclear in his writing, said no such thing. He merely used Our Dr. Asimov as an example of that large group of writers who would not have allowed a series of stories with so many glaring inconsistencies in them to see print. (The question of whether I, myself, can be classified in that group will be left to others of the Honorable Membership.)

Our Mr. Aldiss divides science-fiction-fantasy writers into two groups, the Clerks and the Romantics. "The Clerks," he says, want everything cut and dry; the Romantics work better in chiaroscuro. The Clerks need blueprints; the Romantics work indirectly, by impulse, by suggestion . . . "

By his choice of words, Our Mr. Aldiss seems to plant himself firmly in the Romantics camp, on a peak in Darien, perhaps, where he can look far, far down on the antlike creatures crawling about in the camp of the Clerks. Certainly his choice of the word "chiaroscuro" in the above quotation indicates that it is the sound of a word rather than its meaning that governs his choice. Blueprints, I might point out, are one of the purest forms of chiaroscuro work.

But the Romantic, as Our Mr. Aldiss seems to define him, is much akin to the class of people which I call the Greenwich Village Modern Artists. (This is a name applied simply because this group exemplifies the people I'm going to discuss. Certainly not all artists who live in The Village are of this type, and there are many who belong under the heading who are not in the field of art or writing at all.) The identifying characteristic of this group is a refusal to attempt to learn the rudiments of art, a denial that there is any necessity whatever for discipline in any art form. This is called "freedom" and "self-expression".

The "poets" who do not know an iamb from a trochee, the "writers" who cannot distinguish between a gerund and a present participle, and "artists" who think that perspective should be limited to architectural renderings are all of the same pattern.

The only manual dexterity these painters feel they need is the ability to transfer paint from the container to the canvas by any means handy.

These poets feel that, as Archie the Cockroach put it:

vers libre is
anything at
all written like
this.

Except, of course, that it must not possibly make that much sense.

And the umpteen squillion words of utter guk that flows from the pencils, pens, and typewriters of the writers of this school apparently all come from the heart without bothering to pass through the brain.

These producers of flatulence are aided and abetted by a public that not only doesn't know art, it doesn't even know what it likes. As proof of this, we have the scintillating example of the chimpanzee in the Bronx Zoo who has produced finger-paintings that have sold for several hundred dollars each.

This group is working towards what Our Mr. Campbell has referred to as "hyper-democracy" in the art world. If a chimpanzee, who has neither talent nor training, can produce acceptable art, then all of us not only can be but are artists. We are also chimpanzees. We have been created equal, and will remain that way.

Now, I would not have anyone think I put Our Mr. Aldiss in this group. I most emphatically do not. One of the most unusual and most enjoyable experiences I ever had was stalking through the Jurassic jungles after a dinosaur (while the English language flowed delightfully, wildly, and wonderfully around me), only to die in the end -- of the biggest fleabite in history! Wheeeee!

But I do deplore sloppy thinking, and even more so in the mind of a man whose talent I admire. It is not enough that the notion of cobwebs from Earth to Luna should form a pretty picture in the mind: it should also fit in consistently with the story. I have not, admittedly, read the final draft of the Hothouse series, but it would take a great deal of rewriting and careful editing to make me feel that the story was a coherent whole rather than a mishmash of bits and pieces. The parts of a jigsaw puzzle, distributed at random over a table, may make a pretty pattern, but they do not make a picture.

In his final sentence, Our Mr. Aldiss says: "Eventually, too, he /the writer/ may find critics who will judge his stories by his own intentions."

This is not only a vain hope, it is one that should not even be encouraged in any writer. A writer should not be judged by his intentions -- ever! He should not be judged by what he wanted to do, or what he tried to do, but by what he did do.

To insist that a man and/or his work should be judged by intention is to put us right back in that hyperdemocracy where Oswald Q. Sludgehead can say: "Wull, gee whiz, I tried ta write a purty story." And, because he intentions were better than those of Herman Phogbrain, he gets the Pulitzer Prize or is mentioned on the Queen's Honours List next time round.

God knows that if my own stories were judged by my intentions I would be not only famous and loved, but rich. If recognition were given for intentions, then England would be an island occupied entirely by Dukes and Duchesses, since each and every one of Her Majesty's subjects would have to be put at the highest possible position on the Honours List.

Our Dr. Asimov complains that nobody yells at him. "How come," he asks, "I'm so damn non-controversial?"

Does ~~not~~ the Good Doctor realize that he has made himself so well-loved, not only in his writings, but in person, that to raise one's voice against the Good Doctor would make one feel as though one were committing something akin to blasphemy? To cleanse us ~~from~~ feeling the terrors of this sin, I fear that the Good Doctor mustdo something to rile us, to make us sit up on our haunches and howl. In other words, to commit blasphemy himself, that one sin may cancel out another.

But we all know it cannot be. For Our Dr. Asimov to come out strongly in favor of the Dean device, or psionics, or Communism, or Romantic writing, or Orthodox Judaism, or Christian Catholicism, or Yogi, or deros, would not be within the realm of probability. The Good Doctor is called that, not because he is beyond evil, but because evil is beyond him.

By his very lovableness, he has put himself above attack.

Someone once said: "I don't care if people lie about me, but for Heaven's sake, don't let 'em tell the truth!"

Our Dr. Asimov need worry about neither. Lie or truth, if it is antipathetic toward the Good Doctor, it would be uttered by few and believed by none. (Not, be it noted, that I know any truths that would reflect upon the Good Doctor; it is simply that if I did I wouldn't dare repeat them.)

I fear, Right Honorable Secretary, that, by his very goodness, Our Dr. Asimov has made himself a bed of roses that he must, perforce, lie in. Any thorns he finds therein were placed there by himself, since none of his friends would think to do so, and he has no enemies.

Finally, I wish to say that I will be giving a further report to the Honorable Membership on fan letters at a later date. Since the appearance of my article, "Engineer's Art", in the December Analog, I have been the recipient of the goddamdest letters you have ever seen. A full report will ensue.

HARRY HARRISON SAYS:

Since I was listed among the contributor to PI25CS 141 but appeared not, I rush to make up the loss from the sobbing readers who searched in vain. First, another address to join the growing numbers. We are now at Christiansgave 15, Rungsted Kyst, Denmark. This is the outskirts of Copenhagen, the Phone is RUngsted 1309, and like the Anderson establishment the koldskabe here is always stocked with Tuborg and Carlsberg.

Sent J. Harrison

Poul: I'm glad to see I'm off your list since I managed to write about the one thing you hate the most (psionic gamblers) in my first book, but equalized by working pschoto-mimetic drugs (from your approved list) into my second.

Blish: I add my plug for THE MALE RESPONSE. In truth I think it a better book than BLACK MISCHIEF. Waugh is a snobbish bastard and so obviously considers negroes a lower form of life that his attitudes get in the way of any pleasure that might be derived from the book. And that is a fascinating response you give to John Pierce's letter in ". . . the current issue," WHAT issue?! I have searched back as far as 137 and found no letter. Do I have pages missing? Will someone send me the missing copy? Help. . . !

Avram: Don't be too hard on Brunner without checking his facts. I have met some of the people from the Soviet Embassy he talks about, and have met embassy people from the U.S. in many countries. Brunner is right. Without going into the politics of the thing, there is a simple empirical explanation. For historical reasons government jobs are sneered at in the States and our Motherland's interests abroad are represented for the most part by as gruesome a collection of incompetants and boobs as you could possibly imagine. Our Red cousins hold these same jobs in high esteem, compete for the posts, and the winners make a much more interesting crew. Jumping now to your comments on the obscurantism of scientists. I haven't run across either of your anecdotes before, but I'll take your word on them. But have you forgotten that Velikovsky's book was a sheer mass of reeking crud -- passed off as science? What do you want the pros to do when an amateur tells them they are wrong about everything?! There is enough lack of knowledge of science, hatred of science and misunderstanding of same around now without anymore being dumped on the pile. What is needed is a loud and strident blast every time some boob puts out a BRIDEY MURPHEY or nonsense about Vermont vinegar being a cure for all man's bodily ills. And that Fundamentalist should have been dumped. Along with all Catholic obstetricians and such ilk. Public position means public responsibility. Organized religion is so destitute of any real moral sense that its practitioners and policies must be put behind us once and for all. Your saying that one secularist reacted with rage does not destroy the argument that it is high time the human race abandoned the childish mythologies of its youth, and used the freed intellectual energy to develop scientific humanism.

DeCamp: Yes, there are some very obvious suggestions as to ways to deal with Cuban politicians. The best would be for the State Department to change its attitudes and start representing the American ideal of democracy, instead of the foreign financial interests of large corporations. If, instead of backing any fascist slob who fills his own pockets while "fighting communism", they were to throw their weight behind some politicians with democratic ideals, the final results might be different. And as to your grouping the Nazis and the Irgun Zvi Leumi in the same bunch -- I can only say well!! Neither fits your definition of being fanatically devoted to the good old days. The Nazis were psychotics who stepped into a political vacuum created by the Germans' lack of knowledge of any democratic process. The Irgunists were one of a number of groups fighting to establish a national state in their own defense, after seeing six-million of their co-religionists cooked, gassed, etc. The Irgun was the most short-tempered and violent of these groups. I really am sorry to see you repeating the old cavil of their being no better than or different from the Nazis. I won't beat this, since I'm sure Avram has already turned out a stronger and more factual rebuttal.

J. MARTIN GRAETZ: Okay, J. M. -- who are you? I hate to be stupid about this kind of thing, but it is hard to keep up this far away. In fact, think it would be a good idea for all new names in our ranks to do a short bio. Not in self defense -- just to satisfy the memberships' burning curiosity.

Gunn: Don't whip yourself boy, we're not attacking your job or asking for expiation. You have worked very hard and proven the exact opposite of every point you made. Your job sounds dull as mud and I wouldn't have it for all the gold in Knox. I'm afraid the University of Kansas is pretty small potatoes on the world scene already. And it will not be remembered. Artists and their works are the only records a culture leaves behind. I've met lots of people in Europe who can discuss U.S. SF in great detail -- and have never even heard of the State of Kansas. Time will only accelerate this condition. Sorry. You should have kept your money on SF.

Knight: I have your answer on the typing thing, Damon. I have been using the same girl now through three books and large numbers of articles and stories. She is fast, accurate, reliable and cheap. She lives in Arizona now, which makes not a particle of difference. I send copy from here and never see it until it appears in print, the work is done so well that the few errors can be caught in NY. The rate is 45¢ a page (with one carbon) on short article lengths. But once it goes past about 3,000 words the lower price of \$1.00 a 1,000 words takes over. You pay postage. She throws in a 2nd carbon for free, but I try to add enough to cover the costs on long things. Here name is Peggy, but write to Mrs. P. Spencer, c/o CANNON ELECTRIC CO., 2801 East Airline, Phoenix 34, Arizona. Say I sent you and be prepared to be satisfied. All members take note.

McLaughlin: Your thing on pornography raises an important point. I am about to go into the business. I now represent a secret International ring that is going to start publishing in Denmark, where printing costs are low and censorship non-existent. The final aim is to print some books of SF criticism and the like by Institute members. (One Ring member even suggested a book might be culled from the pages of PI25CS -- any suggestions?) To get the show rolling we are going to start with a book of SF limericks. Send contributions to me. No names will be of course used in the book, but copies will be made available to contributors, Ghod and the U.S. postal authorities willing. It is hoped that money from this will start the other books going. Limericks will be stolen freely from PI23CS without credit, unless their authors write to me first to protest. Do you hear, Poul? Also ideas wanted for the SF books. Perhaps a topic could be worked over in this journal by the members, and a couple of these produced so effortlessly put together for a book.

I close with a question and a cheer of praise. QUESTION: Will some north-western member find out what the hell is going on in Portland? (Box 5007, Portland 13) I sent the Perri people six-and-a-half-bucks American over two years ago for the new Index of SF mags. The rest is only silence. What's happened? The PRAISE: To our hardworking secretary, may he not blush and cut this out. Pix! Glossy paper! Legibility! I weep with joy at his efforts and hope to hell we all appreciate -- between the bitching -- just how much he is getting done. Hip, hip . . .

FRITZ LEIBER SAYS:

I've been free-lancing for about five years now, making about half what I did as associate editor of Science Digest, which seems reasonable for a mid-life change of occupations. To show for this (measuring accomplishment in wordage as an Indian counted coups) I've got a couple of sf novels, an aborted suspense book, and perhaps a half million words of assorted short subjects: sf, fantasy, articles, and mainstream.

So far my attempts at so-called mainstream have tended to bring me home rather than carry me into other literary worlds. Meaning I've sold a couple of psychological stories and two little cat-stories to fantasy-sf magazines (which take them in spite of their mainstream taints) and a few crime-suspense pieces to sf-editors who have drifted into another field -- Leo Margulies and Hans Santesson. (Oh yes, and I've done four Buck Rogers continuities -- about a year of strips.)

