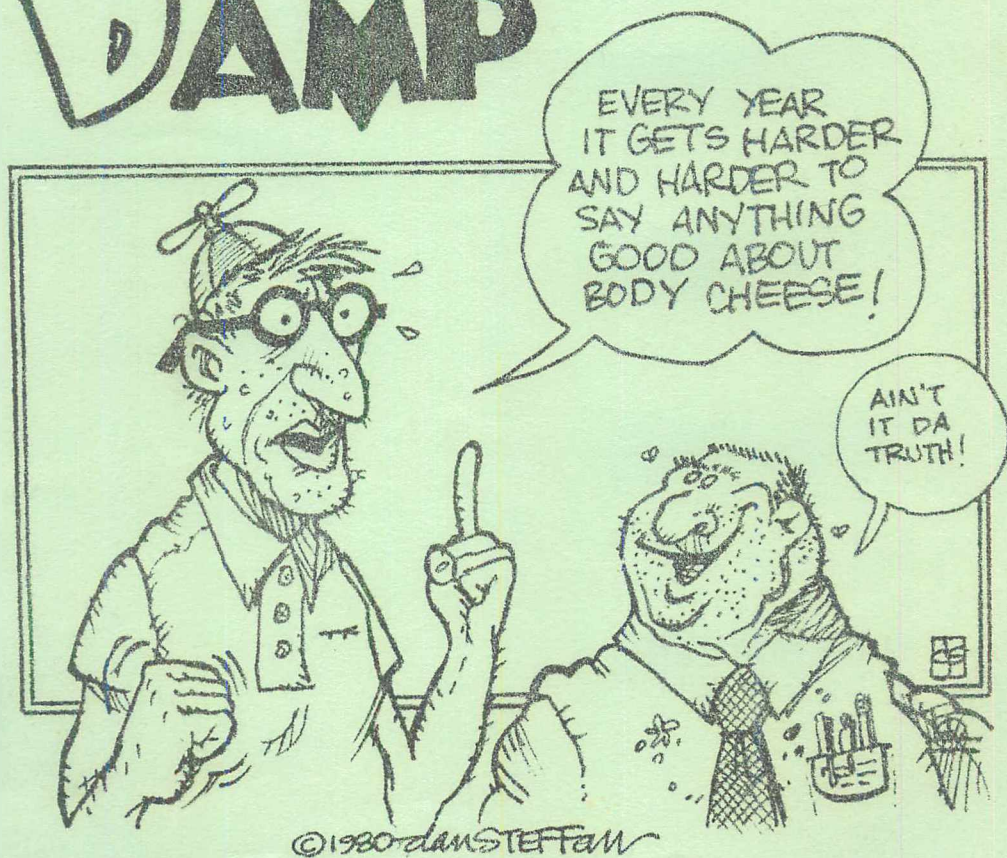


# SMEGMA FEELS DAMP

NO.21









IS THERE LIFE AFTER HAEMORRHOIDS? - MEDICAL EXPERTS BAFFLED.

"Why have you stuffed a blue tennis ball up your arse son?"

"It's a \*GHASP\* pile, Doc."

"Three weeks to live. NEXT."

Well, it wasn't quite like that. In fact my only qualms were when the doctor said "HMMMM", and you know the way doctors say 'HMMMM', "HMMMM, we're going to have to have a try at shrinking this from both sides." Whilst pleased with his sense of involvement ('this' as distinct from 'that' - 'this' is our pile whilst 'that', well, I'm having nothing to do with 'that') I was rather worried by that "...from both sides". I envisaged some mechanical device rather like the folding coat-hanger from 'Raiders Of The Lost Ark'. I needn't have worried. It seems he only meant \*suppositories\* as well as the ointment. Mind you, suppositories are bad enough--'Suppository'(-z-)n. (med.) medicinal cone or cylinder placed in orifice to dissolve. (see 'pose')--I had visions of something like a silver cigar tube and thoughts of a dissolving orifice didn't help. My expectations weren't improved when Cas said they frothed. I could see myself walking down the road leaving twin trails of froth from the bottoms of my trouser-legs, whilst everyone nudged each other and winked knowingly. Apparently Cas must have been thinking of some other form of suppository, as all my fears were unfounded. We are winning. In the meantime I have had 3 weeks off work which explains how come you got SFD 20 and also how I've managed to start this issue. Thus is proven the fact that one man's fanzine is another man's pain in the arse. So if you'll all join me in a rousing chorus of Joni Mitchell's 'I've shrunk that pile from both sides now.' we can finally move on to Dave's LoC.

DAVE LANGFORD 22 Northumberland Avenue; Reading; Berks; RG2 7PW

That's right... mock me for my freelancing poverty... see if I care... go on, do it again, print stuff about how I can't afford to send you ANSIBLE and then omit the salient fact that once in a while you get a bundle anyway... I'm tough, I can take stuff like this without \*waaaaaaaahhhh\*...



door. It was the next-door neighbour who thrust a plant into my face. "Someone tried to deliver this but you were out." I read the note attached. "What is it?" asked Cas. "You may not believe this," I replied, "...but Dave Piper has sent us a Plant Of Comment." I carried the plant-pot into the living room as Cas asked, "Is it favourable?" "How the fuck should I know," I replied, "I never learned to read Horticulture. It's red. Maybe it's a comment on my politics. Maybe we should send it Hazel. She could translate anything. It might even come back with a plantpot-cosy." We decided it was a present for Cas's birthday (which is on the 7th.) It's the only thing that seems to make sense.

### 8 SEPTEMBER 1981 (SKEL).

On the 5th. we went to Bolton. Not because Bolton is some exotic Mecca, you understand. It's just that Bolton is relatively close and yet it is a place we'd never been. So we went. We won't go again. It was OK for walking around once, on the basis that new and different places are always interesting but as a Hub Of The Universe it scores zero points.

Undaunted, and still enamoured of the letter 'B', yesterday we went to Bowness-on-Windermere for the day. This was a pretty ace day out. Windermere, in the Lake District, is England's largest natural lake and one of Cas's childhood haunts. We made a mess of getting bus times and so had to go by train. This necessitated us ~~leaving~~ staggering forth long before dawn condescended to crack and changing trains many times. The day was lovely and we had a great time, arriving back thoroughly knackered to find (a) my boss had rung to enquire about my progress and our Nicholas had told him I'd gone to Lake Windermere for the day, and (b) the flower-power people had been again. This time it was a note to say they'd left something in the shed. It was an orchid for Cas's birthday from Gerald Lawrence. I have visions of Interflora agents skulking around outside, waiting for us to go away for the day. We daren't go away again in case, upon our return we discover the house buried in flowers and everybody in fandom stuck with enormous bills.

Odd that Langford should mention Arnold Akien in his LoC



because this morning we got a LoC from.....

ARNOLD AKIEN 6 Dunblane Road; Seaburn; Sunderland; SR6 8EU.

Sunderland has just about the highest ratio of council-to-private accomodation in the country, something like 53% of all the housing in this town is owned by the council. Skel, the very increase in property values you mention works against your argument. The profits from the sale of two decent council houses would never be sufficient to build a new house, the price of land, labour, materials etc. being what they are. Your argument is simplistic in the extreme and I rather think you're using it to salve a bruised conscience.....but why?

You've been offered what is probably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity - to hell with ethical disimilation. Half this pitiful planet's population is starving and/or diseased - so does that mean we should feel guilty for eating three meals a day and not having bilharzia in the water supply? There are damn few saints in this world. Most of us get by doing our best for those we love (hands up anyone who doesn't love themselves.....bloody liars!) and giving what we can comfortably spare to those in need. Of course the main argument (and not the only valid one) against the sale of council houses is a political one, but then so is the main argument for such sales. Stop waggling your conscience about like a CND protester does a placard! You owe it to yourself, to Cas and your kids to take advantage of your luck - you don't need to think up good ethical altruistic reasons for doing your best for your family.

Now to 'nice' fandom: I would have thought it perfectly obvious that SFD is a kind of extended conversation, in which the patriarch of the Skel clan discusses things with his friends both old and new, and that it is a measure of its success that it achieves a seemingly effortless and natural flow of 'conversation'. As for "a fandom of middle-age", I wonder if Steve Higgins has realised how old the average fan is? From what I've seen a horrifying number of fanzine fans are around their 30s.....middle-age here we come.

