

Philosophical Gas



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17th May: Scythrop not only completed but ready to mail: will wonders never cease! We accidentally had a collating, stapling and enveloping party here yesterday, and the bulk of the work was done by Leigh Edmonds, Michael Cameron, Alex Robb, John Sandler and Valma Brown. But just to allow me to keep a proper perspective on things, today an inspector from Sales Tax called, and informed me that by running Mervyn's ad on the back cover I most likely left myself open to paying sales tax on the whole job. I wish they would tell you the whole story once and for all! I scrupulously avoided advertising my other activities in Scythrop, under the impression that this made the thing liable to tax, but apparently they can get you if you run any ad at all! When you are doing your own production, as I am, the sales tax works out to roughly 35% of cost of materials. Since the materials in Scythrop 22 cost about \$60, that means a tax of \$22.50 (and, since that's not 35%, I should be more accurate: the formula is 15% of cost of materials plus 150%). I told the inspector I would await his ruling (in writing) and if it went against me I would destroy the back page on each copy. That's the sort of thing that happens to you when you mix fanning with business. People who produce con handbooks, booklists and so on, should take note that they are liable for sales tax.

Of course, this tax business works the other way. The paper I used in 22 cost about the same as the paper I used in 21, sixteen months ago. The former is Roneo Impression Paper (known earlier as 750 paper); it is imported from Canada, and is about the best duplicating paper you can get in Australia. Regular price is \$3.00 per ream, quarto; I get it for \$2.08. The Gestetner 485 I used in 21 cost about \$2.15 per ream in December 1969, and has probably gone up since.

I wish I could report the same savings on postage. Having \$45 in my pocket this morning, I went out and blew all but three dollars of it on postage stamps. I normally bulk-mail things, but this time the combined weight of the magazine plus envelope was a teeny shade over 4 ounces. Correct postage on this weight is 18c, but I just couldn't come at that, so I put 12c on each one and have crossed my fingers. Would you believe there is no 12c stamp? I had to put two 6c stamps on each envelope. This is very cynical of the post office; they apparently aren't printing 12c stamps, since the rate is likely to

go up at any moment. Incredible. When I posted ASFR 1 out, back in June 1966, each one cost me 4c. That was the rate then for printed matter under 4 ounces. In five years the rate has increased 300%.

Some more technical notes while I'm at it. The stencils I am using for this Philosophical Gas (but not for Scythrop: they were 16c Roneo R660s) are Roneo RV20 Klarotypes. With discount and so on they cost me 7.5c each, which is what I call a reasonable price for stencils. How they look is another matter. The cover for this issue was done because I felt like experimenting with a coloured background to that portrait of Ursula. At the moment of writing it is on paper 8½ x 11", but I might trim it down for Anzapa. The green background to the picture in Scythrop was done as a last-minute, desperate measure since the first run had show-through all through the white areas of the picture. I outlined the figure in China-graph on the stencil (China-graph is about the only medium you can use on stencil which won't make holes and won't destroy the implement: ballpoint tends to cut, felt pens tend to glum up with the wax from the stencil), then typed onto the stencil after putting it into the typewriter on an angle.

All illustrations and headings for Scythrop were run separately. I finished up using about 80 stencils on the issue: about 30 of them simply for the illustrations and headings. It nearly breaks your heart to spend ten minutes, all that ink and a separate stencil merely to put a single heading on a page, but that's what I have done in everything since Scythrop 21, and I'm convinced it's the only way to do it effectively. The density of typing, linework, halftones and headings varies. If you cut illos and so on into your typed stencil you tend to finish up with either the text too dark or the other matter too light. Bruce Gillespie doesn't know the fun he's missing by not having illos. Even so, you can strike incredible problems. The green illos, for example, took much more work than the rest, probably because the drum wasn't inking properly. The spaceship on page 7 took nearly 45 minutes to print. Each copy was slowly run off by hand. The sister ship on page 8 ran through automatically at 40 per minute, like all the other illos and headings, and finished up looking better.

I started off (at the back of the issue, wisely) with the idea of doing all the headings in green. Two like this changed my mind. Ends technical waffle.

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