It's been a period of rising cost of living and falling prices for the free-lanced word. The paperbacks with their mounting number of originals, are coming to seem quite a bit like the old pulp magazines in a new form -- a monthly publishing quota, tight deadlines, sharply categorized fiction, standardized appeals.

I'm in favor of unionization for writers (naturally!) yet I'm so much more worried about my small output than I am about the declining compensation for it that I'd be poor union material. (Can you imagine a plumber, for instance, saying, "Gee, fellows, I don't know -- I'm racked by guilt -- I need somebody to make me plumb more, not somebody to fight for more money for me for the miserable little plumbing I do." Of course, I suppose that in some limbo there are unions for the guilty. . .)

I've seen enough of TV and movie writing out here in LA to confirm me in my belief that it's mostly for those who want to concentrate on it full time.

I've discovered, I think, why I've had little success with poetry in the past. I've been more interested in exploring inner worlds -- my own and those of others -- than I've been in creating little word-worlds for their own sake. When I've got the illusion of really being in the other world -- when I've identified with the character, by the actor's idiom -- and described it as vividly as I can with the best words at hand, I feel I've done my job; I don't have the impulse to keep on combing through the words, arranging and rearranging. To generalize excessively, fiction writing is a mad adventure, poetry is cutting jewels.

The first years of my free-lancing I concentrated on the classics and stayed away from the current scene. Science Digest had allergized me to newspapers and most periodicals. Now I'm reading the latter a bit and getting some strange impressions. For instance, apparently the Trotskyite Socialists of the Thirties have convinced almost everyone in America that the only thing worth doing in this world is worrying about Stalinist Communism and getting ready for Ragnarok. But when Russia now denigrates Stalin, the best thing the LA Times, at any rate, can think to do is go off on a no-honor-among-thieves kick. According to Gallup, eighty percent of Americans prefer all-out atomic war to supervision by Marxist egghead gangster types. I'm tempted to go back to the classics . . . but probably I'd just find myself reading about the Great Athenian Campaign of Liberation in Sicily. . . . Not that I'm inclined to take a quick look at Las Vegas, the Denver cops, Hoffa, quiz programs, and the sex-and-sadism books and come out whooping it up for superior totalitarian morality at the home-and-office levels and the virtues of a dose of communist puritanism. Guess I had better get back to the classics and history. . . and maybe read about how a Protector is bound to be morally superior to the House of Stuart. . .

When I worked for Science Digest, sf background research was one of the valuable by-products (valuable to me for story purposes). Now I have to do it in my own time, which ups the manufacturing cost per story. And perhaps because I like to be thought a knowledgeable writer, I find myself tempted to do stories requiring considerable background research, especially in the astronomical direction. Some research is necessary and desirable, but it can be pushed too far. We can't all be Ike Asimovs or Arthur Clarkes and no run-of-the-mill sf writer is rewarded for erudition or had even a wooden medal pinned on him for "having faith" in space flight and atomic power before those things were achieved. As a group we're not admired for our foresight -- we're thought of as sensationists who concoct wrong ways to doing things NASA and AEC are doing right. How many newspaper science reports have I read containing the phrase, "Contrary to the sensational notions of science fiction writers. . . !"

But maybe we ought to be sensational. Come to think of it, I find it fruitful. I don't mean sensational in the sense of being lurid and piling one stock surprise on top of another, but in the sense of taking an idea on the edge of or in the very heart of crack-pottery's domain and then using a story to make this idea as vivid as possible and

while in the state of creative exaltation. (Surely this is the vital and unique contribution of the fiction writer in any field -- to explore people, situations, speculative notions, etc., while projecting, identifying, dramatizing, feeling like god, and being otherwise in the hopped-up state of mind peculiar to creativity. . . this is the thing the scientist, scholar, and critical thinker can't do and we can. In the heat of writing we ~~make~~ our "discoveries." We can't plan them ahead of time, we can at best leave room for them in our story outlines. Sometimes they're nonsense, sometimes they're not, often they remain mysteries for other writers to explore.)

By being sensational I don't mean whooping it up in story after story for one fringe concept like psionics. Or rather, if you do, to try to do it differently each time. One trouble with psionics as a story element is that there's so little variety to its manifestations: a character knows something happening elsewhere or elsewhen, or influences something happening elsewhere or elsewhen. . . and that's it. This, incidentally, is exactly what a fiction writer does: he projects himself into distant beings and scenes and influences events. Perhaps psionics is so like creativity itself that it makes the writer feel boxed in.

At any rate there's a place for sensational sf and outright fantasy. The field would be rather dull if it were all that sort of realistic, ultra-backgrounded sf that tries to keep itself in line with the very latest research report in every branch of science and technology -- with the whole story hanging on what the last scholarly paper on the spectrum of Venus says about the presence or absence of water vapor in the atmosphere.

As I'm sure other people have, I find the chief problem of full-time fictioneering is to avoid vegetating and getting lost in minutiae, becoming too much of a spectator. Thank God for a place like PITFCS!

RICHARD MCKENNA SAYS:

Brian Aldiss: I did not know Mr. Aldiss' intentions when I read the "Hothouse" novelettes, nor were they revealed to me in a very careful reading. The frustration was what marred an otherwise enjoyable experience. I enjoyed the tummybellies immensely. Contrary to the author's intentions, however, I saw them as moulded on the stereotype of the American Organization Man (who no doubt has a British cousin). Every Spring now when the seniors here on campus swarm to meet the corporation recruiters I am going to be irresistibly reminded of the tummybellies. I could quite honestly have said many things in praise. Doubtless defenders of Mr. Aldiss will rush to say them and I will agree with most of what they say. But I hold that in some circumstances praise can be pernicious.

Here where he is still a literary fetish, I dare to say of Thomas Wolfe what I say also of Brian Aldiss. Wolfe was good; with more discipline he could have been vastly better. I do not hold with an either/or Classic-Romantic dichotomy. I think all story writing is romantic on the sub-verbal level of trains of imagery (often unconscious) and begins to be touched with classicism as soon as it is subjected to the discipline of verbal expression; however sloppy. Disciplined reworking (judicious selection, pruning, polishing, attention to internal consistency, fine and gross structure, all the craft of rewriting) moves it toward the classic pole and all finished stories subsist in a tension between those two poles. I think each individual writer has his own optimum position in the resultant spectrum; certainly too much rewriting can kill a story; but no or not enough reworking can equally well cause it to fall short of its potential.

That latter charge is the one I make against "Hothouse." Its potential is so great that realization of it to a first approximation is enough to get it published and praised. As in Wolfe's work, bits of it can be taken out of context and read as rather good poetry. But the context all too often cries out for the ruthless reworking necessary to the full-fillment of the whole. I wonder whether science fiction, by providing a coterie audience

for unfinished work of this sort and the resultant gratification of premature publication and praise, may not be a pitfall in the way of many a gifted writer's full development.

Poul Anderson: Okay, Anderson, you are a disturbing symptom, etc. What more I want, for Pete's sake, is that Pete should have more of the freedom of thought and expression that Poul claims to have; Pete being that vast majority of educated Americans who are Organization Men of one sort or another. Science fiction writers are not a representative sample of that universe, which is why I broke into the Reservation myself. I feel free too -- inside that somewhat limited enclosure. But suppose you had to write only for the POST or READER'S DIGEST: how free would you feel then?

George Price: Let's say all rights are human rights and one of them is the right to own property. Say further that it is not ordained by God as unlimited, and the argument as to how the limits should be defined is much more manageable. I fear you tend to give "economic law" the force of "natural law." Proof on paper that bumblebees can't fly is a poor defense against a bomber fleet overhead. Classical economics resembles classical geometry; grant the axioms and the theorems follow. But posit a controlled rather than a free market, approximate it in practice by empirical trial and error methods, and in time possibly a quite different set of equally valid economic laws may be deduced. Men have barely touched the possibilities of automated production and electronic data processing as economic factors.

By "glut" I mean the current output of consumer goods which is greater than consumer income can purchase in the amount that the total of personal debt increases each year, which is considerable. The glut is relative only to demand coupled with the purchase price. There is no glut relative to pure demand or even to some rather basic human needs. The trouble is that we cannot collectively afford to buy nearly all that we are collectively capable of producing. One of the axioms of the free market is that production must be for profit rather than for direct use. This situation of being physically able to produce abundance for all and being prevented from doing so by the barrier of the price system is the irony I spoke of. It is frustrating. It seems to impair human freedom. It is like having hands capable of gathering almost any amount of food but prevented from conveying enough of it to the mouth to assuage hunger. It is in the nature of men to seek ways around such barriers and I wish them luck in the effort. If von Mises knows a way around it, I wish him luck too.

DEAN McLAUGHLIN SAYS:

Numerous items in said PLTFOS rouse my blood, and I may yet sit me down for a long-term serious commentary on various and sundry. But if you absolutely must have something under my name for the next issue. . .

To George Price: Why yes, of course all human rights are meaningless without first recognizing property rights. Who, after all, can exercise freedom of speech without first owning a soapbox?

To John Campbell: I don't know about anyone else, but I for one am well aware that the Dean Machine is only a stalking horse for your one-man war against scientific caution, conservatism, and skepticism. Especially in view of John Pierce's comments, it might do you well to get yourself another horse. My own attitude re the Dean Machine is well summed up -- tho I resent the tone you flavor it with. I prefer to say, Come back when you have something to show me. (You seem to be on rather more solid ground with those dowsing rods. I'm willing to admit, on the basis of testimony given, that something is happening. I don't know what, and I'm definitely unwilling to accept your psionic interpretation; neither am I willing to accept the "subconscious cue" explanation so glibly presented by the orthodox. But in this case, who can you accuse of apathy? Whose job is it to conduct the scientific investigation you are demanding? Buddy, you

are the one who wants investigated. So get to work -- and come back when you have something solid. Poul Anderson has outlined your first experiment for you. What are you waiting for?)

To Jim Blish: Well, since you ask me, I'm inclined to favor the pulsating universe idea, but don't ask me to nail it down point for point. However, one thing I think you're missing -- that we can accept Gamow's ~~monobloc~~ concept (as you call it) and, at the same time accept Hoyle's ideas about formation of the elements. These points are not mutually exclusive; in fact, like the gentleman he is, Gamow has in effect said "Thank you" and incorporated the idea into his own cosmology. (Worth noting -- a pulsating universe, if you accept the additional element of imperfect contraction, just might sidle past the question of how you get past atomic number five. Our present expanding universe could have inherited a portion of its heavier elements from the universe that preceded it. And now that you've got me thinking about it, and I combine the idea with the concept I mentioned F&SF -- our universe being merely a "ripple" in a universe virtually frozen in heat-death -- I begin to get all manner of ideas. But you don't think I'm going to spill everything with a hungry bunch of idea thieves (ie, other writers) positively drooling at my brilliance.)

To Isaac Asimov: Can we help it if you're non-controversial? I mean, some things are above dispute or vilification. Like motherhood, the Presidency under Eisenhower, God, and Isaac Asimov.

To Jim Blish again: Poetry doesn't pay? Permit me to introduce a recently admitted member of the Institute, Joe Kennedy. He's probably too modest to say so himself, but his book of verse from Doubleday (Nude Descending a Staircase, by X. J. Kennedy) is the 1961 Lamont Poetry Selection -- which means not only cast, but circulation in the right circles. Besides which, locally at least, it's been selling like crazy.

Can't help wondering what all the boys had to say, who didn't get into #141 because the ~~mine~~ broke down. Please, Mr. Secretary, get it fixed. The suspense is dreadful.

WARREN MICHAEL SAYS:

There could be a yarn here. If you can't use it, you might want to pass it on to one of the scribes.

CREeping MOLD ROUTS FARM FAMILY

Elkin, N.C. (UPI) -- A grayish powdery mold has invaded a mountain home and driven out the Rev. Grady Norman, a Baptist minister, his wife and daughter.

The six-room mountain farm home is covered by a mold that has defied disinfectants, shellac, hot water and alcohol. It has enveloped the house from basement to attic and devoured furniture, floor, walls, and clothing rotting in the closets.
(CHICAGO DAILY NEWS -- Thurs., Aug. 24, 1961)

JOHN T. PHILLIFENT SAYS (18 OCT.):

Strewth, me writing to a professor, and in English, at that! Still, you neither act nor sound like any professor I ever knew, so I take heart from that. And warn you that, so far this is private. I'll say when to start the quoting, if any. You see, there's a small dilemma, here. . . the curse of a pen name. I am still shaken by Avram Davison's 'Who is George Price?' I'd hate for somebody else to say same about me. So quote me as Rackham, if at all. Of course, there is still the chance that someone will say 'Who is John Rackham?' but I can put that down to ignorance with a clear conscience. Who is Price, anyway. . . someone I should know? Anyway, if you want to quote. . . start here.