Let me tell you of my triumph in the Silicon darts tourna-

ment. No, I didn't actually win, but I did get to the fourth round before being defeated by Alan 'Deadeye' Dorey, the eventual winner. I attribute my very wonderful success to my superior game plan, which consisted of standing before the board at the prescribed distance ("You stand there" they said. "That thing on the wall is a dartboard."), closing my eyes and hurling the darts in the direction of the board. "Bloody Hell!" went the cries of admiration from the crowd, who watched the game (I'm really getting rather good at these technical terms) from a vantage point under the pool table. Still, I won! Well almost! I beat Rob Jackson (whose game plan involved hurling his darts sideways), Stan Eling (who should have won) and Neil Hepple ("You shouldn't have won." he groaned. "You won the wrong way.") who then told me how I should have played in order to lose properly. I'll never understand this game..... which could also be said of 'Space Invaders'. Oh, the awful indignity of only scoring 153 at 'Space Invaders'. Silly game! What use is a game in which you can't cheat?

#### 9 SEPTEMBER 1981 (SKEL)

But you can cheat at 'Space Invaders', at least on the home console. Normally one only gets one missile at a time on the game board and if you miss you can't fire again until that missile disappears from the top of the screen. However, if one holds down the 'game reset' switch whilst switching the console on one can fire a second missile whilst the first is still in play. For this information I am indebted to Mike 'Bottom Card' Meara who is a well known cheat around this town and who is lucky at cards and Atari games more than somewhat.

Okay, I'll bite. What is the valid non-political argument against selling council houses? Also commenting on council house frolics was...

TERRY JEEVES 230 Bannerdale Road; Sheffield; S11 9FE.

Hope you manage to purchase the Skelhome without running into the Labour party's delaying tactics. Here in Sheffield they are spending my tax money like water on newspapers and councils to advise would-be home buyers to avoid doing so.





19 SEPTEMBER 1981 (SKEL)

Since typing the last page we finally have the facts. According to the council our house is worth £14750 but after the discount it will cost us £8555. There shouldn't be much of a problem getting a mortgage for that sum as the law requires the council to lend us the full amount provided only that my salary is sufficient. Of course, to get a salary you must first have a job.....but more on this matter later.

Harry Bell sent the cover for SFD 22 (thanks Harry) with a note which concluded, "Was going to say something about the sale of council houses, to which I am thoroughly opposed, but can't be bothered." That is 'thorough opposition'?

"Star Trek presented an accurate image of what America's future galactic behaviour might be, based on past and present historical data. That explains the Klingons anyway. However, just whom the other group were, with their peace-loving federation and their non-interference edict, I have no idea."

Don Boyd writing in Q36F (June 1981).

PETE PRESFORD 2 Maxwell Close; Buckley; Clwyd; North Wales.

Reading about vibrators reminded me of Dave Britton. Er, not in that way. Dave plans to open a FULL SEX SHOP soon on Oldham Street, Manchester, wiv all yer gear in, and a downstairs room full of space-invader type machines. He reckons that the two go together! Picture all yer perverts dressed in leather and split-crotch panties, waving vibrators and screaming "Take that, you alien bastard!" I often wonder how Dave makes a living. He must know some funny people nowadays...or perhaps he always did.

No bloody wonder the countries going down the nick if all Conservatives work things out like you do. It ain't Cas that's poorly.

((Pete then went on to mis-read my remarks in SFD 20 and in refuting what he thought I'd said presented figures that in effect proved my point, namely that the money one is likely to get from selling two council homes at 33% discount will enable you to build two more. Thanks for the info Pete, but 0/10 for the 'comprehension test'.)))

Do you know that the highest proportion of people that go bust are builders? There is no way any Government can justify the selling off of housing stock that has taken years to build up. It also means that you are forcing the ghetto situation, where the houses nobody wants to buy will end up full of folk (good and bad) hating each others guts. The idea is good, but only if an equal number of houses are built to compensate for those sold.

#### ALAS FOR THE WAY OF THE WORLD...

.....for Conservative councils won't spend the money they receive from house sales on building more houses as they are opposed to this type of expenditure (wrongly, I feel, in this instance) whilst Labour councils are unlikely to spend the cash on new houses as to do so would disprove their political point in regard to such sales. Perhaps realising this Pete went on to add, "I'd never vote Conservative or Labour again. Both of them want stuffing." This leads us into the next letter:-

#### MICHAEL ASHLEY 86 St. James Road; Mitcham; Surrey; CR4 2DB.

Actually any incomprehension caused by Joseph's comments on SFD is cleared up by reading Steve Higgins' criticisms: "creatively it's a dead-end". Joseph said the same thing; it doesn't evolve, one issue is the same as another. I suppose though that the current issue is slightly different by virtue of the political comment. However I'd have preferred your lead article to have started out on a rather more credible footing than the following statement: "There are two main political parties in the UK and the rest can be ignored." This may have been fine back in January but since then there has been the rather speedy rise of the Social Democratic Party, the importance of which may be difficult to gauge at present but at the least its potential



importance has to be stressed. Ah but you were writing in January. Well, yes, but you didn't finish the whole issue until the end of August - yet the article remains intact without any kind of later emendation, despite the fact that recent events have rendered that opening sentence as thoroughly misleading. (A case could be made for the statement being wrong anyway, even leaving aside the Social Democrats. For example, can the effects of Scottish and Welsh nationalists in local elections in Scotland and Wales be "ignored"? Can the influence of Fascist groups like the British Movement and National Front in areas like the East End of London be ignored? Obviously they can't - yet your comment would apparently have us believe otherwise.)

Page 13: unlucky for some (you, me, my psychiatrist...) I don't know, what can a po' boy do when faced with someone seriously suggesting that the Queen should have genuine power?

"It's a fanzine full of writings on feminist issues, Dear.....a sort of Clit Lit."

WHAT A LOAD OF WAZZ-BRAINED CRAP.....

.....that was, Mike. Let's deal with the political issues first. Nationalist, whether Welsh, Scottish, Fascist or even Cornish have as much political power in this country today as a silent fart with no smell. Politically they are nothing. Nor for that matter are the Social Democrats. So far all they have actually done is come a good second. If they maintain this 'success' (achieved during all the enthusiasm aroused by their creation) they will achieve nothingness. Until they actually come across and do something I, and the country, will be entitled to regard them as having no consequence.

As to the Fascists.....I find it far easier to worry about the extreme left than the extreme right. The extreme left is

far more opposed to the democratic ethic (as evinced by it's deeds rather than by its rhetoric) than the National Front. Also, the extreme right is isolated from the rest of the political spectrum of the country. There is a substantial ideological gap between the National Front and the right wing of the Conservative party which keeps the fascist evil isolated yet conversely the extreme left blends gradually right to the centre of political opinion and is thus far more dangerous to free speech and thought in this country.

As to the Monarchy having some real power..... The fact is that any power held by the Monarchy is power denied to the politicians. Justice is supposed to be in the hands of the monarch and not tied to political considerations. However, the police forces in this country are controlled by local authorities whose primary concerns are political. Already some socialist councils are demanding greater control of police policy where current policies don't entirely follow their ideological aims. At the same time Tony Benn is demanding greater sovereignty for Parliament. Apparently Parliament should make all the decisions and therefore any decision taken elsewhere is an abrogation of british democratic principles (if it is taken by an individual or by the European Parliament). It's OK though if Parliamentary powers are usurped by the Trade Unions or by the Labour Party Congress. I suspect Tony Benn hates eating sandwiches - it must be terribly difficult when your bread is buttered on both sides.

All that though is simply fair comment. Political differences and all that. No sweat. You walk your way and I'll walk mine. Some of my best friends are ~~Labour~~ Socialists. But you really should have put your brain cell back in before making those comments about SFD.

Look you turd brained mong - this is SFD 21. Get that? Twenty-Fucking-One! Wouldn't you think that by now I'd have some idea of the sort of fanzine I want to produce? Also, that knowing this I'd produce that zine? SFD 20 was considerably different from the first issue (INFERNO 1). There is a marked difference from issue 10. You've only seen the last three issues, for Christ's sake. What evolution can you expect to

see? SFD can only change as I change and as you get older you tend to change at a slower rate. When you're young you think this fact is an indictment of middle-age rather than seeing it as the continuation of a natural process. That is why fanzines produced by younger fans tend to be full of the sort of intolerant writing displayed in my last paragraph on the previous page. Immature fans are constantly ripping their hearts from their breasts, holding them aloft and shouting "Look, I bleed therefore I care." Immature fans are always shouting. They confuse decibels with integrity. But that's OK too. It's all part of the same natural process. It's called 'growing'.

Basically what it means when you display a 'middle-aged' attitude, is that you've acquired tolerance. At one time it may have looked like I'd never make it but I think I'm getting there. That's why I'm quite pleased to be part of a fandom of middle-age, nice fandom. I didn't get involved in fandom in order to shout at people who hold different views. That's why you don't see writing like the last paragraph on page 13 in SFD. What's the point? Shouting at people never changed anyone's mind. Abuse doesn't improve anything, ever. Because you don't shout all the time doesn't mean you don't care.