I awaited the first of PITFCS with hope, and apprehension. It couldn't be as good as I'd heard. . . but it was, and I'm glad to be wrong. A feast of goodies. I feel like a finger that has just discovered it is part of a hand. . . or the spaceman of legend who stumbles across a planet where the people all speak fluent English. Happy, far-off days.

And I see the controversy still rages as to who killed SF. . . or what. For me, the answer is, nobody and nothing. It isn't dead, just bleeding badly. This is a permanent state of affairs, to be expected from a medium which has built-in limitations. The clue is in that reprint from vintage Campbell, on why television will never catch on. This is how you can be dead right, and dead wrong, at the same time. In one ~~man's~~ honest evaluation, television demands that you sit still and watch, forsaking all else, and there just are not enough people, with enough money, who are that much short on individuality. That was a valid and logical prediction.

The awful truth is something different. There are that many people, and television does work. The bugger factor was 'people'. Is, and always will be, 'people', until sociology comes of age. That same factor operates in SF. SF is fiction, is fun, both to read and to write, tries to be serious at times, is inquisitive, condemnatory, extrapolative, hortatory. . . but is, and must be, all the time, concerned with people, be they human or alien.

And people are two sorts of things at once. They are, and they think they are. Other fictions use imaginary people, constructed according to popular images. . . the hero, heroine, villain, lover, crook, politician, poet and priest. . . called 'real', but in fact 'brand images'. They are understood, recognised, and accepted. In SF, possibly because of the aura of science, and the inherent 'logic' of the plot-factors, the tendency is to show people as they are. This a guess, of course, and usually an intelligent guess, which is worse. This is really why the characters are dismissed as 'cardboard', or, to quote Bordes, 'steel plates' (I wish I could write French as well as he writes English) just because the characters are developed logically. . . at least as hopefully scientific as the rest of the plot.

But people don't like that, because they aren't like that. . . they are not even like their own brand images, although they try to be, mostly. They do, however, like those brand images, and accept them uncritically. Take the 'hero' for instance. For my sins, I served in the Royal Navy all through the last major insanity, was in more tight corners than I care to recall, but I never actually met anybody, in any action, who wouldn't, honestly, have preferred to be elsewhere at that particular time. Heroes, I feel, shine forth in after-glamour. Yet the heroic is still a stock form, and there is, even, a demand for the return to 'heroic' type literature. People would far rather you kid them, or let them kid themselves.

As for logic, take something trite, like a wrist-watch. Assume you have never seen one before, and have just met up with the suggestion . . . let's change from carrying this delicate and intricate piece of clockwork in a safe pocket . . . let's all strap one on our wrists . . . to be jolted and jarred, swung about, openly exposed to a dozen dangers of damage every ten minutes . . . shall we? Would you accept that? Or would you, perhaps, say 'Man, that's about the craziest place you could think of to put a watch! You'll never get sensible people to fall for that . . . and the watchmakers will laugh you out of sight!' Logical . . . no?

On a similar basis, who would have credited that the time would come when the whole of mankind would be split down the middle, with either side ready and itching to sterilize the whole planet, over a difference of opinion? And for what? Does anyone seriously believe that the Soviet people are so afraid of the so-called 'Western' way of life that they would die rather than endure it? Or vice-versa? But it happens. This is people. And some of the more rugged SF minds have predicted this, often. Good guesswork. But it could never have happened in ordinary fiction. Yes, I know about 'On the Beach', but that was all fouled up again with hero images and 'people'-type people.

The really wicked part of it is that it could be perfectly possible to predict people, if only sociology was allowed to grow into a workable science. But it suffers from the same built-in handicap as SF. It studies people as they are, as against what they think themselves to be, and this is not popular. Give us this day our comfortable illusions. For instance, it has been shown with overwhelming figures, that the face-interview technique for handling job applications has a value something less than guesswork; that a properly constructed battery of tests, properly applied, gets much better results (not perfect, but better). Yet the face-interview goes on, because the 'boss' just won't yield his conviction that he is a 'good judge of character'.

In fact, the truth is not popular, especially when it is about people. And enlightened guesswork, that's even worse. This suggests that people are not only other than they believe themselves to be, but are definitely other than all sorts of things . . . are illogical, insane, irrational. This is offensive, even in the small smidgens concealed in SF. This, I submit, is why SF never will be popular, will be even less popular every time it is shown to have guessed right.

OTHER COMMENT: I'm not sure I agree with Will Jenkins in placing the opposition to science on the shoulders of persons in authority, no matter who, where, or how they got there. Surely the real criminal is the 'idea' that there has to be an authority of some kind. . . the itch, so common, to look for somebody else to do the think-work, pronounce the dogma, and then go off with it, in the happy relief 'It must be so. HE said it!!' This is common to politics, and to religion, as well as science. What we need is some way of popularising the idea of 'percentage probability', surely?

I would like to disagree, gently, with Winston P. Sanders on SF folk-lore. I'd prefer to see it dusted off. Folk-lore is fine, as such, but not when so many of us are accepting it as sacred truth. I mean, I didn't know that about Verne's periscope, or the Cartmill atom-bomb. It would be nice if somebody competent could do a full-dress article on this, for reference. Only, that much work ought to be paid for . . . and who would print it?

I'd like to add just a bit to Arthur Clarke's mention of the book 'The Scientist Speculates'. The brainchild of one Dr Irving J. Good, mathematician and philosopher, who has made a life-long hobby of collecting what he calls 'partly-baked ideas'. These he defines as the kind of idea likely to occur to almost any active scientific worker with wide-ranging interests . . . the idea which seems, on the face of it, to be 'going somewhere' . . . yet, either because he hasn't the data, the time, or the knack, it sticks, and he can't take it beyond a certain stage. The book is planned to contain about a hundred such ideas, and the list of the contributors is impressive. I counted at least six gentlemen subscribed FRS. And Arthur Clarke, of course. And me, I think. Dr Good said he wanted some small and frivolous items, too, so K sent him one . . . and, so far as I know, he has taken it. No word, yet, as to when the book is due out.

I imagine Judith Merrill's appeal got her a sackful of strange stories. I was hot-foot to my reject drawer until I looked again at the date-line. In between August and October I imagine she has sorted, selected and sealed her choices. Still, I do have a couple of yarns . . . I think I'll take a chance on them. She can always send 'em back . . .

JOHN T. PHILLIFENT SAYS (18 DEC.):

Pitfcs 141 just arrived. That cover is guaranteed to disorganise what wits the reader may have, so making him vulnerable to the contents. But I read that cover, including the small print, and I think Geof Doherty, Harry Harrison, Serge Hutin, Joe Kennedy, Bill Temple, Theodore Thomas, and humble self all have enough evidence to prove your claim not to proof-read your output is no jest, but sober truth. I wouldn't go so far as to say you could make a career out of it, but it comes precious close to that, listing distinguished contributors on the outside, and then . . . inside . . . nothing! 'Distinguished', of course, refers to the other guys. Me, I'm just as pleased you didn't put my bit of nonsense in there along with all those hard-hitting professional types. All

that detailed structural analysis, mechanisms, levels, and what the writer was trying to do, by Dickson and Budrys, gave me cold shivers among my awestruck admiration.

In my naive way I thought you wrote a story by first getting an idea, then nursing it, feeding it with data, watching it grow; then you imagine what sort of person would be able to do something with such an idea, and what sort of circumstances would compel him to do something with it; and who wouldn't like that, and why not . . . and by that time you're well into the first stages of the story itself. I'd hate to think somebody was going to try an analysis of a story like that. I stick badly on one minor point, too. Suppose a writer does build up his structure with deliberate intent, where every word counts . . . and then the editor chops out chunks of that careful design, apparently at random? In magazine terms, once you have the check, you've sold it, and there's nothing you can do to remedy the ruin. Especially when the story doesn't appear until months afterwards.

Maybe I've been lucky up to now, because this happened to me for the first time just recently, on the first yarn I've managed to sell to Zill-Davis. It hurt, just the same. If I may lick a wound or two in public, it was this way. The main plot idea was old; a group of ill-assorted people dumped into an alien and hostile jungle and left to fight their way back to base and safety, with scant hope of survival. On that straightforward 'adventure' theme I had hung a philosophy; if you believe in something to the point where your belief over-rides intelligence and common-sense, you're a bad survival prospect in alien circumstances. An imperious film director who believed that money and prestige could get away with anything was the first to go. Then the cynical script-writer, who wanted to make other people suffer; then the fanatic camera-man, who wanted more and more spectacular pictures, above all else; two trained and experienced 'jungle-troopers', with implicit faith in their equipment and training; the female lead's personal assistant, who had made a life out of looking after the 'star', and couldn't, not there. The parson, who had to believe that this was God's work, no matter what. Finally, the muscle-bound, slightly simple leading man, a good Joe, who believed in an innate sense of justice and fair-play, although not articulate enough to be able to say it. The two who did get through, the pilot-guide . . . who didn't give a damn for anyone or anything, who thought that life was an accident, anyway . . . and the star, who 'pretended' on the outside to be all that her giggling public wanted, but lived for herself, inside.

Not, perhaps, an elevating philosophy, but I believe it to be sound. Most of the story was action, of course, but quite a bit of it, in the pauses for breath, was conflict between the characters, allowing their various beliefs, and points of view, to come out. This underlying 'way of thinking' was the whole point of the story. In the hands of Cele Goldsmith, all the 'point' dialogue was out out . . . all the sexational bits were left in . . . only, with the arguments and reasons why, they wouldn't have been sexational at all, but inevitable.

As it stands (and no-one is recommended to read it, now) the story has no point at all. It isn't even coherent. Anyone who does read it will wonder why I called it 'Point'. As I said, this is the first time this kind of thing has come my way, and I have been spared even that, had the timing been different. I first sent the yarn to Fred Pohl, and he heaved it back on the grounds that it was a good yarn, but the readership of Galaxy is a cut above ordinary adventure stuff. The rejection I didn't mind . . . I've had a few, and I write as a compulsion, not to pay the rent . . . but I gave him an argument on his estimate of readership tastes. Maybe my argument had some point, for he wrote, later, to say he'd changed his mind and would like to give it a trial. Only I'd already sold it to Cele by that time. Now I shall never know whether Fred would have run it complete, or not. The point is, though, the story as it appeared just isn't my story, at all, and I would rather have had it rejected than mutilated.

Somewhere in this (141) is a crack or two about editors. I've just made an allegation or two about one who was not referred to. May I spring to the defense of one who was. JWC can get along quite happily without my feeble aid, but here it is, for the record, in any case. I don't often submit to Analog, because it is seldom I feel I have a story good enough. But I did send one, some months ago, and I had it back, all eighteen thousand words of it. I had thought it a good yarn, and a good idea, properly worked out. With the reject came a letter, a page and a half of short and terse sentences, which took my story apart, showed me what made it tick, and why . . . and what had gone wrong with it . . . plus advice on how to put it right. When I read that bit about 'closed minds' I wonder. In something like two hundred words, my story had been understood far better than I understood it myself, and redirected to the logical conclusion I had missed, in a way that left neither doubt nor argument.

It was a challenge, too. I kicked it around for several weeks, trying to get that answer with my story, and ended up by rewriting the whole thing. It came out a much better, more satisfactory yarn. It was sent off. At the time of writing I haven't heard the verdict. It may be rejected again, of course. The point is, I had to agree with the rejection in the first instance, and the criticism was an improvement on my thinking. I wonder how many of Campbell's critics could do as much, as economically, and as regularly . . . as part of the daily job? As a long time dabbler around the fringes of the philosophy of science and S-F I am not in a position to join the fray on closed minds regarding 'hard' science, but I can testify that here is one mind which is anything but closed to the art of writing out an idea in fictional form.

Comment on the BBC evaluation of Warren Michael is asked for. Here's my bit. WM is inconsistent. He says 'if the bearded ones spent as much time supporting good programmes as they do pointing fingers at the wasteland . . .'. For many long years the BBC has a charter which lays down a functional rule . . . 'to entertain, inform and instruct'. For many years, our bearded ones had no wasteland to point to, and could spend all their time supporting the 'good'. And they did. In that period the BBC steered a narrow, often wavering, course, between pandering and preaching, alert to public opinion, sensitive to criticism, but committed to certain standards. The result, up to about five years ago, was that the BBC had a reputation for integrity and quality. If you heard and saw it via the BBC, then it was so. If you heard and saw it via the BBC then it was the best of its kind, and genuine. The BBC itself had no opinion. On controversy, both sides were given a fair shake. Minority interests were catered for in a minor programme channel. The service was the admiration of unbiased observers all over the world. The BBC did a damned difficult job, on a pinch-penny budget, always with an eye to improvement, experiment and impartiality, and with deference to no-one except the general of idea of decency and standard of taste.

Then came commercial TV, with its open intention of giving the majority of the public exactly what it wanted, and backed by an enormous budget. The difference in standards is screamingly obvious, even now. The swing in public following is equally and pitifully obvious; the advertisements are an insult to any intelligence; the information content of the programmes is largely zero; on entertainment value, opinions are obviously subjective, so I won't give mine. The really crying shame is that the BBC has become weak-kneed in the face of this competition and is tempted to copy, doesn't do it very well, especially as it has to manage with the cheaper left-overs, being still on a limited budget. Now our bearded ones have a wasteland to point to, and they are doing it, but their voices are largely unheard in the grand chorus from the public majority and the press critics, who have been, for the most part, conditioned by years of Hollywood sensationalism.

There are faint signs, just now, that the BBC is getting over its first panic, and is swinging back to its old standards of integrity and quality. I hope I'm guessing right, but it's going to be an awfully difficult row to hoe, because one of Mr Michael's quotes is absolutely right. 'The mass audience will not buy anything that is not pure escape. If you ask them to think or participate in any manner, they will flip the dial'. When the BBC had a monopoly, there wasn't any dial to flip. Now there is. Strikes me the BBC has the unenviable task of trying to show that the aforementioned quote is not necessarily true.

SF on TV, although Mr Michael doesn't seem to know it, is a different matter altogether, and is the same problem which confronts the SF writer who has hopes of reaching a wide audience. If I may link some names, here . . . HG Wells, Neville Shute, Nigel Kneale, and Fred Hoyle . . . all have used the same technique to throw SF away to the masses. You take easily recognisable ordinary people, not too bright, in standard circumstances and with well-known problems . . . and you hit them with one, single, isolated scientific phenomenon . . . just one gimmick . . . what Fred Pohl called 'the one big lie'. Then you just go on from there and show the struggles of your ordinary people as they try to cope with, to understand, to adjust to this new thing. Sadly, they always end up by beating it, wiping it out . . . or getting wiped out themselves. This is a subconscious plea for the retention of the status quo, which is all that the mass public can tolerate. The popular Wells stories have this pattern. Shute used it in 'On the Beach'. Kneale did it very well in the TV series 'Quatermass', and Fred Hoyle murdered it in the recent, and awful, 'A for Andromeda'. SF, as we know it, deals with circumstances in which things change, and the stories are largely about those changes. It is trite to go on and add that this is true to reality. Since when has the mass public been interested in reality? Even the SF public, far too many of them, clamour for a 'return' to the good old days, to 'sense of wonder' and so-forth. It is an effort, trying to keep up with this continual 'process' which is living; even more so to try and guess ahead of it. And this may well be known to future historians as the age in which 'effort' became a bad word.

I cringe in admiration before Richard McKenna, who was able to read through the 'Hothouse' pieces. I couldn't. The fault is probably mine, as I have never been able to find my way through eccentric sentence structure. Being naive, again, I see writing as a device for communicating intelligence of some kind, a message. The emotional impact, if any, should surely spring from the content of the message and its action on the person receiving it. But when the device, the writing, the transmission itself, is larded up with emotion, then only the emotion gets across, if anything. For me, nothing. I prefer writing which tells me something in plain English, and leaves it up to me whether I 'feel' about it or not. In my very humble opinion, words cannot transmit 'feelings' and shouldn't be used to try. All they can convey, and that only in part, is 'sense'. If I have a toothache, and you've had it, the word means something to you, but I can't tell you how it feels to me, I can only invite your sympathy. And I can only do that by telling you, in plain English, what is going on . . . not what I'm feeling. And, again, SF, if it is nothing else, is 'thinking' writing. Unless you've thought the thing right through, and clearly, how the hell can you write it down so that someone else can follow it? And that applies to 'character' stuff just as much as anything else. If your characters won't keep still while you count 'em, then you're not thinking them, you haven't created them completely.

I'm not against experimental writing, as such, mind. I read everything of Sturgeon I can get hold of . . . but I always know just what he's talking about.

Avram Davidson has a point about 'closed minds' although he doesn't use the term. He makes the point that in religious/anti-religious discussions . . . also in scientific/non-scientific disputes . . . it is the rational side which tends to blow up. He doesn't put it that way. If he had, he would have seen how obvious the 'why' is. To oversimplify, there are two sides; there is the side that believes, without any recourse to

evidence, reason, proof or anything else, a conviction that is integral to the person-as-a-whole; the other side has acquired a belief system by some exercise of critical faculty, reason, evidence and argument . . . by choice, in fact. In any dispute, therefore, the first side is immune, has already rejected the validity of argument. This is any religious believer, politician, mystic, or 'fan'. You can't annoy or excite them by threatening to shake the basics on which they stand, because they have already accepted such basics as impregnable. In rare cases, where the individual happens to be more intelligent than most, and you do succeed in making him think you can kill him, just by doing that. But the other guy has got where he is by thinking, and you can, in some cases, get him to suspect the validity of his thinking. He then has something to lose, knows he can lose it, and tends to blow up in his emotional effort to hold on to something he has come to love dearly.

A point about the religious, particularly the Judea-Christian type. To hear them talk, you'd think they invented the idea of kindness and compassion, good-will to fellow-man and all that. Yet at times the pursuit of their beliefs can be the most inconsiderately cruel thing ever . . . and they are so besotted with their felt beliefs (see above) that they just do not know they are being grossly offensive. I've had a small sample of this just recently. Suppose I put it in the form of a question. We'll assume you're a person who has long since discarded any orthodox religious belief as superstition. Among your friends you have those who share this attitude, and those who don't. Say you suffer a bereavement, sudden, shocking and distressing. You'll get, I should hope, sincere if awkward messages of sympathy from all and sundry. I'm betting that from the devout you'll get 'consolation' in terms of their belief. I did. I believe, frankly, that such people are sincere. But suppose the position reversed, and one of my friends, a devout Christian, is in the same distress. Do I then take advantage of this opportunity to write or phone, to plug my beliefs? Just the sound of it, the very idea, is indecent. I wouldn't. You wouldn't. And why? Because the person who is not purblind from belief is able, rationally, to respect a fellow man's right to have a belief, even though he may not respect the belief itself. I am aware that my beliefs are offensive to him, but he is incapable of seeing this his beliefs are offensive to me. And that, again, is where the blow-off comes.

When you're leaning over backwards to respect the other fellows right to have his own beliefs, only to find that he's so stuck on his way of thinking that he cannot appreciate what you're doing, that's when you blow. And that is the closed mind in excelsis. If you want a real, one hundred percent efficient mental block, pick dogmatic religion, every time. And that, incidentally is a theme that hasn't been done nearly well enough in SF, possibly because of editorial caution.

Somewhere in this (141) was an idea which blew a fuse in my mind the first time I read through. If I can find it . . . ah yes . . . Rog Phillips hinted that PITFCs might evolve into the NEW sf. Why wait? Just for the hell of it, how about a concerted effort . . . all those interested to write and submit the story he or she would like to see in REAL sf . . . the lot to be batched and sent to some courageous publisher for a one-shot edition. Or is that completely unreasonable? After all, as James Gunn says . . . agree and amen . . . sf is written for love, and the money is only incidental, and those three men who rescued it from an untimely death in 1949-50 did so on their own terms. They must, like it or not, think in terms of readership. Such a one-shot . . . call it NEW S-F . . . would not be obliged to conform to any established pattern . . .

I liked Katherine MacLean's bit, but have one slight demur. I don't see why there couldn't be an active and openly known society of telepaths, provided they called themselves something else.

Heartily echo Mc McLaughlin's plea for a date-line on material. It would take very little trouble, or space.

Plenty more I itch to comment on, but have rambled far too much as it, I hope you will delete, dilute or omit, just as you think fit.

EVELYN E. SMITH SAYS:

For Publication: (but feel free not to publish all or any part of it) I was going to ask whether the gentleman on the right of the photograph in your last issue was really Isaac Asimov, because, if so, the person to whom I said "hello" at a science-fiction thing, thinking it was Isaac Asimov, must have been an imposter (although very likely an unwitting one, because, although he courteously said "hello" back, he may not have known whom he was supposed to be); and whether that was a blot on your face or a beard. However, Randy Garrett has already informed me that the answer to the first question is no, it is not Isaac Asimov (I can't seem to spell his name; do you think I have a block, and why?) and the answer to the second is that it's more of a beard.

Also, why is it that every Christmas your secretary mails my PLITFCS to West Eighth Street? Does she **have** subconscious memories of one wild Christmas in the Village?

I've been meaning to write to PLITFCS for a long time, but, what with the cat throwing up one one issue before I could check over the points that had provoked me; and, then, people saying the things I wanted to say not only much better but more safely -- because they are bigger and/or overseas -- I never got around to it. And, now that I have, I find a lot of it almost as incomprehensible as the fanmags used to be (and no doubt still are), and I don't think it's because I've drifted out of the field; I don't think I ever would have understood. For example, in Mr. McKenna's Review of the Hot House Planet series, he writes that the moon should have been in a "Trojan position." To me that means the moon would have been inside a wooden horse -- which is a lot more far-out than anything Mr. Aldiss wrote. (In the stories, I mean; naturally, Mr. Aldiss may have written a lot of further-out things with which I'm not acquainted.) And then, later on, Mr. Youd said about Kipling: "More reasonable . . . is the story that he was offered the Laureateship and begged to be excused. He was, after all, a personal friend of George V." Why should being a personal friend of George V make anyone spurn the Laureateship, particularly since George V couldn't have been George V at the time the offer would have been made. Did George-V-to-be say, "No friend of mine would accept a Laureateship from Grandmother?" . . . I do wish you would explain these things; not all of your readers are as learned.

Incidentally, I disagree violently with Mr. McKenna about the Hot House series. Although I was bothered by things like Mr. Aldiss's suddenly resurrecting a character he needed briefly, I can understand how such things happen; besides, it was as much the editor's fault as Mr. Aldiss's for having caught the slips. Otherwise, though, I think Mr. Aldiss's point that Mr. McKenna was judging him by the wrong yardstick hardly needed to be stated. It seemed obvious to me as I read the stories that they were intended to be poetic rather than scientific, and, if Keats could put stout Cortez upon a peak in Darien, no Cogswell, I don't see why Mr. Aldiss should be jumped on for misplacing the moon. (If, in fact, he has. I don't see how Mr. McKenna, or anybody, can be so sure of where the moon is or should be, at least not until this weekend when I understand they're going to be up to all kinds of things in outer space. All I have to say is that if the newscasts of these events interfere with my favorite TV programs, I am going to put a hideous spell on the Armed Forces, the networks, and Newton Minow. When I want the news, I turn on the radio to order.) Rawhide was interrupted for a bulletin saying they missed the moon, and, even though Rawhide is not one of my favorites, it serves them right.

Speaking of television, which I was, in the preceding parenthesis, I agree heartily with Mr. Michael (I know you solicited only the British point of view, but I think you should present the extraterrestrial outlook also) that TV isn't any worse than any other mass entertainment for, and, if you exclude the daytime programs (which I've had to watch

recently only because of an assignment, and, God, anybody who thinks the evening programs stink should see the daytime one; incidentally, if Mr. McKenna can't envisage anyone or anything "twirling laconically" -- and all hail to Mr. Aldiss for sticking to his guns and keeping it in -- all he has to do is watch the Dick Clark show) I'd say the percentage of over-all crap was far less than in science fiction. And, as in science-fiction, a lot of crap is good crap. What I do deplore, though, is this nasty subversive tendency to cut down on violence, especially in Westerns -- which are my favorite. Westerns are supposed to be violent. As an art form, they hark back to the Elizabethan, and, although I suppose I can't expect them to shoot in iambic pentameter, I feel they are as much entitled to their gore, as, Tamburlane or The White Devil. (I notice, incidentally, that the scriptwriters are fully aware of their debts and are compounding them by stealing the plots; recently I saw Volpone done deadpan on Gunsmoke, and almost every gangster series has overtones of Macbeth.) Of course I am not accusing members of the Institute of being against violence; I am just deploring today's anti-literary tendencies.

I was glad to see that in your last issue someone has had the courage to speak out in favor of the John Birch Society, and I honor Mr. DeCamp for so doing. In the first place, it seems to me that the John Birchers are as much entitled to freedom of speech as the Communists or anybody else (hasn't anybody fingered Mr. Anderson by this time?), particularly since they don't seem to owe allegiance to a foreign power (on this planet, anyway). In the second place, I think that their detractors are, in good old McCarthy fashion, re-interpreting the Birchers' tenets to suit their own theses. I don't believe that the Society meant that Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers were out-and-out Communists, but that by their lax attitude they were leaving the way open for Communism . . . a point which Mr. Anderson has ably demonstrated.