Mind you, I still prefer the term 'mellow' to 'middle-aged'.

Mike then went on to suggest I stood for TAFF or GUFF. Maybe he was hoping I wouldn't come back, eh Mike? Or maybe you thought all that 'in person' fanac would burn me out so I wouldn't publish any more issues of a zine that "...could be re-titled SEEMS FAIRLY DEAD..."?

Ethel Lindsay sent a postcard of Frankfurt...from her home in Carnoustie. This buying of postcards in picturesque places and then using them for brief PoCs months later is something I've started doing too. Ethel said "...like your format - reminds me of the old Inchmery Diary." Oh well, I suppose there's really nothing new under the sun. She also sent me ATom's address so that I can grovel for a cover. After all Arthur, we old and middle-aged fans have got to stick together, haven't we? Course we have. By return of post please,





these faanish type conventions all that interesting anymore. One of the problems I'm sure is that it's more or less the same people year in year out with only the occasional newcomer to enliven the proceedings. The one trouble is of course that that person in a relatively short space of time also becomes one of the regulars you see time and time again. It's all right if you're actually friends (and how many real friendships are there in fandom?) but seeing mere acquaintances time and time again and not improving your relationship with them in the course of it, seems like shitting because you like wiping your bum.

But enough of all this crap. I'll still be at Novacon and probably all the other conventions as well.

#### ARGH \*SHOCK-HORROR\* IAN MAULE GETS RELIGION.....

.....remember, you read it first in STIRRINGS of FANNISH DISTASTE. "Fandom is a load of Cobblers," hints New Malden fan "...though it is still my sole interest - that's my last remark on the subject." Hmmm, sounds a bit like those Sloughs of Despond that I get from time to time, usually when SFD is a bit dormant and I can't be bothered to do \*anything\*. Maybe if we could get Arnold to write you a nice sympathetic letter and perhaps buy you a quintuple brandy, eh?

#### BRIGHT RED DREAM MACHINE - Part One.

When I was ten, back in 1957, I was a bright young kid. My parents were busy lifting themselves up from their working-class background, trying to become middle-class capitalists. My father, a printer, was working every hour God sent and a few God didn't, trying to build up his own business, ploughing all the profits back into the firm whilst mother took a Saturday job in an attempt to make ends meet. They met. They may not have overlapped much, but we got by. Many of our clothes came from Jumble Sales. In fact Jumble Sales provided not only for our physical needs, they were also a form of social entertainment. We rarely went to the cinema or to a soccer match. The high spot of the week was a trip to a Jumble Sale where we could combine business with pleasure. It was a barren weekend without one. The meeting hall where the Jumble Sale was taking

place took on some of the excitement of an arab marketplace whilst also seeming some kind of seedy Aladin's Cave full of obscure, if moth-eaten, wonders. The Jumble Sale remains, for me, one of the two features which encapsulate this period of my life. The other was 'peg rugs'.

I remember evenings spent cutting up old garments; coats, jackets, trousers and such into little scraps, all kept carefully segregated by colour until Mum thought we'd got enough of each sort to make the pattern she'd designed. I remember my wonderment as all this rubbish became transformed into a 'brand new' hearth-rug. I recall laying upon it and marvelling at its softness compared with the old rug which had been flattened and trampled until it was hardly more comfortable than the oilcloth. No, we never had to worry about how to invest all our spare cash, but we never really wanted for anything important (did we John-boy???). I was never really deprived of anything.....with one exception. My parents were looking to the future and I was that future. I would not have to struggle like they had. I would get a good education and go on to better things. The world was to be my oyster. I was the apple of their eye and, like I said, I was a bright young kid.

The only real obstacle they could foresee in their plans for me was the 11+ examination which would decide if I was to go on to a grammar school education with a rosy future or, if failed, would condemn me to years of going through the motions in a secondary-modern school prior to landing in some low-paid manual job at fifteen. To encourage me in facing this rite of passage lavish promises were made. My Nana for whom I'd been, until recently, her only grandson, entered into the spirit of things and pledged me a watch if I passed my 11+. The star prize however was dangled before me by my parents. A bike. If I passed the examination I was to have a bicycle. No details of this bike were specified but in my mind's eye I could already see it, bright red and gleaming in the sun; drop handle-bars, a pedal-powered super dream racer. Of course, I never intended working for this bicycle. I was a bright kid, wasn't I? I'd breeze through the 11+, wouldn't I? No sweat. I'd have my bike without any effort. I suppose I was prime material for being taught a lesson and needless to say, Fate was



in a lesson-teaching frame of mind.

If you're expecting me to tell you I blew it, you're wrong. I was a bright young kid. I did breeze right through the exam and wound up in the top class in the grammar school. My Nana, beaming with pride, took me down to Stockport and looked on as I chose my watch. I was eleven years old and I had my very own watch. But I never got the bike. I don't recall ever finding out just what went wrong, whether they'd simply overreached themselves financially with the promise or whether other, more vital demands had been made on their resources. Came the day and the money simply wasn't there. No bike. No scarlet dream-come-true. I was destroyed. Betrayed? You don't know the meaning of the word. Don't talk to me about 'betrayed'.

My best friend didn't have a bike either. He'd just scraped through the 11+ the year before me, into the bottom class at the school I was to attend, but then, he'd never been promised a bike anyway. So, we were both bike-less together except that just when I failed to get my bike he came round, all thrilled and excited, to show me his brand-new black and yellow sports cycle which had more gears than the whole of Fritz Lang's 'Metropolis'. Unfair? Don't talk to me about 'unfair'. In no time at all I became the area's leading exponent of self-pity. I was a long time getting over it.

A couple of years later my father wheeled home what could only be described as an utter wreck. This was my bike? It was hideously old-fashioned and drab but.....it was a bike.....and it worked! (Fate's lesson had not been in vain) One of my friends had an older brother who was much given to taking bikes apart and then putting them back together again in somewhat different combinations. He had a spare frame and a couple of shiny wheels. Thirty bob. Done! I had a pound saved up which, knowing my record at saving money, probably meant that some relative had recently visited us, bestowing largesse upon us kids as relatives are wont to do. So, cadging ten bob from my mother, I was in business. A bit off this one, a part from that one...and I had my bike. The frame was red too, a brand known as 'Hercules', though there ended any resemblance to my dream machine, small though even that likeness was. The old

discarded frame, a 'Raleigh', I later realised was basically superior to its replacement and, repainted, it later reclaimed its rightful place on the cycle.

At last I had my bike. Now however I discovered a hitherto unsuspected fact. It concerned the basic purpose and function of bicycles. A bike is not primarily a means of transport. No, a bike is first and foremost a device for acquiring things called punctures. If I went out on my bike I might not necessarily get to my destination but I sure as hell would get a puncture. For a long period it never failed. Once more my bike was testing my character. Impotent raging and frustrated self-pity do not a puncture mend. Not only are they no help, they are a definite hindrance. Wielding a bike-spanner whilst angry and enraged leads only to skinned knuckles and an ever-worsening temper. It's a 'No Win' situation and the only way is down. Have you ever seen a bike-spanner?

A bike-spanner may be the Ultimate Weapon. I'm certain that if only the american indians had been armed with bike-spanners instead of those silly bows and arrows the white man would have been pushed right back into the sea. Had the Aztecs not failed to develop the bike-spanner we would now be asking "Cortez who?". The Roman legions only perished, at the last, for want of the bike-spanner. It is a fiendish device full of assorted holes and sockets cunningly designed to never quite fit any of the nuts on the cycle. It also has an unbelievable number and profusion of wickedly sharp bits which stick out in the most awkward places and which ensure that the application of enough pressure to actually tighten a nut will result in extreme pain, pain which is exacerbated when the spanner slips off the nut and ones fingers get mangled in the wheel spokes or jammed agonisingly between the wheel-rim and the brake-blocks. The less resolute become aware that walking is healthy exercise and besides, if God had meant us to ride..... Only after I had learned to control my temper and developed a more philosophical attitude did my bike behave more benevolently towards me. After that I learned to live at peace with my bike, which served me well for many years. It was a good workhorse but it was never the thoroughbred of my dreams. I tried never to let my bike know this though. Bloody hell, I didn't want to have to go through that again.

JOY HIBBERT 11 Rutland Street; Hanley; Stoke-on-Trent; ST1 5JG

God, not cricket - can't bloody stand cricket! Nearly as bad as tennis.

Don't know if you've noticed how a lot of ordinary shops are opening up 'Marital Aids' sections. Our local healthfood shop has done so. Unfortunately the staff there consists of a woman old enough to be my mother, who is just not shockproof enough!

Musical vibrators eh? I can see that it would be to a lady's advantage to be a fan of (for example) Meatloaf as opposed to, say, The Carpenters. Pneumatic drill operator? Why didn't I think of that?

WHY INDEED, JOY.....

.....then you could have got your rocks off getting the road up. The Beatles of course prophesied the musical vibrator as the line, "Come together, right now, over me." clearly indicates. I agree with you about tennis in general but I've just been glued to the set watching Sue Barker win the 1981 Daihatsu Challenge. Sod the tennis! Sue Barker turns me so far on it's disgusting. I think it's the schoolgirl image. The pony-tail, the very short skirt revealing the firm thighs. The jaunty way her pleated skirt flirts up around her pert bottom \*ghasp\* - water, somebody give me water. Quick, somebody talk about boring old cricket again whilst I calm down a bit.

JOHN OWEN 4 Highfield Close; Newport Pagnell; Bucks; MK16 9AZ.

So you had the same reaction to the Headingley test - it almost revises my long suppressed belief in Ghod - I mean it had to be divine intervention, there was no other explanation! The funniest part about it was the way I heard the news. At the OU I work with a group of editors and the senior editor is a very colourful old bloke, an Armenian and a card-carrying Commie to boot. Now he's never, ever, shown any inclination towards any type of sport whatsoever - if you want to turn him on you talk politics or Wagner (Wagner? For an ardent Marxist?) yet that Monday, when most of the rest of us didn't even bother



to try and find out how much we'd been beaten by, he came chuntering down our corridor positively howling with glee - he had all of us hanging out of our office doors wondering what the hell he was shouting about - "We won, we won. Isn't it amazing we won!" It slowly dawned on us that he meant the Test Match and we all collapsed in shock for the rest of the afternoon.

Your bit on UK politics seems to be a little out of date now, with the SDP looking set to cause quite an upset by stealing away all of the middle ground from both Labour and Conservative, who both are in the throes of internal disputes that look like ruining both of their chances in the next election. Multi-valued choice seems to be a thing of the future, not the past. And I do believe that the SDP/Liberal pact can form a very viable alternative government too, one that is a good compromise between the welfare society and the freedom of choice of the individual. What I don't necessarily believe is that it will automatically be a better thing in itself - but it does present the opportunity to proceed from a fresh position without the automatic 'Us/Them' attitudes that come into play (as you so rightly point out) in the current set-up.

#### GLAD YOU MENTIONED THAT, JOHN.....

.....as recent events require that I modify my own response to Mike Ashley's comments on the same subject. Since then there has been a by-election in Croydon and the seat was won by the Liberal candidate standing as a member of the SDP/Liberal alliance. Even though the candidate himself was a Liberal there is no doubt that it was the SDP involvement which turned the trick. As one columnist phrased it, "The Liberals lend respectable ancestry to the Social Democrats and the SDP give the Liberals political plausibility." In the general election the same Liberal candidate, Bill Pitt, lost his deposit coming in a poor third. Now it is the Labour candidate who lost his deposit in a similar performance. The Conservatives could have expected to lose the seat. Any government half-way through a troubled period of office tends to lose such seats. They would however have expected to lose it to Labour who ran them reasonably close in the General Election. For Labour though the result is an unmitigated disaster and seems

to show that the average Labour voter is as concerned as I am at the swing to the left within the Labour party. What I hope will happen is that when the Communists have finally gained control of the Labour Party they will discover that we as a nation have no wish to become Communists and they will be left in control of a party that the british electorate has abandoned to a backwater of british politics. Sadly if this does happen then presumably the Liberal/SDP alliance will probably move leftwards and we will be back to the old 'Us/Them' again, unless the alliance breaks up leaving a revitalised Liberal party to inherit the middle ground.

John also had something to say about the UK fanzine scene in general, "The reaction I have since I returned after my lengthy hiatus (coo, that sounds like some kind of nasty surgical thing) is that it's just about reawakening after a lengthy slumber. There seems to be all these other fans emerging, Rip Van Winkle-like, after a period of inactivity or even total gafiation.....and it's probably just as well as there does not seem to be all that much in the way of a scene around - some of the fanzines I've recieved have been tremendously boring - badly written, put together with all the skill and panache of a chimpanzee with cerebral palsy, and disgustingly printed on clapped-out John Bull outfits." Hmmm, comments echoed by.....

PAMELA BOAL 4 Westfield Way; Charlton Heights; Wantage; Oxon.

I was so pleased when SFD 20 wagged its way through my letter box as my fanac nowadays is only and can only be getting and LoCing zines and they are pretty thin on the ground. I seem to get ever further out of touch. It's good to know folks are still out there somewhere, still talking in the way and living in the way peculiar to fans. So, SFD lives and I suppose there must be some ancient measure of time that would make the word 'quarterly' an accurate one, but where have all the zines gone? Gone to GAFIA every one? Except for ERG and CRYSTAL SHIP, a months late CHUNDER and QUINAPALUS headed January, posted July and received September, I just don't seem to be getting any. If it were not for ANSIBLE I'd think you were all a figment of my imagination. Now of course I know that you are all a figment of Dave Langford's imagination and an occas-

ional DOT or round-robin letter from Daroll Pardoe or even a MALFUNCTION doesn't prove otherwise.

For the Royal Wedding I had a place on the Mall, a special enclosure for disabled people. In common with 70% of wheelchair jockeys I couldn't see a thing for walking wounded (some) and able-bodied so called helpers standing in front of me.

### BUT IS THE FANZINE SCENE REALLY SO MORIBUND?

This question is prompted by a letter I received in response to SFD 20. It was two notes really, both on the same piece of paper (Oh, you impoverished young fans). JOHN SHIRE said, "I didn't enjoy it very much at all. I would tell you I thought it was shit but you're probably quite a nice person who I wouldn't offend otherwise." Not only can he not handle the English language but the zines he enclosed, several copies of RAGNAROK show he can't handle layout either. RAGNAROK is what one might term a 'punk' fanzine and like the early punk music it is full of inferior sound, second-hand fury and signifies fuck all. The other note was from MICHAEL PAINE and added, "Having only glanced at a few SFDs all I can say is that I can't really empathise with your attitude to fandom; SFD occupying (to me) a niche in fandom that whiffs of nostalgia. To be honest I don't really think you'll enjoy these fanzines."

Oddly enough, Michael's OVERDROWNED, whilst nearly as cluttered in appearance as RAGNAROK, was in fact quite an interesting zine, mainly because Michael had something worth saying and also because he has the ability to say it in a forthright and interesting fashion. What both these zines did have and have in abundance, was enthusiasm. Youthful enthusiasm, unfettered by experience (or, in some cases, judgement). They also contained reviews of many zines, none of which I get. None of which I particularly want to get if they are the kind of zines you spoke of John, if they are like RAGNAROK, but they are there. Just because our part of the fanzine scene seems pretty dead (as, they would say, do our fanzines) we should not make the mistake of thinking that we are all there is. There once was a time when these youngsters would have injected their enthusiasm into our fanzines, our fandom. Sadly, no more.



Bugger 'em anyway. Give me a bloke like Peter Campbell anyway. He writes, "The con report brought to my attention the difference between your visualisation of Arnold Akien and The Real Person. This is a favourite hobby of mine. What, I imagine, does Joseph Nicholas look like?" There you have it. A bloke whose self-confessed favourite hobby is imagining Joseph Nicholas, who yet has the nerve to complain, "SFD 20 was definitely a 'down' issue, what with your comments on the polarisation of politics, the news of Cas' breakdown and a decided dearth of the usual humorous pieces combined to give a somewhat sombre mood. Even the LoCs seemed to fit this pattern. All in all a more sober SFD than any I've seen to date. The shape of things to come?"

Bloody Hell! And I haven't even mentioned my impending redundancy yet. No Peter, without actually re-reading all the back issues, a thing which Cas would tell you I never do, I can't say for sure but I feel that every so often I do slip in a couple of issues on a more sober note just to purge myself of any traces of creeping normality which do tend to recur. Mind you, others too noticed something amiss with SFD 20. "Did enjoy your cute cover idea and congratulate you on publishing twenty issues. That's a good score..." wrote Mike Glicksohn who went on to add, "What's all this talk about vibrators? Does SFD stand for SEXUALLY FRIGID DEVIANTS? I am happy to say I have no vibrator stories to tell you, mine or anyone else's. I firmly believe (you should pardon my choice of words) that such material has no place in fanzines. Keep it in the prozines where it belongs! I had planned on writing you this LoC yesterday, gently sipping a martini or five but they announced that they'd be showing 'The Sting' so I slapped a tape into the VCR and watched/recorded the movie, one of my favorites, editing the commercials as I went. I still sipped the five martinis but the LoC to Skel bought the biscuit. Today, as if in punishment for my lack of dedication, I got your letter/LoC-on-NERG telling me what a shitty useless lousy awful job I'd done with my summer-long publication of my ish. Wow, I'll never put off LoCing SFD for a movie again, I promise!