Mr. Anderson, incidentally, defines the current world struggle as between totalitarianism and liberty, and goes on to define liberty as "the concept . . . that by virtue of being an individual (a person) has certain rights which no one can take from him for any reason." But supposing they are the wrong rights? What good are they to an individual who doesn't want them? If the rights that are applicable to a majority are chosen, then the individuals who make up the minority are just as effectively underprivileged as they would be under a totalitarian government -- and perhaps less so, if the totalitarian government's objectives happen to be more in accordance with their own way of life.

To give an example, I would gladly surrender what right I have to free speech, if, in return, the government would prohibit smoking. I seem to have an allergy to tobacco smoke and, if I remain in a room permeated with tobacco smoke for any length of time, I am automatically deprived of my right of free speech, because I develop laryngitis (or, if I am bandying a scientific term about, something that has the same effect). Socially, of course, I can remove myself from any area where there is a heavy concentration of smoke, but professionally I often can't. Therefore, by giving the majority the right to smoke, the government is depriving me, the minority, of my right to breathe freely, (Of course I do what I can in a small way by wishing they all get lung cancer with spots, but chances are I'll never have the satisfaction of knowing.)

By the way, before those of your membership who are also members of John Birch start giving outraged cries, I feel I should explain that I haven't meant to imply that John Birch is anti-tobacco (if it is, however, you can send me an application blank immediately), merely that there is no such thing as individual liberty. (Somehow, I feel that Mr. Anderson is a heavy smoker. However, if he has a cat, he can't be all bad.)

I re the many shrieks about inferior proofreading (with which I fully concur), I feel, as a former editor, that I should point out that letting the writer correct his own galleys is no solution. What makes you think writers can read, let alone spell? (And, as some of the manuscripts that have come under my blue pencil have been yours -- I use the pronoun collectively -- you'd better think before you charge.)

As for Damon and his typing problems, I have never been able to understand how a writer can give his stuff out to be typed, because how can the typist read it? If I complete a manuscript that a typist can read, then an editor can read it, so why waste time and money? (Naturally this wouldn't work on speculation, but it's been a long time since I could afford to do that.) Electric typewriters are very nice, except that they break down so often. Mine is at the moment hors de combat, but it's wonderful to type on when it isn't. Of course I run the words all together but whatthehell, and I've created some marvellous poetic effects by accidentally breathing on the keys. I'm not having mine repaired until I can afford the money to buy a better one; an IBM, the repairman assures me, won't break down so often. Also, in defense of the electric machine, a lot of its woes are my fault; I bear down on it like a juggernaut.

LAN WRIGHT SAYS:

The depths of my regard for PITFCS can be judged by the date line of this letter (December 25th). How many others of your esteemed correspondents have sat down to write to you on this Christmas morning I wonder? For what it's worth at this late date I hope all your readers had a good holiday -- to you and all others who grace your pages, a happy and prosperous New Year.

Now, for the meat of my letter.

Over the past few years there has been in use in England a word of uncertain etymological derivation which is nevertheless, completely indicative of it's users meaning.

Under varying circumstances it can mean: --

1. Stupid.
2. Ignorant.
3. Physically repugnant.

The recipient of it is, in the eyes of the user: --

1. An idiot.
2. A moron.
3. An opinionated ass.
4. An ignoramus.
5. A bombastic clod.
6. A pompous know-all.

The word is NIT -- enn, eye, tee -- NIT.

Warren Michael is one. (PITFCS 141.)

Having got that off my chest, let me say that I enjoyed receiving No. 141 except for the wasted drivel of Mr. Michael. Drivel, did I say? Well, he used the word first.

Let us examine what he says point by point, and as objectively as possible under the circumstances.

POINT ONE: -- There is only a small SF audience on TV (he says). A few years ago the much maligned BBC gave their blessings to three serials by one Nigel Neale; there were: The Quatermass Experiment, Quatermass Two, and Quatermass and the Pit. They were all first rate SF, they were well directed, well produced, and convincingly staged. Most important they had large and very appreciative audiences, and they were well received by the critics. ERGO: -- Good SF on TV has large audiences.

More recently the BBC ran two more serials which were so bad that even the titles escape my memory. I watched them (along with a rapidly diminishing audience) morbidly wondering if they could possibly get any worse as each episode passed. They could and they did!

Surprisingly one of them (7 episodes @ 45 minutes each) was the combined work of Fred Hoyle and one, John Elliot (a noted TV writer) -- and it stank.

ERGO: -- Bad SF gets (and deserves) poor audiences.

Now, I am in no position to judge American TV, but none of the programmes mentioned above cost a fortune to produce, none of them were "pure escape", and none of them relied upon world events which (according to Michael) create a bad atmosphere for SF drama. I know that I have only picked on five specific shows for my arguments, but there have been a lot of other cases on both BBC and the Independent TV Authority (our commercial TV) which have proved the points I'm trying to make. Most recent example was a play based on a story by BOB SHECKLEY, and another was the TV showing of the Wells film "Shape of Things to Come" about four years ago.

It is a recognised fact that a great many shows get on TV because something has to fill in the time, and assuming that a programme producer has to choose between a bad SF script and a bad 'straight' script he will choose the 'straight' script every time. Which leaves us where? Obviously, part of the blame comes straight back to the authors for not providing material which would force it's way on to the screens simply because it is better than anything else. Part blame too, on the producers and directors for not encouraging established SF writers to adapt their talents to the requirements of TV.

I see that Warren Michael is both writer and producer, so surely he is an admirable position to do something about it on your side of the duckpond.

POINT TWO: -- To see how bad TV can be, take a look at the BBC -- blah-blah-blah (says Michael). I agree on one point here. The BBC uses an average of 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of its programme time showing imported American shows. Taking out Perry Mason (to whom I bow in admiration), the odd Jack Benny Show, and perhaps one documentary in four, the remainder is sheer unadulterated rubbish. And what we see is, presumably, the cream of American TV which the BBC is buying. Perhaps I should say 50% of the cream, since the Independent Authority covers 14% of its time with American shows.

For the rest, the BBC does at least try to be instructive as well as entertaining, and it does limit the number of dead cowboys, tortured indians, beaten up policemen, and battered thugs which appear all too frequently on our screens. Frankly, I would rather watch a BBC documentary programme than another pseudo-tough private eye, or a faster than light gunman, steely jawed, peering myopically from under a sombrero at a wicked, painted aborigine who has more right to the land over which they're fighting than the aforesaid gunman.

There is today in all forms of entertainment, a great underestimation of the intelligence of the general public, and both writers, producers and administrators tend to write down to the people they want to entertain. Consequently, bad shows on TV are the rule rather than the exception, and Michael's comment that "the bearded ones should spend as much time supporting the good shows as they do pointing fingers at the wasteland" is a complete and utter idiocy. What better way of supporting good programmes is there than to draw attention to the rubbish? The wasteland needs to be publicised, Mr. Michael, so that you and other writers/producers realise that it's there and start doing something about it. Or do you merely want to sit back and bask in the glory of praise over the one good programme you've produced out of, maybe, half a dozen? Criticism, it's said, is good for the soul, and for my money TV can only thrive and improve if criticism is bold, objective, and taken to heart.

And if Michael says he's never produced or written a bad TV show -- well, I'll add another word to the one already used.

To get back to the BBC. That august body has just celebrated its 25th anniversary as a regular TV programme supplier. It was the first regular TV programme operator in the world. It has built up a reputation for good, honest, unbiased social and political reporting. True, it has bad shows; true, also, you can't please all the people all of the time -- but I, for one, am being sick and tired of being beaten over the head with the blunt instrument of commercialised advertising with its low grade, mass produced, semi-hysterical idiocies. At least the BBC preserves us from that. I like to be entertained,

but I like to think as well, and I can't think if I'm sitting four-square, goggle-eyed in front of a silver screen listening to cops burbling inane jargon, or cowboys grunting, "Nope" while Indians ask "How?"

For my money the BBC (which is not in the hands of the politicians or the sponsors) does a first rate job in the field of public entertainment, and more important, the field of public information. As a body the BBC is not subject to the pressures of sponsors who want to sell their wares, politicians who want to sell themselves, educators who want to sell their ideas, fringe groups, power groups, lobbyists, or any other crackpot organisation with an axe to grind; AND THAT'S THE WAY I WANT IT. THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MISTER MICHAEL!

And as for that crap about American TV offering more to more people than any other media in the country! Is that meant to mean something? Rot, rubbish and tarradiddle! You've got the right idea, Cogswell, there is probably more human emotion, pity, envy, greed, lust, love, hate, philosophy, learning, teaching in the Calcutta brothels than there is in all the stupid, horrendous, nauseating inanities that bubble forth from the silver screens of America in any one twenty-four hour period.

Oh, yes. I must have missed that programme on "How to Stuff a Skunk" -- but if ever they do it again I'll recommend that they use Mr. Michael as the subject. They could stuff the skunk head first down his throat and leave the tail hanging out of his mouth -- it might produce better comment than the tongue it would replace.

Other Points to Ponder in PITFCS 141.

I like the new print format, and as a result of it I have a lovely right tumb print of TRC in all its glory -- if ever I want to fool the cops on a murder it'll be a wonderful clue to leave lying around with its owner safe and sound four thousand miles away!

What has been censored out of page 43 by those three large black lines? Surely, nothing could have been too hot for TRC to handle!

PAGE SIX heading for Michael's article. Who's this guy Ernest who's soliciting all us Britishers? Some Yankee with odd tastes?

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Robert Silberberg has moved from 915 West End Ave. to 5020 Goodridge Ave., New York 71, N. Y. (K16 - 6674).

G. POLLINGER SAYS:

You asked to see in Pitfcs No. 141 my comments on the television situation over here. I think that the reason that Science Fiction does not appear on television as much as we should all like it to, is because there is not a sufficient audience for it to justify the producers putting on more shows than they do. Even though there are several commercial television companies the fact remains that the British viewer can only watch one of two channels in any one area. These two channels must therefore provide entertainment for the masses and the masses seem to prefer Westerns, variety shows, circuses, and light entertainment, generally. There are a number of programmes which require the audiences to think but these are mainly the news programmes. I think one should also bear in mind the fact that although there are 3½ million people out of 52,000,000 who will buy a book, there are only 3,800 members of the Science Fiction Book Club. Thus it would seem the Science Fiction appeals to a very small percentage of the population of Britain if you would like to take these statistics indicative of the television viewer response. Nevertheless there have been some good and some mediocre Science Fiction

serials on the B.B.C. and one or two plays worth remembering on the other channel. However, in the main, producers seem to fight shy of launching any production which requires finance being expended on large sets or trick photography. Since we do not have sponsored television as such I feel that I must agree with Warren Michael's first three points. As for his fourth point about world events creating bad atmosphere for SF drama I do not consider myself intelligent enough to comment but will look forward to reading the views of those others to who you have applied!

GEORGE PRICE SAYS:

Now I know how the cat felt when the door shut on its tail. I guess I'm lucky that the Secretary got almost all of my letter into PITFCS 141 before his mimeo returned to primeval chaos. I trust that the letters which were entirely omitted will be carried over to No. 142.

Cogswell has gone ape! An illustrated cover on 141! Seriously, it was very good. And Dr. Asimov looks so much more dignified than the last time I saw him.

Speaking of the eminent Dr. A., he accuses the Secretary of a "social gaff" in that he let the name be spelled "Azimov". The word is "gaffe"; a "gaff" is a sharp hook which is sunk into a poor fish. On second thought, maybe that's the right word after all.

Sole comment on Department X: MORE, MORE, MORE!

After having said hard things about some of Mack Reynolds' stories, it is a double pleasure to be able to applaud his "Black Man's Burden". Apparently Mr. Reynolds knows something which our government has not yet discovered, which is that backward cultures are backward precisely because of the cultures. It is nonsense to talk of industrializing the "underdeveloped" nations, unless one is willing to disrupt their present social systems. To give aid "with no strings attached" is not only wasteful, but also very highly irresponsible. It amounts to injecting a disruptive agent into a culture, and then disclaiming all responsibility for the consequences. We really need "Homer Crawford" and his Machiavellian peace corps. And incidentally, isn't this the first sf story in which all of the major characters are Negroes, whose color is essential to the plot? Well, the handbooks on fiction tell writers to strive for local color -- Mack Reynolds has given us international color. As they say, the future of Africa looks pretty black. Considering Analog's deadline, "Black Man's Burden" must have been written well before the Katanga and Goa episodes raised serious doubts about the continued existence of the UN as now constituted. So Mr. Reynolds may prove to have been very prophetic indeed in referring to the "Reunited Nations".