Bring on SFD..... Hope you won't think I'm just being vindictive because of your LoC to me but I don't think this

issue is as good as recent efforts. The reason is clear though: not enough of Skel being inventive, drunkenly or otherwise. You are your own best contributor (\*blush\*) and when the issue consists so much of letters, you need very good letter writers. Ortlieb was superb and that Glicksohn chap was nothing short of brilliant (or is that "nothing, short nor brilliant"?) but much of the rest of the material was merely ho-hum."

#### THAT'S THE WAY IT CRUMBLES, COOKIE-WISE

No points for realising that the BBC re-screened 'The Apartment' last night. OK, There was less of me in SFD 20 and what there was of me was less flippant. You have to play them the way they're dealt, card-wise. The difference was however exaggerated by the fact that the issue it followed was probably the best I've ever done.

Now, to react constructively to your criticism, Mike, I should now procede with some ace skelish material but unfortunately I am much too tidy-minded and can't resist the temptation to get my two main drunks out of the way in one swell foop and thusly I give you:-

MIKE MEARA 61 Borrowash Road; Spondon; Derby; DE2 7QH.

Dear STENCHFUL PART DISTRIBUTOR: Speech is silver, they said, and I agreed. Silence is golden, they said, and I demurred not. Typewritten words arranged into a LoC on SFD 20 are absolute 100% solid platinum with fucking great diamonds stuck all over it, they strongly hinted, and I'm prepared to go along with that. Just because I haven't written you a LoC since January 1980, you get all tetchy!

I thought that Steve Higgins' comments expressed his feelings about SFD very well indeed. His rejection of the concepts of niceness, tradition and contentment implies that he feels he is an angry young man, and that you are not, and that his is the superior state of mind. Possibly the truth is that you (and I) have realised that there is nothing in fandom worth getting angry about. Or am I putting words into your mouth?

"Politics makes strange bedfellows" may well be a load of





## TALES OF OLD OFFERTON

It really is time I brought you all up to date on what's been going on down at the old Skel homestead. First and foremost Cas is still very much the same. Many thanks to the large numbers of you who wrote in supportive letters, many written from painful personal experiences. Apparently almost my entire readership is cracked in the head, although why that should surprise me I don't know. In case you're wondering why I have not published any of this material I can only point to the LoCs printed earlier which have pointed out that SFD is not such a load of laughs anymore. Also, whilst nobody actually said any of their stuff was 'DNQ', I don't want to inadvertently upset anyone by revealing confidences possibly not meant for publication. Besides which, they're worth more as blackmail if I keep them to myself.

On the job-front, I have been made redundant again. Do you think these people are trying to tell me something maybe? As last time, I have been offered alternative employment (in this instance involving more money) but again I don't want the job I'm being offered. The problem with finding another job however is that whilst I am a pretty good Cost Accountant I am totally unqualified and Accountancy is very qualification-oriented. Being in computers, they tell me, is just the opposite. Nobody gives a fuck for qualifications once you're in. What they're interested in is experience. "Great," I say, "sounds like just the thing for me." But I'm a bit worried about the way they say "...once you're in." "Okay," I said to Gerald Lawrence, "...how do you get in?" "Well, first," he said, "...you have this University Degree." Fucking great!!! This from a guy who can't even put up an ironing-board.

Undeterred I went to sit an aptitude test in an attempt to get on a government sponsored re-training course in Systems Analysis. First I think maybe I should have gone on a course to help you get on government courses. This thing is becoming a lifetime career. Okay, so I passed the aptitude test, as far as my overall score was concerned. Great! Now they had to scrutinise my result in greater detail to make sure that I had not failed in any section which was essential for the Systems

Analysis course. Nope, everything is OK, said the letter. We will send for you soon for an interview. Great! The continents continued to drift. Entire mountain ranges were thrust up and eroded away. Evolution came up with something called 'dinosaurs' and then changed its mind. Then came the letter. Come and see us. Reading. Thursday the 3rd of December.

The first thursday in the month! Scheme-scheme. They'd pay my expenses. Scheme-scheme. British Rail is running special fares that will enable Cas and I to get to London (and me to get from London to Reading) and back for the price of me going direct to Reading. We could look in on the December Tun, spend a couple of days hoofing around London kipping over at Gerald Lawrence's place and Cas could freak out on the pinball machine he keeps in the hall there. So, never one to miss out on a free trip to London, it was arranged. We met Gerald at the station and went straight off to spend incredible amounts of money at a second-hand-record shop that Mike Meara had recommended. Then we headed for Paddington station so that I could let British Rail speed me towards my interview leaving Gerald to the delights of accompanying Cas as she looked around Harrods. Heh-heh!

The interview didn't go so well. The course itself splits into two parts. First there's an intensive eight week lecture based element and then, after passing the relevant examinations there is a twelve week 'project' actually working at a computer installation. The problem was that I didn't want to move away from this area, certainly not for the sort of salary I could get as an inexperienced Systems Analyst. Unfortunately this is not a very good area obtaining work in the computer field. The point is that the project you undertake, if successfully completed, usually ends up with you obtaining permanent employment with that firm, although of course there are no guarantees. 85% of trainees usually end up in employment though. However the last two trainees from this area had been forced to accept a project in Kent and then move there if they wanted work. As I wasn't keen on this prospect they compromised. Had I been out of work there would have been no problem but as I actually had a job they weren't too keen on me quitting, taking the training and then possibly ending up out of work despite it all.

So, they reserved me a place on the course but before I could take it up I had to find my own project. OK, I could see their point, what with unemployment being so high, but I was pretty pissed off. Bloody hell, if they couldn't find me a project in this area, with all their contacts, experience and resources, what fucking chance had I got? It seemed to me that they were passing the buck. They didn't have enough projects to go around and they were trying to get me to do their job for them. I was really down, for weeks I was down. Fortunately I am climbing back out of it and am in the process of banging out letters to all points in the known universe. Anyway, more on this topic later. I'm getting ahead of myself. I'm still in Reading, remember? I claim the minor victory of obtaining mine and Cas' expenses and head back to the station. Even though there is a slight 'profit' I am in a bad mood. I try to spend this profit in the station bar whilst waiting for the train. Sodding thing closed ten minutes previously. I can see that the remainder of this trip is not going to be joy unalloyed.

Back to London. I cheer myself up by going to the other branch of the same record-shop chain and spend even more incredible sums whilst Cas, who does not enjoy looking around record shops grumps along behind me, contenting herself in the knowledge that she will get her own back on the morrow when I have promised to try and smile cheerfully whilst being dragged around London window-shopping.

Evening, an on to the Tun. We get there as it opens and grab a table. Just Cas and I, Gerald having gone on to his evening class. Gerald is learning to type. Harry Warner will be proud of him and he and Cas can bore the shits out of me swapping 'learning-to-type' stories. "My teacher used to rap your knuckles with a ruler if she caught you looking at the key-board." said Cas. "Bet yours doesn't." "Why do you think I'm taking this course?" answered Gerald, rubbing his knuckles whilst a far-away dreamy smile played around his lips and flickered behind his eyes (copyright 'Famous Writers Descriptive Writing Course - Part 13').

The pub began to fill up. Dave Langford came in and, brushing the dust off of my ulterior motives, I fought my way



back to the bar and bought him a drink. We were able to trade Christmas cards which was fortunate as I couldn't afford to subscribe and I don't think I'd be much good at LoCing a card. Suddenly it was packed and the noise was like being hit on the head with the entire universe. Now I know why Dave likes going to the Tun. At the Tun nobody can hear. In fact, with all his practice he is in his element, like a blind man in a dark room he sweeps imperiously through the throng dispensing wisdom whilst his minions cup their hands to their ears, lean towards him and look bewildered.

Somehow I managed to ask Dave if he'd promised anyone else a chapter of his trip report after the one that then was due to appear in WARHOON. He said he hadn't which I later learnt was not the case as the following episode was already promised to Malcolm Edwards for TAPPEN. I put this communications failure down to faulty semaphoring on my part. Not that it matters. An episode of Dave's trip report will appear in SFD, as he has since confirmed in writing. The trouble is, I don't know if it will be in this issue or next. I don't really want to press Dave on this point as you know how prone these sensitive creative types are to cracking at the slightest strain.