HARRY ALTSHULER SAYS:

Here's a great debate topic for you: if you had just one Life-size doublespread to show off western science-fiction to the Russian people, what would you put on it?

Patricia MacManus had the opportunity, in Issue #62 of AMERIKA, the U.S. State Dep't magazine published for distribution in Russia. She wrote an article about S-F, but I don't know what she said as it's printed in Russian. And to illustrate it, she printed a short story which I can vaguely make out is by Ray Bradbury; and a short-short by Fredric Brown, PATTERN from his book ANGELS AND SPACESHIPS.

FRITZ LEIBER SAYS:

As income-tax April draws near (like an idiot, scattering ten-forty forms) I find myself seeking pictures to make vivid the freelance writer's dismal economic plight to other

citizens, craftsmen, professionals, and working stiff.

Writing is not a profession in the sense that medicine, engineering or even college teaching are. It lacks the lobby, the self organization, and self policing, and any general conviction of its worth. The writer is a professional only in the same mockingly honorific way that fortunetellers and call-girls are. (This is poetically just, for -- think God! -- the writer is still more of a witchdoctor than he is a lab technician; but a flesh-and-blood person must seek economic as well as poetic justice in the world.)

The writer works on approval -- no fees for office visits, house calls, or laying out his tools and beginning a job. Any self-respecting plumber would be aghast at a colleague who let a customer fob him off with, "I don't trust your diagnosis," "I don't like the look of that first faucet you installed. Pull it up and pack up your stuff. I'm not paying you a cent." (Maybe people should treat plumbers that way, but that's changing sides in the middle of a fight.)

The on-approval rule generally holds even when a writer is in that plushy-sounding state of being "on assignment." "We will pay you for an outline" means ". . . when you give us one we like -- probably the sixth or seventh." "If we don't like your story we will still pay you so much per word, so your time won't be altogether lost" means ". . . after you have knocked yourself out revising it three or four times to our instructions." (It's against the rules for the writer ever to say, "Gentlemen, that's the best I can do.")

Now what all this may add up to (and I imagine many of you have already done the arithmetic in your heads) is that the writer is not a workingman or even a lordly professional expert-in-his-field, but a capitalist entrepreneur, manufacturing and then selling his unique product, risking his time and his money for an uncertain return. The grimmest proof of this is the number of people we all know who have put in decades of spare time writing, or scraped together a nest-egg and taken off six months or a year fiercely trying to break into some field of writing, and then never sold a thing. They are exactly equivalent to the thousands who every year start hamburger joints and drygoods and novelty shops and fail. And the fact that we always knew some of the first group couldn't ever write is balanced by the point that their friends knew that some of the second group couldn't successfully boil an egg or lay out a window display that looked like anything but a junk yard.

So the writer is a do-or-die swashbuckler of the business world. Fine! (And very romantic-sounding, I must say.) But, look you, he generally can't hawk his product to the highest bidder (except by a process of planned submissions taking years). He can't charge off anything for stories or articles that fail or must be sold at a loss. And even if he should get up into those brackets, he can't handle his income on the basis of capital gains! So he ain't an entrepreneur -- that was just romancing, it appears -- though I do believe people can buy an ms. (or a painting) and then sell it at a profit and handle that profit as a capital gain. Something fishy about that, surely. And isn't there a real sense in which the writer adds to the natural resources (literary) of a nation? Or maybe it's that he's tapping his id for the black gold of fiction, much as those Texas millionaires pump up oil -- and they've got some very fancy privileges when it comes to taxes. Anyway you look at it, it's a dark dirty business.

ADDENDA:

re plumbers: What the writer is like is the local non-union handiman, who paints or rewires someone's house and then waits and waits to be paid (probably because his customer knows he hasn't some sort of mafia at his back).

re "one approval": The writer is often a notable scapegoat and whipping boy. Some employers of freelance writers would never think of accepting the first script a writer submits; just on principle, because they're captain and he's cabin boy, they make him do it three times over. (And one can never tell when an idea remembered from ms. 1 or 2 might not come in handy in the future; why not get your money's worth out of the scribbler?)

re natural resources: The s-f of the past fifty years amounts to a big ore-vein, a big pool, and is being most effectively tapped by Rod Serling and others. All within the law, of course.

re the whole damn business: (Despite all the above) If I've only one life. . . let me live it as a Clairol . . . whoops, I guess I mean clairvoyant, pen-pushing, key-banging, swashbuckling, witchdoctoring, artist-entrepreneur.

re the Worldwide Puritan Counter-Revolution (this is purely a rider on the above bill of opinions): Certain citizens of Los Angeles are in a state of panic because Dec. 22nd last the state Supreme Court invalidated the local "resorting" ordinance which made it unlawful for persons not married to have sexual relations in apartments, motels, automobiles, vacant lots (okay for Mom and Dad, I suppose) and other sites. Chief Parker got into such a pet that he announced that no arrests for any sort of vice were to be made and it wasn't until the mayor went down onto his knees to him two hours later that the Chief rescinded his directive. (I slept through those two hours, dammit!)

KINGSLEY AMIS SAYS:

The plea that "the mass audience will not buy anything that is not pure escape", as Warren Michael puts it, is pure escape from responsibility and the duty of being intelligent. Hogwash gets churned out because a lot of the public want it, yes of course; but another and increasingly important reason for the ubiquity of hogwash is that those who churn it out are too lazy to change their habits and to notice that the public appetite for hogwash is decreasing, possibly at an algebraic rate.

One striking piece of evidence for thinking so is the fact that the three Quatermass serials on British TV broke several viewing records here. (The scripts were later put out in paperback by Penguin Books: minimum printing in excess of 100,000 copies.) Were they any good? Don't take my word for it; let me quote -- as a dozen other people probably will -- from Boucher's note in the current Year's Best:

"[these plays] demonstrate, in a manner unknown to American TV and films, that mass-appeal s-f can still be literate and intelligently exciting."

My italics. After that I don't see that much remains of Michael's case against the BBC, who put out the Quatermass plays (and had commissioned them), at any rate as far as its science fiction is concerned. Since Quatermass it has put out two other serials, one of them (in which Fred Hoyle collaborated) mostly bad, the other entirely bloody awful. This still gives BBC a score of three out of five. And incidentally the two bad efforts were bad not because they were excapist, but because they weren't excapist enough -- dull, snail-paced, unoriginal, unthrilling, unhorrifying etc.

This isn't the place to defend BBC on a broader front, but I'll just mention Panorama, a news magazine programme which attempts, sometimes with fair success, now and then brilliantly, to report on and to discuss important public issues: the Congo, Communist influence in the trade unions, the American election and so on. Panorama during the years of its existence has had the highest viewing figures of any British TV programme, BBC and commercial. I don't know what day, or half-day, Michael picked on as a basis

for his survey of BBC, but it was an unlucky one.

KINGSLEY AMIS CONTINUES IN MORE MEASURED TONES: Let me add my own congratulations to Budrys for Rogue Moon. It's the biggest step forward science fiction has taken since -- well, certainly since A Case of Conscience.

One point: Budrys seems to think he has written three books in one, a science-fiction novel (The Death Machine), a philosophical novel (Halt, Passenger!) and a novel about a scientist (The Armiger). Isn't there also in it a novel about courage (The Bend of the Dogleg)? I'm not sure about any of this and would welcome some more exposition from Budrys. This is a very difficult book, which is connected (for once) with its being a very good book. I am sure that it's that.

That about does it. I thought of adding, at the end of my anti-Michael remarks: "By the way, "How to Stuff Skunks" must have been an import from the U.S. The skunk doesn't exist in Great Britain, except in zoos." But then I reasoned that this might have been liable to misconstruction.

More thanks and congratulations for the continuance of PITFCS, AND ALL THE . . . ahem, all the best for 1962.

SPECIAL NOTICE: (FRITZ LEIBER FORWARDS THESE EXERPTS FROM A LETTER FROM MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA)

"On January 11 Representative John V. Lindsay of New York introduced a bill, H.R.9524, in the House of Representatives which is of very great importance to authors, artists and composers."

"H.R.9524 was described in the New York Times (UPI) as a bill that would permit authors, composers and artists to pay capital gains taxes rather than regular income taxes on their earnings. The effect of the measure would be to cut the tax bills of the creative artists at least in half. Capital gains rates are half the regular rates in lower brackets and less than half in the higher income brackets."

"The Bill has been referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, the Honorable Wilbur Mills, Chairman."

"Every member of MWA is urged to write at least two letters: one, a letter of commendation and support to Representative John V. Lindsay, and one to Chairman Wilbur Mills or, if a congressman from your state is on the committee, to him, urging that the Bill be reported out of Committee and that the congressman himself support it. For your information the names of committee members will be included with this letter."

"A telegram (special rate 85¢) is likely to be more effective. It is most important that in your communication you give the number of the Bill: H.R. 9524."

To stimulate your imagination in composing your letters, some points of recommendation are suggested. You will take or leave such as suit your notion of importance:

You are not pleading for special privilege as a writer. Writing is your business, and you are trying to save from the good years to balance the bad ones.

The Bill is of no benefit to the indigent: the money has to be earned. It is an equitable adjustment of tax assessment, in no way a special benefit.

You, as a mystery writer, provide a most useful commodity, something to be taken for relaxation. If the product of your invention is of continuing service, are you not entitled to the same tax consideration as the inventor of a bottle opener?

Writing is a risky business at best. The earnings even from what is looked upon as success are undependable; the exceedingly rare large returns which might compensate for the difficult years are now subject to such discriminatory taxation that there is virtually no possibility of accumulating capital against eventual retirement or sudden disability.

At a time when it is so important that we, as a nation, sustain and enrich our culture, and that we project that culture to other nations of the world, it is imperative that we attract and encourage talent to the arts even as to the sciences.

Personal incentive is surely the backbone of the free enterprise system."

Representative John V. Lindsay
30 West 44th Street
New York 36, N.Y.

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE,
House of Representatives
New House Office Bldg., Room 1102
Washington, D. C.

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A. Sydney Herlong, Jr. (Florida)
Frank Ikard (Texas)
Thaddeus M. Machrowicz (Michigan)
James B. Frazier, Jr. (Tenn.)
William J. Green, Jr. (Pa.)
John C. Watts (Kentucky)
Al Ullman (Oregon)
James H. Burke (Mass.)
Noah M. Mason (Illinois)
John W. Byrnes (Wisconsin)
Howard H. Baker (Tenn.)
Thomas B. Curtis (Missouri)
Victor A. Knox (Michigan)
James B. Utt (California)
Jakson E. Betts (Ohio)
Bruce Alger (Texas)
Steven B. Derounian (New York)
Herman T. Schneebeli (Pa.)
Martha W. Griffiths (Michigan)
Clark W. Thompson (Texas)

WILLIAM F. TEMPLE SAYS:

Embedded in the middle of the page, introduced as casually a a remark about the weather,

was the 4-letter word (p. 127 of Saroyan's Rock Wagram). Used as a swear-word, not to describe a biological function necessary to advance the plot.

Meaningless, of course, but ugly. All these 4-letter words fall hearshly on the ear: the Anglo-Saxons must have been tone-deaf.

I regard it and recall the Cogswell jingle in PITFCS 141 -- on the reverse side of the photo of the Bevy of Beards -- and earlier contributions and letters from American writers think with barrack-room language. What makes them do it?

It seems more peculiar to American intellectuals than British, even allowing for our home products like Lawrence, and Aldous Huxley (who often writes as though he's sitting on a bed-pan), and John Osborne (a visit to Luther is like a night in a public convenience).

I feel that at the back of their minds must be running something like this: "Sure, I appreciate literature, poetry, music, and art, but that doesn't make me a sissy. Look, I swear and spit like a stevedore -- and that's real hair on my chin."

Moss Hart (in Act One) touches on the matter:

"Even in the long-ago days when I was growing up, the cult of 'toughness' in American life was beginning to blossom. . . The non-athletic youngster who liked to read or listen to music. . . or who had some special interest alien to the rest, like the theater in my case, was banished from the companionship of the others by rules of the 'tough' world. . .

"I suspect that today's bland dismissal of the intellectual and the overwhelming emphasis placed on the necessity of competing and of success are due in part to the strange taboo we have set against that softness in ourselves which brings men closest to the angels. A nation of poets would be no more desirable than a nation of athletes, but I wonder if that toughness and competitiveness which have become an ingrained part of our character as a people and a symbol of our way of life as a nation, are not a sign of weakness as well as of strength. Is our cultural life not robbed of a necessary dimension and our emotional life of an element of grace?

"And I wonder if the fear of a lack of toughness in our children does not sometimes rob them of an awakening awareness and sensitivity in the realm of the spirit that are each child's birthright and his weapon of rebellion against the accepted norm of his time."