One thing Dave did mention at the Tun was my LoC in the PONG annish in which he said I'd "...gone on about Greg Pickersgill." I denied this furiously. I could concieve of no circumstances which would lead me to go on about Pickersgill. It wasn't until three weeks later that my copy of the annish was delivered and I was able to see what he meant. Two days later my copy of the following issue (?) appeared in which some UK fen had managed to have printed responses to an issue I was just about to start reading.

My problem is I don't keep copies of my LoCs and I have a lousy memory...and I mean lousy. The first thing I do when I get a zine is to turn to the LoCs and see if I've anything there. If I have I immediately read it, so I'll know what I'm on record as saying. Until I read it I haven't a clue. My LoCs are as new to me as anyone else's. I hate it when someone WAHFs me because that means I've sent someone a letter and now I'll never know what I said in it. I'd rather they never men-

tioned it so that then I wouldn't know that there was something I didn't know.

I'm sorry by the way DanTed. I enjoyed that annish and made notes of some points for a 'joining-in-the-conversation' type of LoC before I realised that the conversation was over. This, I reckon is the only type of complaint about the mail deliveries that is ever really justified. I never believe statements like Mike Glycer's in PONG 25, to the effect that something was sent but the Post Office must have lost it. I've used that excuse myself and it was a lie then too. Post may sometimes take a long time but the number of occasions on which it actually disappears permanently can, for all practical purposes, be counted on the fingers of one foot.

I think I've figured out why my copy took so long to arrive though. The mailing label with my name and address was stuck on top of another. Being nosy I carefully peeled the top label back to see where my copy had been first. Ted White? Bloody hell, Dan, aren't you guys even speaking to each other?

#### POLITICAL UPDATE

The trouble with mentioning 'current' topics in SFD is that I could spend my entire life keeping them up to date. The SDP have now won a by-election, or rather Shirley Williams has. The trouble is I'm not really that interested and neither is anyone else Michael. So, it doesn't matter even if the SDP are swept into power in a surprise General Election. Not another fucking word. Enabling me to subtly change the subject Gary Deindorfer writes:- "I'll admit that I was joking about Eric Mayer rewriting old Harry Warner anecdotes and passing them off as his own. Actually it's the other way around: Harry Warner passes off old Eric Mayer anecdotes as his own. Lately in fanzines I have come across Harry Warner LoCs where he tells about his job editing law books, his love for punk rock, and his little daughter, Flower Warner. Thanks for the copy of NABU 20."

I'm glad you cleared that up Gary. Mind you, I wasn't the only one left wondering about that. Someone else too wrote:-

ERIC MAYER 1771 Ridge Road East; Rochester; New York 14622.

What is this about Harry Warner anecdotes? What brought this on? I don't see how anyone could make a connection between Harry's letters and mine since mine are largely incoherent.

SFD arrived two weeks ago. I woke up that morning and there was snow on the ground. During the apartment-living years the first snowfall always gave me a feeling of claustrophobia, a feeling that it would be more difficult to get out if the surroundings became unbearable. But this time the feeling was more cozy. I suppose I was reminded of being at home when I was younger, with schools closed on account of icy roads. Oddly, fanzines came to mind. I had a strong association with the snow on the ground and the way I'd plod through it down to the mailbox in Falls, in hopes of finding a fanzine there. Why I should associate my early faaning with snow rather than with rain or sunny summer days, I don't know. Maybe because it was sort of magical how fandom went on out there in the country even though the weather had brought everything else to a standstill. Anyway, I thought about that and I thought, "Wouldn't it be great to find one of those good old fanzines out in my new mailbox." But I didn't expect such an occurrence because there aren't many zines I get anymore that really enthuse me. Remarkably, SFD showed up right on cue.

o=o  
o-o  
o=o

Her mind was moving on a remote curve that she was trying to plot in words. - Ross Macdonald in 'The Ivory Grin'.

o=o  
o-o  
o=o

I suppose I'm a sucker for Steve Higgins' "nice" fandom. When I started out there were a lot more "nice" fanzines it seems, and they were well done. Too often today the two don't go together. The best written zines tend to be aggressively faanish or, in the case of British zines, just plain aggressive. They aren't friendly, and those that are being often in the



nature of apa zines and not well composed or original. The Higgins review strikes me as rather pathetic. It is a shame that someone can't feel alive unless he has a knife stuck into someone and, as for creative deadends.....well, where exactly are Joseph Nicholas' reviews, for instance, leading.....to what artistic pinnacle are all those quarrelsome British zines leading? Isn't Fandom a deadend.....except insofar as the editors and readers enjoy what they're doing? I can get aggravation in everyday life. I can get a job as a lawyer if I want to stick knives into people. But I don't want. It's pretty obvious the bastards rule the world, but do we have to turn Fandom into a mirror of the outside world? I suspect a lot of fans like Steve Higgins would like to be big bastards in the real world, but they can't, so they settle for being little bastards in their own fantasy world. Anyway, they will soon all be left to rip at each others' throats and we can go on our way. I see Nicholas wrote you and half my British mailing list out of Fandom in a letter to Brian Earl Brown. Oh well. Of course, you haven't been holding up your end so far as youthful vigour goes, lying on your back. Then again, anyone who insists on drinking homemade stout might well expect to spend much of his time on his back. I don't know why I should go off on such a diatribe. The zines that have kept me around fandom have never been the award-winning ones, the ones with the big reputations. Things aren't all that much different, it's just that people keep complaining so much lately.

So you support Thatcher, do you? Wait for the firestorm from your US readers. Over here Thatcher and Reagan have been compared again and again in the press and US fans seem largely frantic about Reagan. As for me, so far as economics goes, I say give him a chance. The other politicians have managed to progressively reduce the American living standard to the point where 20 years ago my father, who was a schoolteacher, was able to live in a style which I, after seven years of college and a job requiring them, can never hope to approach. It worries me that I will not be able to afford my own home. First on my mind is the fact that, without a home, I have no resources. I have nothing to fall back on. My parents took out loans against their home in order to help me through school. How will I be able to help Fleur?

I was interested to hear about your house situation. In the US fewer than 1 in 11 can afford homes, and presumably this includes many older people at the peak of their earning power. The government has programs whereby it will guarantee a mortgage loan you make through a bank. However, one must still qualify through the bank. The usual requirement, for starters, is that your weekly salary must at least equal your monthly mortgage payment. The average payment, on a very average sort of house (and remember that housing in metropolitan areas, where the jobs are, is much more expensive) is over \$700. In other words you have to have an income of \$35-40 thousand to have a realistic chance of qualifying.

Normally house rentals start from \$500 around here, and seeing as how we'll be paying \$200 for gas in the winter months as well as the usual \$60 for electric.....well, GROGGY is ready to mail but I'm saving up for the postage. Apparently the standard of living has declined the same way in England. I wonder why this is. For so long it rose. Why should it have declined so drastically in the years following the 1950's? Is it merely the baby boom? Not enough to go around? Are the rich simply draining off more and more? Is productivity down that much? Somehow it doesn't seem right and most puzzling is why no one seems to have tackled the question.

We are told now that both husbands and wives should work, that women ought to fulfill themselves. Isn't it peculiar that this idea happened along just about the time it became necessary for both to work? I'm not saying that the wife should raise children and the husband work, mind you, only that I think it ought to be possible for one partner to devote their full time to raising children if a couple so desires. It seems that rather than address the problem of the precipitous drop in living standards we are being brainwashed into becoming the sort of corporate zombies who will be happy slaving six days a week and crawling back into our cubicles at night. Never mind houses, you can still buy a betamax or a space-invaders game and lose yourself in video-fantasyland. Never mind the disintegration of the family under economic pressures.

This isn't a very funny letter is it? I'm going to have

to watch myself. When we were in college my brother and I'd sometimes stay up nights after my parents retired, drinking and talking about art and the like. When we visited him and his wife last spring we ended up spending the whole time talking about how we were managing to pay the bills. I hope it is just a phase.

Actually things are going quite well here. As I mentioned GROGGY will be mailed soon so you'll have it before spring. Fleur is getting teeth. It is remarkable how they shape up into real little people after spending so much time as lumps, so to speak. Kathy has the task of baby reporting in the zine so I won't say too much. Hell of a diet she is on lately though. Eats more than me. Everytime she sees us heading for the kitchen to get a snack, on those rare occasions when there is such a thing in the kitchen, she takes off after us like a dog, whining and tugging at our legs. Loves cream cheese and toast with strawberry jam. Enjoys pulling the strawberries off first. She has only one tooth through so far but it is like a razor. I've also noticed that she's going through a violent phase. Likes to scratch our faces. No, there's no reason, just asserting herself, I suppose. I wonder what it's like coming into an awareness about oneself, one's existence. Is it like waking up or has the awareness been there for a long time already? And what must it be like to think without yet having the words stuck onto everything you see, hear and do? I guess the words are all just flying about, incoherently, like a flock of crows, waiting to land on the reality all around. I surely don't remember what it was like to be a baby. I think I remember what it was like to be a child, a teenager. I hope I still do when she reaches those stages. Perhaps I don't really remember at all, but merely think I do, just as my parents probably thought they did. Who knows? You become less certain. By the time I die I probably won't be sure of anything.

CAN I HAVE MY FANZINE BACK PLEASE, ERIC?

I hope I didn't butcher your thoughts too badly in trimming your letter down to about half its original length. Much as I enjoy your writing I thought 7-8 pages of gentle melancholy would have been too much in this issue of SFD.



## BRIGHT RED DREAM MACHINE - Part Two.

I am fast approaching middle-age, on the middle-age spread express. For all my working life I have sat behind a desk. I gave up playing cricket, at which I was never particularly good anyway, shortly after leaving school. Until then I had persevered with typical yorkshire grit, in the somewhat wishful hope that everything would come good in time, that all the skills I appeared to lack would suddenly click into place. From nowhere I would burst upon the scene, striding the cricket pitches of the world like Hutton and Bradman and Sobers all rolled into one awesome batsman. The Aussie bowlers would be despatched to the boundary with the contempt they deserved. Red rose lancastrians would quake at the very mention of my name. Alas, it was not to be. When I became a man I put away childish things. Vain dreams had to go. The England and Yorkshire cricket teams would just have to do without me.....and look what a mess they've both made of it.

Unfortunately, cricket was the only exercise I took, so when I gave it up my trim lithe figure could see the writing on the wall. Then I gave up smoking and with the return of my appetite, the writing loomed more large. With the money I was no longer spending on the evil weed I bought a low-fi stereo record player and many records. Many, many records. Sitting listening to records is not particularly energetic and as, at the same time I began to acquire the taste for various alcoholic beverages, it can be seen that there was nothing down for me, physical fitness-wise. The writing on the wall was now so fucking huge that one could hardly see the wall.

All my other hobbies were equally sedentary: Watching TV, reading (DNQ) science fiction, typing stencils, and watching Cas make me cups of tea.....none of these activities are particularly recommended for burning off excess calories. Some years back I made a bold effort to get back into condition without any dramatic changes in my life-style. Sadly, hand-cranking my electric mimeo has not proven as complete an answer to my physical decline as I'd hoped, although I attribute this failure mainly to the fact that lately my ish has not been pubed as frequently as of yore.

It became evident that more drastic measures would have to be taken. I bought a bicycle. At last I have my dream machine. Thirty-four years old and I finally got it. Twenty-three years late.....that's not too many. It isn't even red, but it's far more my dream machine than my dream machine ever was. Why a bike though? Why not take up jogging or squash or proofreading for Keith Walker?

Well, I suppose it's partly because of my past. As a kid I was conditioned into wanting a bike. I'd always wanted one and apparently, deep down, that bright young boy still wanted his reward. Persevering little bugger! But, as I said, that was only part of the reason.

For many years now it has been apparent that we were never going to be able to afford proper holidays. Not the sort of holidays that most others take, fortnights in Gstaad or Malaga, ten sundrenched days in the Bahamas or Mustique, an out-of-season weekend in Cleethorpes. All these were beyond our financial resources. Day trips were about our style. So, on the way from Buxton to Dove Holes, as mentioned on page five, Cas and I once more mooted our vague plans of someday acquiring cycles and thus increasing our radius of local operations. I would buy a cheap second-hand cycle when we saw one advertised and Cas would buy Deborah's from her as she never used the sodding thing. Thus freed from the shackles of 'walking-distance' we would spread out into the surrounding countryside and reap the psychic rewards of long summer days cycling 'neath the hot sun. There was something very 1950's about this dream. Simple pleasures of childhood. And, when we were bored with our local environs, it is remarkably cheap to take your bike on a train and then really make the most of places like Buxton and Bowness.

Well, we'd talked of it many times before and would presumably have talked of it many times again. Knowing us, we'd probably still have been talking of it in the twilight of our years. "Cas, remember that idea we had when we were young, the bikes? I wish we'd bought those bikes." This alternate future was murdered though by the unlikeliest of circumstances. I actually went out and did something instead of just talking about it.

I saw an advertisement for a reasonable bike at a less than reasonable price. When I rang up about it the bloke's wife told me it had been sold, but that her husband had a much better one, "...as good as new..." for £50. It was more than I'd intended paying but the description sounded too good to be true. They gave us directions to get to their road and added that their house, number 45, was half-way down on the right. What they didn't say was that houses 1-43 were each set in about 35 million acres of grounds and that walking down their road would take nearly as long as had the other three miles of the walk. We were a bit awed by the wealth implied by all this but fortunately number 45 was one of a series of newer homes added to the road much more recently and was only about ten times the size of the skelhouse. They turned out to be a young couple of about our age, with two young kids. Apparently his father had given them the house as a wedding present. He took me up into the loft to view the bike and I fell \*in love\* with it immediately. A gold sports cycle with ten gears, drop-handlebars with brake-extensions for use when you're not in the high-speed head-down mode and quick-release wheel fastenings should one ever want the wheels to drop off particularly quick. It was obviously a mean-machine. "Go on," he said, "...pick it up." I took a few fast mind-concentrating breaths in the manner of a weight-lifter, girded up my loins and heaved upward. I think the frame must be filled with helium. Light? I'll swear it kept on going up long after I'd stopped lifting.

"It's a lightweight alloy frame," he informed me as I stood in a catching position waiting for it to float down again. I'd got to have it. It was obvious to me that I'd have to pedal backwards in order not to travel at sixty mph. Maseratis would be left in my wake. I had to have it. We took it out so that I could give it a trial spin. Now I'd never had a bike with drop-handlebars or gears before so I was intensely proud of the way I wobbled down the road and even more proud of my slightly less wobbly return. No, you never forget how to ride a bike. It was amazing how the skills were still there after all these years. "It's obvious," he said upon my triumphal return, "that it's years since you last rode a bike." Chagrined I handed over the money and then we wheeled the lightless bike home through the dark streets.



LEIGH EDMONDS PO Box 433; Civic Square; ACT 2608; Australia.

You talk about polarity in politics with parties at the two extremes. Here in Australia we have the two major parties struggling to be the centre party and of late a third party has sprung up, also in the centre, for the truly wishy-washy.

I'm glad that you went to the trouble of reprinting and making use of that odd review from Steve Higgins because I thought it was one of the silliest things that I'd read in years. I suppose that you had to incorporate it into an issue of SFD or else you could not feel justified in feeling that you print some of the silliest stuff around.

Don't talk to me about cricket. I sat up until 2.30 or 3.00 am many mornings watching that test series. Like you I didn't believe that Australians could bat so badly. Actually the reason I'd prefer you not to talk about cricket has to do with the current series we have here against the Pakistanies. I just thought I'd watch a bit of the Australian innings on the box - "...to see how Greg Chappel goes." quoth I to myself. "He hasn't been in form recently, shouldn't take too long." I added. Two hundred and one runs later he finally went out. It was an unintended use of a day and a half - I didn't get all those stencils cut. Looking at cricket on the box can play havoc with ones fanac. As an aside I must say that one of the delights of an Ashes series in Britain is the BBC radio commentary, which always seems very fannish. Freddy Truman would have made a great fanwriter.

Talking about cricket, when is some writer going to write a decent time travel story where the protagonist puts the time machine to good use. Instead of going back to look at Waterloo or the Crucifixion I'd have thought that the '48 Ashes series would have been something really worth going back to see.

CRICKET? DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT CRICKET.

.....has been a sentiment much in evidence in the skelhome lately as the England cricketers have been underlining their ineptness on the current tour of India. Fortunately the bad news

has been lightened every morning by the radio commentary of Don Mosey. Listen out for him next time your lot come over here to get flukily beaten, Leigh.

THIS IS WHERE YOU GET YOURS.....

.....providing you're on this list. This is the mailing list for SFD 21. You are here. If your name is underlined you won't be here next issue unless I get some response. I'm not sure how my system will stand chopping thirty people from my mailing list in one go, but a man must do what a man must do.