Imaginative invective, such as the Arabs use, can be an art. Really witty graffiti has its points. Excremental crudeness merely repels.

My name was listed as "In This Issue" of PITFCS 141. Not true, and no loss. I shan't claim it was overlooked because of an insufficient deadliest 4-letter adjective of all: dull.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL SAYS:

Apologies to Isaac for daring to use a 'z.' I plead a mental fixation. His only namesake that I've ever head of invariably uses a 'z.' Added to which, a fannish friend persists in referring to him as "Isaac Azimuth." After seeing #141's cover I think it ought to be 'z' -- the last word in beards deserves the last letter in the alphabet. My wife spotted that cover first and let out a scream of: "It's happened! . . . at last! . . . at last!" I said interestedly: "What's happened?" And she said "Christ

has come again."

Sam Youd's crack is something I deserve for failing to make my meaning clear. In referring to the need to satisfy the mass readership I meant science-fiction's readership and not that of the general public. There is one hell of a difference which I thought too obvious to be worth mentioning. Samuel's point about Lady Chatterley's Lover is well taken but comes somewhat belatedly. You will agree that I made it my self in a longer and ruder letter considered too vulgar to appear in #141.

I agree with Warren Michael's lecture on the futility of s-f on T.V. -- assuming that what we have had on T.V. (or the movies for that matter) can be called s-f. What little I have allowed to insult my eyeballs has looked to me more like stuff cribbed from Weird Tales of the 1930s and hotted up by a script-writer who resents having been weaned. The result has been a mess of vampires and tits with an occasional robot thrown in for good measure. T.V. -- movie versions of s-f look to me like the products of sick minds intended for the consumption of sick minds -- and they provide wonderful support for Russian gibes about the "decadent West."

But I am not implying that real s-f would do any better than the ((a four letter word has been deleted in deference to colleague Temple's tender ear. TRC)) masquerading as s-f. Nothing that strains the imagination of bead-brains and employs words of more than two syllables without hyphenating them can hope to be a howling success on T.V. or the movies. In this oneish of #141 Youd, Campbell and Michael all say the same thing in their several ways, namely, that a large percentage of the public is moronic or sub-moronic. Yeah, verily! In Britain the half-wits, quarter-wits and completely witless are known as "voters." At any general election they prove themselves as numbering about 80% of the population.. The science-fiction readership, which can stand the strain of independent thought, comes out of the remaining minority and I doubt whether it represents more than 5% of the whole. There aren't many of us around, are there?

As for the problem of giving the science-fiction readership what it wants, that's a tough one but it is not tough all the time. There are occasions when one can sense a trend and make intelligent use of it. For example, my first post-war yarn, a thing called "Metamorphosite," was completely devoid of blood and snot. Nobody let fly with a ray-gun, nobody got killed and the conflict was strictly confined to a battle of wits. That was intentional. I wrote it with one eye upon the obvious fact that the market was about to be enlarged by the arrival home of 11,000,000 veterans in the U.S.A. and 5,000,000 in Britain. As one of them myself I knew exactly how we felt about Buck Rogers stuff-- we felt in was ordure. There were a lot of other things about which we felt strongly but I won't go into them here.

Then again, early in the 1950s I found my sense of wonder evaporating fast, tried to determine the cause and decided that s-f was taking itself so seriously that it had become downright pompous. Seemed to me the only answer to this was some judicious clowning. The market was starved of humor. It was up to me to exploit the fact, if I was able to do so. So I tried, Bod, how I tried. With what success only Ye Eds know -- but they did keep on buying and nobody cussed me to blazes.

What of 1962? Been talking to a wholesaler friend of mine (a jobber to you, I think). He's appalled by the number of cancellations of old-standing subscriptions to mags like Life, Reader's Digest, et al. He's looked into the reasons and found that a hell of a lot of people are thoroughly sick and tired of (a) adverts, (b) cold war propaganda. They are refusing to pay hard-earned money to be brain-washed. They want entertainment and not mental conditioning. At same time there's a spreading sale of "blab-off switches" whereby the ad-yap can be cut out of T.V. programs. And again at the same time there are good sales for such books as The Hidden Persuaders, The Waste Makers, Etc. So there is another trend, a half-dumb revolt against being shoved around. Somebody should

be able to make use of it provided he can do so without being accused of "writing Commie propaganda." One character who gets away with it again and yet again is the cartoonist Feiffer -- somebody ought to talk him into writing s-f.

SOME LIBELS ON MY FRIENDS

Isaac Asimov --
well, you certainly can't pass him off,
so I wanted to give him the requested mention.
But that rhyme makes me regret my intention.

James Blish
is not a cold fish
nor anti-sexual --
just intellectual.

Anthony Boucher
is not at anyone's door a coucher.
He saunters confidently in
and specifies one part vermouth to seven parts gin.

John Brunner
is the guy who begun her --
I mean this wasting valuable time with clerihews.
He must have a merry muse.

John W. Campbell
says he doesn't gamble.
Though his mind may ramble,
it has never been known to amble.

Theodore Cogswell
lives where peasants and dogs dwell
and works in education.
Could PITFUS merely be overcompensation?

If a barber asked Avram Davidson,
"Dost thou wish to be shaved, son?"
Avram would snort, "Don't be absurd!
Elizabethan should be seen and not heard."

Cele Goldsmith
is not an old Smith.
She's as young as Eve before the Fall
and doesn't look like Doc at all.

When you deal cards to Roger Phillips Graham --
Christ, can he play 'em!
He won my money, watch, spectacles, fillings, and apparel,
including the barrel.

Robert A Heinlein
writes a very fine line.
His views on sex are anything but inertial.
Why is he controversial?

DEPT. X:

((If only as an example of what is being done to our language, your secretary feels that the following should be preserved for posterity. TRC))

* * * * *

IV. A. Dean Ross presented the following statement:

A Statement of College Objective, Policy
and Procedures Relative to Fair Practices
for Students in Off Campus Approved Housing

One of the institutional objectives of this College is to provide a variety of continuing experiences for students which nurture psychological maturity. An obvious base for these kinds of experiences is that students will be heterogeneous in value commitments, abilities, talents and subcultures. Thus the College will organize situations to the degree that students may learn about themselves and others through living, studying and socializing together. This objective may be postulated in the more common fashion of the democratic principle of equal opportunities for all students including choice alternatives.

The opportunities all students have for living together (after securing approved off campus housing) is a major facet of the educational process. Therefore, the College must continue to work toward the elimination of the denial of such opportunity.

Ball State Teachers College resolutely stands for non-discriminatory practices in off campus approved housing.

The College must make clear to all that it will not serve as pander to the prejudiced. To achieve fair practices in off campus approved housing Ball State must use the most discerning educational processes. The following steps are indicated:

1. Students may materially contribute by formulating and executing a program designed to obtain the active participation of students, to encourage householders to accept students of any race and thus indicate their desire to live with them. It would be helpful for students to present their views on this matter in writing to the householder and provide the College Housing Office with a copy.
2. Because one of the basic tenets of our approval system is students must be housed in the family environment of the householder, approval will not be dependent on the householder housing and agreeing to house students unacceptable to them.
3. Call meetings of all householders and inform them of the college policy (as stated above).
4. The College Housing Offices will initiate discussions with householders to reach the objective of their accepting students of any race. When it can be established that a householder refused to accept a student because of race a record will be made of this fact.
5. Householders will be notified in writing of the College's policy (as stated above).

The results of this action will be evaluated with information provided by the College Housing offices by a joint committee of the Council for Student Affairs and the Student Senate during Spring Quarter 1963.

2/2/62

- B. It was moved by Dell that the statement with the following changes, be accepted by the Council and forwarded to the President as a policy recommendation.

Point 2 should be changed to read as follows:

One of the basic tenets of our approval system is students must be housed in the family environment of the householder. Approval will be dependent on the householder housing and agreeing to house students regardless of race, creed, or religion.

Point 4 should be changed to read as follows:

The College Housing Offices will initiate discussions with householders to reach the objective of their accepting students of any race. When it can be established that a householder refused to accept a student because of race the house would be removed from the approval list.

C. Motion was seconded by Bennett.

D. Motion was defeated: 3 for, 6 against.

E. It was moved by Jeep that the statement in its original form be accepted by the Council and forwarded to the President as a policy recommendation.

F. Motion was seconded by McQuillian.

G. Motion was passed: 9 for, 0 against.

V. Meeting adjourned.

DEPARTMENT OF MISLAID CORRESPONDENCE FROM ERIC F. RUSSELL:

Nice to see you again. Lie flat on this ~~here~~ rug while I go fetch the whisky bucket and a fannel. So far three characters who as far as I know are not on your list have written remarking on my letter in #139. Looks like your work is being handed down or onward or whichever way it goes. One commentator says: "What do the masses want?" Ovah heah the answer seems to be the unexpurgated edition of Lady Chatterley's Lover (known among the cognoscenti as The Kunt-Diki Expedition). Somebody might do well with a science-fiction version of this classic. I pass the idea along, alas, because it is beyond my capabilities. #140 was stimulating as ever. I liked the crafty stunt of having all the pages right way up. Not to mention concentrating all the typos under my name. And I missed the smudges. But we can't have everything, can we? Was brooding over Chan Davis when a business friend leaned over, his ratty eyes agleam, and the following conversation ensued:-

"What's that you're reading?"

"Pitfucks."

"What?"

"Pitfucks."

"Quit kidding! What is it?"

"I just told you - Pitfucks."

"Well, what's it about?"

"The love-live of coal miners."

"I don't get it. Does their love-life differ from anyone else's?"

"Sure does."

"In what way?"

"Man, they get real dirty."

"That so? Can I have the loan of it after you've read it?"

"NO."

"Aw, come on."

"Nothing doing. There's enough dirt around here without me spreading it any further."

This chump ceased speaking to me for four days. You know, sulky. So I presented him with a copy of Ye Olde Englishe Classick mentioned in the first para. He now talks - when he isn't away reading it in the toilet.

There are ~~many~~ those among us sufficiently astute to perceive that all the foregoing Conveys A Message. Me, I'm too lazy to figure it out for myself.

SOME LIBELS ON MY FRIENDS (CONTINUED):

Wrote Damon Kinght,
"Science fiction writers can't write.
I regard them as a Ghibbeline would a Guelph.
Some days I can't even stomach myself."

Judith Merril
differs from James T. Farrell
in several respects
including sex.

Robert P. Mills
survived many ills:
an editorship and clients.
Some men are giants.

John R. Pierce
gets downright fierce
discussing machines
not approved by physics department Deans.

Said Frederik Pohl,
"I am not Frederick J. Pohl.
Nor, I swear up and down,
am I poul Anderson or Fredric Brown."

Jack Vance
is a gentleman out of Victorian romance.
He pronounces PITFCS
Pitchforks.

--- Poul Anderson

HOWARD DeVORE SAYS:

Just a note to acknowledge receipt of PITCHFORKS 141 and I'd appreciate it if you could pass along a "thank you" to those who sent in biographies and bibliographies. I tried to acknowledge them as they arrived and then ran into a spell of sickness and got far behind. Incidentally we're still open (the Tuck Handbook) to those who can find time to contribute.

DELEND A EST PITFCS

by

frederik pohl

I think, by and large, that I would like it best if you quit publishing PITFCS. I was going to ask simply that you quit sending it to me, but I guess my strength of character isn't up to that. I wish you would give it up. I don't suppose my wishes will prevail in this, but there's my vote, for what it's worth, if the question ever comes up.

The thing is, I don't like it. I think it's harmful to the field, and I know it ruins my digestion. I'm sorry that I think this, but I do, so there it is.

Something I do like is science fiction. I think many science-fiction stories have content which is worth communicating, and that by means of science fiction this content is often best communicated. Besides, I enjoy reading it, I even like writing it pretty well -- as much as I like any kind of hard work -- and it pains me to have it dismissed as empty-headed lint-picking.

This pains me from anyone, but it pains me most of all in the sour and constant chorus that emanates from PITFCS because these are the persons who create it. I mean, if the writers of the field say it's crap, who is to blame?

The prevailing note in PITFCS, of course, is the stupid and malignant bastards, the editors, who spoil everything. I suppose the reason for this is that the editors themselves are seldom heard in this discussion -- except Campbell, who is under attack even more heavily in other areas and confines his rejoinders to them. The argument here would appear to be that editors publish bad stories in preference to good. This is not an admissible argument unless it can be established that these good stories exist. It is a rule with GALAXY, for example, and I suppose with other magazines, that we don't send out the new issues with the pages blank, so we have to print something.

If these good stories exist, I would like to know where they are. I'm not talking about the good ones that do exist and are bought and published by editors, I'm talking about the ones that editors keep from being published.