Abramowitz(address needed):Akien:Andrushack:Arthurs:Ashley:  
Barker: Bell: Bennet: Bentcliffe: Bergeron: BSFC: Boal: Boston: Bowers:  
Brooks: Brown: Bulmer: Cadogan: Campbell: Cantor: Carr: Carton: Clarke:  
Cline: Coad: Collins: Connor: Cohen: Danielson: Danner: Deindorfer:  
Denton: Digre: Dixon: Dorey: Edmonds: Farber: Faulder: Ferguson: Fine:  
Fletcher: Foyster: Franson: Gaier: Geis: George: Giguere: Gillespie:  
Gilliland: Glicksohn: Goldberg: Goodall: Goudriaan: Hamilton: Hanke-  
Woods: Hansen: Herman: Hibbert: Hills: Hirsh: Hlavaty: Hoffman: Hollyn:  
Howard: Hunter: Jackson: James: Jeeves: Josenhans: Kaufman & Suzle:  
Kinney: Langford: Lawrence: Lee: lewis: Lieberman: Lindsay: Lindsay:  
Lockwood: Logan: Long: Macdonald: Mackay: Marion: Marshall: Mayer &  
Malone: Maule: MeadowsIII: Mearae: Meece: Neufeld: Nicholas: Nielsen-  
Hayden: O'Brien: Ortlieb: Owen: Palmer: Palter: Pardoe: Peek: Piper:  
Potter: Presford: Purcell: Robertson: Rowe & Doyle: Runte: Salomon:  
Scantlebury: Schweitzer: Seelig: Sellars: Sharpe: Shaw: Shiffman (Ta  
for the cover, Stu): Siclari: Simsa: Skeltons(2): Skene: Smith:  
Steffan: Stephenson-Payne: Stopa: Strelkov: Swider: Tennison: Thomson:  
Townley: Tutihasi: Vaux: Wallace: Ward: Warminger: Warner: Warner:  
Weber: WKUSFS: White: Whitmore: Williams(I): Williams(K): Wind: Zuhl:

That little lot comes to 144 copies which leaves me about ten for sending out on spec. Whoops, missed out Keith Walker. It must be catching.

William T. Goodall, stoned on magic mushrooms, wrote:  
"Yes, I do mumble and it is annoying - many people have pointed out this fault and I am now trying to speak up a bit, but I still revert from time to time. Next time just ask me to speak up, eh?" Pardon?

Greg Hills joined the 'When is a fanzine not a fanzine?' fray with: "Having seen a number of SFRs and a couple of ALGOLs I feel somewhat qualified to venture that they are, in fact, fanzines. Besides, Geis sent me a copy of SFR in trade for TANJENT. If I sent Scithers a copy of TANJENT, do you think he'd send me a copy of ISAAC ASIMOV's? Mind you, that copy of SFR was the only copy I got. The fact that I haven't produced anything to send him since and hence haven't reciprocated might have something to do with this; but still.....one copy, then off the mailing list? There's something unfannish about people who are so efficient with their mailing lists."

R. Laurraine Tutihasi wrote: "Thank you very much for SILLY FRIVOLOUS DIVERSIONS 19 and 20. When the first issue came, I wasn't sure exactly what I should do with it. I'm still not sure. However, I notice that you are missing a piece of information. Robert Lansing is the name of the actor you were wanting on page 36. I don't remember a show called '87th Precinct'. When was it shown? Is it a British series or an American one? My knowledge of TV only goes back to 1956."

Well, it was definitely a US series although I wouldn't swear it was called '87th Precinct', only based upon it. It can't be all that old though. My knowledge of TV doesn't go back that far. Barney Neufeld stands foursquare for thruth, justice and the American fanzine: "I must be lucky (or Dan Steffan isn't). I don't find much to moan about in the thirty or forty fanzine titles I receive each year, unless you count the latest incarnation of RUNE. There is nothing wrong with American fanzines today that a course in composition wouldn't cure (a complaint that can be legitimately lodged against a significant amount of modern professional writing as well)."

Well, yes, OK, but is it enough to have not much wrong with it? I've been thinking about this recently. I enjoy each and every fanzine I trade for, to either a greater or lesser extent. But, the great majority of them I wouldn't miss if they stopped coming, on the basis that they would be replaced by other fanzines which I would like almost as much/just as much/even more. I've just gone right through my mailing list



and made a note of the zines which I would really miss if they were to stop coming, zines which would be irreplaceable in any era. I have excluded current favourites like SPACE JUNK and HOLIER THAN THOU which, however much I like them for obvious or obscure reasons, don't quite belong in such exalted company. I have excluded past favourites which, whilst never officially folded, have not been seen in recent memory. I am left with just seven fanzines without which fandom would be the poorer. Without further ado, here they are:-

BOONFARK, GROGGY, PONG, Q36, TELOS, TWLL DDU, WARHOON, and that's all she wrote.

Re-reading the above I seem to have implied that if your zine isn't one of the above, I wouldn't miss it. Not so. There are many other very good fanzines, some of which would obviously be harder to replace than others, but the above are what I consider to be today's stand-out fanzines, the zines which, with the exception of WARHOON could be linked with today's fandom by posterity in much the same way that HYPHEN, QUANDRY, OOPSLA and WARHOON etc. were linked and are linked to that earlier era of sixth fandom.

Richard Bergeron informs us: "Malcolm Edwards will be reviewing fanzines for Ted White's new genzine GAMBIT. Willis has a piece coming up in BOONFARK 6." Remember, you read it last in STARTLING FANNISH DISCLOSURES, the fabled newszine.

JONI STOPA Box 177; Wilmot; WI 53192; U.S.A.

We auctioned off a dead vibrator at Wilcon this summer and netted a cool 12 dollars for it. Naturally it was auctioned off in a paper bag known to the audience as 'lot ten' and a lot of clues given as to the contents in verse form. We practically spelled out what it was. The lady who bought it thought that it just couldn't be that. It was of course that, and firmly dead with its batteries corroded inside. She was red as a beet.

I have a large cat called Caliph who has been bringing in chipmunks all summer. He doesn't want them for lunch, just as

pets. He holds them between his paws and washes and cuddles them. When he is tired of that he lets them go. Yours truly has become an expert chipmunk catcher with the help of another male cat known as Elton. Don't let the name and sex confuse you, he is a big momma cat who cares for all the kittens we take in. He corners and I catch. It is very important to catch the chipmunks before one of the other cats decides that one would be great for lunch! I have a lot of cats that think that way. The way Caliph brings them into the house is via the cat door. I must confess they aren't really chipmunks but rather 13-striped ground squirrels.

So sorry to hear that Cas is so depressed, wish there was something I could do to cheer her up. Perhaps I could ship her one of my more loving cats?

AAARGH NO!!!

Not cats. Anything but cats. I must remember to send you a copy of my 'cat' article from SFD 16. Knowing my distaste for all things feline Gerald Lawrence brought me back, as souvenirs from his trip to Denver, the first and second 'Official I Hate Cats Book'. Joni also promised to send us a 'CARE' package of goodies she knows are hard to get over here, pecans, pistachio nuts, thousand-dollar bills and like that. Thanks Joni.

Chris Lewis writes: "It occurs to me that Marc Ortlieb has left out some vital facts. Ruminants also produce quite substantial quantities of methane which is not a component of beer \*(I dunno, Chris...have you tasted Watney's?)\*. However, it does leave the animal in conjunction with esters thus producing rather unpleasant farts (Dinosaurs were ruminants, you will note). This trait is also observable in beer drinkers. The implication is that animals and humans break down the alcohol to produce methane. So why is it that convention hotels do not suddenly explode after a few days, wiping out whole groups of fans?"

A question I have often asked myself, Chris. "Why doesn't that group of fans get wiped out?" I ask myself. What you are failing to consider though is the trend to non-smoking in fandom

today, Without a naked flame to spark off the explosion the building would simply fill up with an unbreathable atmosphere and extinguish all intelligent life, as obviously happened a number of times in the recent fannish past.

That about wraps it up for this issue. I still have LoCs from: Phil Stephensen-Payne, Alan Ferguson, Harry Warner Jnr Frank Denton, A. D. Wallace, and Jim Meadows III, which contain bits for possible use next time as well as one or two items expressing concern for Cas which were much appreciated.

ALL KNOWLEDGE IS CONTAINED.....

"The polyphyleticists are causing enough trouble in the consideration of the higher taxonomy of the arthropods...."

Richard Faulder in XENOPHILIA 3

Next issue - a \*surprise\*.

Get the lead out Langford!

Last stencil - 26 January 1982.

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For D. SICLAR!

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