There would seem to be three possible cases:

1. That these stories are written and published, but are loused up by the editors either through demanded rewrites or through ruthless editorial changes. (I do not know of any case, ever, where a really good story was ruined in either of these cases. I do know of a couple incidents where an editor proposed such revisions, but the writer had integrity -- that's spelled, G-U-T-S -- enough to refuse. As to blue-penciling, I don't believe it to be possible to take a pencil and convert a masterpiece into crap. If it ever has happened I would be grateful to have any one single solitary lone specific instance called to my attention.)

2. That these stories are written but not published, since the editors prefer buying junk to buying them. In twenty-five years in this field I have encountered about a dozen instances which would be interpreted as having some reference to this situation -- that is, stories that were really good that were widely bounced and at least for a time retired by their authors, with great regret. However, every one of these which had

been written by a professional appeared ultimately anyway. It may have been postponed, but it wasn't aborted. (There is one such, by an author whom I had never heard of and whose name I haven't since been able to remember, although I've tried, that never did appear. I saw it in manuscript and recommended it highly to a couple of editors, but they didn't buy it. This is, all the same, the writer's fault. If he had had enough confidence in it to keep sending it around, it would have been published. As he was an amateur, he probably didn't realize how good the damn thing was. Even so, it was no masterpiece, just an uncommonly competent first effort.)

3. That these stories are never written, because the editors obviously won't buy them, so what's the use?

This is a comfortable rationale for a hack, since it can be used to excuse his lack of talent. It is used for that purpose, too. In the present dreary chorus (PITFOS # 141) I count 26 voices, the majority of whom when they touch on science fiction at all echo that theme. No more than ten of these have ever in their lives written a story worth a second look. Even of the ten, at least two or three are way past their prime.

This leaves, however, some seven or eight, including a few of the loudest wailers, who don't need this rationale to excuse their shortcomings since they have few shortcomings to excuse. It is these who baffle and distress me. Three such, whose breast-beatings have appeared in current or previous issues, are Poul Anderson, Jim Blish and A. J. Budrys. It is not within my powers to comprehend how they can at once derogate their field so thoroughly and perform in it so well. There isn't any real need for me to comprehend this, of course, but I wish they would stop it, because as they are rational men if they believe what they say to be true their only logical next step is to get out of science fiction entirely. This would be a serious loss -- to me, which is where in my eyes it counts -- not only because I count heavily on these three and others like them to upgrade the contents of the magazines I edit, but because as a reader I treasure the enjoyment they give me.

If it is true of these persons who have demonstrated the capacity to write very well that they could write even better if editors were not insane perverts, good stories make themselves get published, and so go on to write the masterpieces that have hitherto been stillborn. I wish they would then send them to me, because I do believe I have the mother-wit to buy them.

Now, I am not very modest, and I would not deny that an editor can help produce good stories. I expect I have done this. I'll go farther, in fact: I know damn well I have, in one capacity or another, many times, over a period of years. I have on my shelves a treasured possession, a science-fiction novel which a very good (but chronically belly-aching) writer dedicated to me with the inscription, "To Fred Pohl . . . who painstakingly taught me to value what I wrote." This I prize above more fulsome flattery because I consider it to be perceptive. If there is one single lesson I would tutor into every writer it is to form his own estimate of what he does, and to be guided by his own beliefs rather than those of any critic, editor or general howler. Such knowledge insulates against fears of "what the editors will buy." If it doesn't, it is because the writer involved is lacking in spine, an omission beyond any outsider's power to correct.

(It is useless to bring into this discussion questions of compromises of principles forced by need of a check, etc. A person who compromises on every story vacates his right to claim enough creative ability to compromise in the first place. Surely anyone could write one story in ten, say, for love.)

As I am immodest, I would not deny also that GALAXY is at the present time the best science-fiction magazine being published -- a relative vanity -- and will in future become better still -- an absolute vanity. It is not perfect in even my eyes, of course.

There are many stories which I consider at best passable, and naturally there are some I consider good which other tastes may despise. However, the objective claim I make, on which I stand, is that it is going in the right direction and not slowly.

All the same, although I am immodest, I am not insane. I realize I am not quite unique. There are other good editors.

Two such are John Campbell and Horace Gold, who have been getting their lumps in PITFCS and elsewhere with dreary regularity. It is said of John Campbell that he is a maniac on the Dean Drive and ruins writer's stories by demanding destructive revisions. Consider this fact: Probably the best story Campbell has published in the last few years is Tom Godwin's THE COLD EQUATIONS. This has nothing whatever to do with the Dean Drive, and I am told by informed persons that Campbell got it by demanding and getting a long series of difficult revisions. It is said of Horace Gold that he has a mania for sappy satires and ruins writers' stories by demanding destructive revisions. Consider this fact: One of the best stories Horace ever bought -- the last he worked on before he had to give up and go to the hospital -- was Ted Sturgeon's TANDY'S STORY. This is nothing like a sappy satire, and I know for a fact that he converted it from a passable bit into an excellent job by demanding and getting considerable revisions.

The point is that whatever John and Horace may have done with yard-goods (to the likely detriment of what wasn't much to begin with), they were also capable of extracting first-rate jobs where I, for one -- and practically every other editor in the field, actual, past or potential, including the PITFCS gabblers, for others -- would have settled for less.

I could instance other cases in which both Horace and John have published a story that went in opposite directions to their alleged manias, or a story which benefited from their alleged ruinous touch. I selected these two because each of them is an exception to both "known facts" about Horace and John. It is not so that "the exception proves the rule." Exceptions disprove rules. There is no rule that says an editor's touch must be damaging; the prevailing direction is the other way. There is no rule that writers must write what they imagine editors will most readily buy. Writers who write what they think should be written are better writers, as well as more admirable human beings, and will prosper more in the long run. Probably will in the short, too.

(This is a lesson, by the by, which I must with some pain confess I had a little difficulty in learning for myself; but I prize it the more because it was late coming.)

What is written to push editorial buttons is yard-goods, and if the writers know and bemoan this fact, so do the editors. Does anyone in his right mind think that Campbell would buy a Garrett-Silverberg fabrication if he had an unlimited supply of COLD EQUATIONS to run in its place? John Campbell is not one of my closest intimate friends, but I don't have to know him very well to know him better than that.

In this connection, I have a story to tell. Although I do not recall getting my lumps to anything like the degree of Horace and John, probably due to the fact that my tenure as an editor has been either ancient, like ASTONISHING, or diffuse, like STAR, or quite recent, like GALAXY, I did take a pasting in a fanzine -- one had almost written "another fanzine" -- and if one were willing to digress to fight on another front, one damn well would -- called XERO, just the other day. The piece is so flat-headedly poisonous that it is hard to see how it escaped being published in PITFCS. Maybe you can make a deal for the second serial rights, Ted. The author involved is a fellow named Donald Westlake, who has given up writing science fiction because he can't get his good stories published, so there is no incentive. A close inspection of his own words reveals that one alternate reason he can't get his good stories published is that he hasn't written any -- he says so quite clearly -- but the reason he prefers to cite is that the stupid, maniacal, perverted, etc., editors just won't buy good stories any more. He points to a story he

wrote for me called THE SPY IN THE ELEVATOR as the kind of junk a fellow is compelled to write in order to scratch out a lousy living in this field. It so happens that THE SPY IN THE ELEVATOR was a story that couldn't miss. It was sold before it was written. I had agreed to buy a Westlake story for GALAXY; never mind how, it's a complicated and not very interesting story -- I goofed, and I know it -- but because I liked another story Westlake had written, CALL HIM NEMESIS, and because his agent worked on my sympathies with great skill, I gave him a blank check to produce a story I would buy for GALAXY.

If any science-fiction writer ever had a chance to write and see published at once a "for love" story -- he had it, right there. What he turned up with was THE SPY IN THE ELEVATOR.

What Westlake says he did was to read the first and last line of every story by me he had in the house, which he says were a great many, and then construct a story just like all of them. The sly dog got away with it, too. Of course, he would have got away with it if he had read the first and last line of, say, Heinlein or Van Vogt or David H. Keller, M.D. And, of course, he would have got away with it if he had written a story of his own.

And would have got more money for it too, in all likelihood, because I know imitative yard-goods when I see it and this was before I jacked GALAXY's minimum back up to 3c, so I paid for yard-goods at yard-goods rates. Especially when they were imitations of my own stories. I swear, I don't know what goes on in some people's heads. I must get fifty imitation Pohl stories a month. Of which I buy, let's see, at most two or three in a year. This is because when I see Pohl stories published I like best to have the money go to Pohl.

This Westlake preferred to write what he himself calls "a very silly insipid story," copying somebody else instead of reaching for the heights he claims to be able to attain. . . but declines to try for.

Now Westlake is not in himself a very interesting case; but he is unfortunately not unique. How many discussions have all of us listened in on -- and contributed to! -- of how to push Campbell's buttons, Horace Gold's buttons, Tony Boucher's buttons. . . Hugo Gernsback's buttons. . . and now, I see, Fred Pohl's buttons.

I tell you this and I tell you true: If I ever found out I had a button to push, I would conceal it even from myself. This as an editor; but I also tell you as a writer -- and one whose emotions toward his own work are a goulash of pride and shame -- that if I ever found I was writing nothing but button-pushing junk, I would move to Western Idaho and get a job pimping in a bawdy house so that I could hold my head up in society without embarrassment. Not that a pimp is an admirable citizen, but at least he isn't an actual whore.

So you see, Ted, this constant whine in PITFCS and elsewhere troubles me deeply. These are the voices of spoiled children, mad at Big Daddy. I do believe -- and I assure, I know as much about science fiction as anybody around, so what I believe may be disagreed with but should not be dismissed out of hand as another idiosyncratic editorial lunacy -- that every really good science-fiction story written sooner or later gets published in recognizable form; and that this is a truth of such consequence that it deprives anyone of the right to believe that science-fiction has gone to hell, unless he is willing to lay the responsibility to the collective guilt of its writers.

There simply is no other place to pass the buck.

Reading PITFCS is painful. Discount the, say, three-fifths of the membership who can't write anything worth bothering about because they simply haven't got it. What they

say isn't of much importance, and if they can make themselves feel better by blaming John, or Horace, or me, or sunspots, they're welcome.

What about the others? What sickness is it that fills PITFCS with lines like, "Most current s-f I will not read past the first page," "I look over three or four story beginnings I have lying around, and somehow I have no real urge to finish them," "The amount of intellection going on in present-day science fiction is almost invisible," et many cetera. These are not fans talking, bemoaning events beyond their control. These are the workers in the vineyards themselves.

They are also largely, by their own confession, prostitutes. They do for money what they should do for love. It is not an attractive posture, to walk around spread-legged; but it is shameful to do so and then to scream "rape."

I think Damon, who admires symbolism, must rejoice in the symbol he presents us with in PITFCS #141. In these times of what is stated to be catastrophe in the field we all (state) we love so well, the contribution of the field's chief literary critic-emeritus is a bleat about how much money you have to lay out to get decent manuscript typing. That's really putting it on the line, boy.

I do apologize for taking up so much of your time; but you have taken up a hell of a lot of mine and I don't like it. And so we come at last to the real reason I wish you would knock off publishing PITFCS: Much of what is said in it makes me sick to my stomach and ashamed of what I still deem to be a worthwhile endeavor. If the wailers can't take pride in what they do, or can't do what they might take pride in, I wish they would go away entirely, instead of spreading shame.

I suggest that this is the time to put or shut up. Let us assume, as is said so often and so empty-headedly ("the amount of intellection going on in present-day discussions in PITFCS on what is wrong with science fiction is almost invisible"), that editors have prevented good science fiction from appearing any more.

I now state, with my hand raised in the Boy Scout oath, that I am not that kind of fellow, that I know good science fiction when I see it, like it, publish it when I can get it and have no ordained policy from a higher power that can keep me from doing so. I may be a damn liar, of course. It doesn't much matter to me whether you believe me when I say this or not -- I am getting more good stories now than I was a year ago, and I expect the curve to go on rising -- but, look, it matters frightfully to you. You can't afford to chance it. If you are deeply concerned that science fiction has gone to pot, and if a fellow, say he might be me, comes along who says he can help it flourish again by providing a free climate in which it may appear -- you must not dare let the opportunity pass. It may not come again. Even though you think I may smile and smile and be a villain, you must put me to the test.

Those who elect not to do so -- who choose either to not-write or to go on writing yard-goods (which I will go on publishing, too, because of this rule about not having blank pages -- until all these aborted masterpieces turn up anyway) -- are within their rights; but it is my opinion that in that event they should at least, in common decency, turn in their bitcher's cards.

FROM THE SECRETARY:

Hell, beloved, I can't close shop without giving you a chance to respond to Pohl's comments on the general state of the membership. If you'll limit your discussion to his article, I'll see that another issue gets out before I go into temporary retreat to finish off my dissertation.

YOUNG!

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