

INFERNO SIX





THESE THINGS ARE SENT TO TRY US. This is one of these things, INFERNO 6 to be precise, and it's being sent to try us just n-3 weeks after the date of the last stencil. Blast-off this issue is the sixteenth of September and I anticipate that splashdown will be round about the end of October, but only time will tell.

Cas is annoyed. She had insisted that she was going to get to start off this issue but she has been far too busy practising her latest method of birth control, known as the 'Gerroff-ye'll-make-me-drop-a-stitch' method. Yep, Cas is going all maternal and making with the knitting. So, it behoves me to get my finger in (contact with the keyboard) and get this show on the road....."Excuse me sir, have you got a license for that fanzine? This could be very serious sir..... Driving a fanzine without a license in a public place, Action contrary to the public order act, Indecent exposure of the inner you, Mis-use of Her Majesty's Postal Service. I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to accompany me to the station, Sir. After three bars of 'The Station' the carousing duo of fan-ed and policeman are unceremoniously written out of the fanzine. It's tough at the top.

IN - CLEMENT CONDITIONS

"The best way to avoid silverfish trouble like that suffered by Leigh Edmonds is to have as much stuff piled up as I have. After the stacks reach a certain height, the pressure becomes too severe for silverfish to be able to move about freely through the compressed reading matter, and they crawl off somewhere and cry a lot."

Harry Warner Jr. - SOMETHING ELSE 4.

How typical of a guy like Harry Warner to hide his light under a bushel and to only mention his failures. Not many of us would be able, from that brief advice to a fellow fan, to discern the service to fandom which Harry is performing. The selfless service which he is performing in strictest secrecy so as to avoid the possibility of raising any false fannish hopes in our fluttering hearts. But it's no good Harry, I've got to tell 'em....you'll just have to put up with all the

tributes which ensue. No, sorry Harry, fandom must know. That's the way it's gotta be.

It's obvious when you think about it isn't it folks? Is it not? Well, Harry's trying to create a stefnic creature. He is trying to mould the humble silverfish into something dear to the hearts of every SF fan. Harry is making a dream for us.....he is making a Mesklinite. He is breeding generations of silverfish to be able to withstand ever increasing pressures. What would I give to be at the con where he finally introduces Barlemaan. I'm not sure how he intends to breed for intelligence, but he's obviously taking things one at a time. first of all the physical attributes.....the ability to exist under tremendous pressure.

By golly, I know how he's breeding for intelligence after all. Brilliant in its simplicity Harry. Obviously the silverfish in the common fanzine piles are culled and only the stock found in the stack of hugo-winning zines is used for breeding purposes. After about twenty generations you could get somebody fit for a fan-panel that way.....(Excuse me Dondragmer, what are your feelings on the state of fan-art today?).

It is yet another example of Harry's unceasing devotion to fandom that he should spurn the obvious contender in the Mesklinite stakes - the centipede - and instead base his programme of mutation on that most in-offensive of creatures, mother natures fall-guy, the silver-fish. Can you imagine how rotten it would be if those pushy centipedes were all tough 'n intelligent. They'd probably want to be taking over the world and exterminating us all and like that. Not to mention the fact that they're nasty and horrible and wriggle and scurry and look like they want to bite you and are just out and out yeuch! But the prippy little silverfish? Why, they already exist in a kind of partnership with mankind. There isn't a morning goes by for instance, when I don't find some in the sink downstairs, just waiting for me to turn on the taps (they can't reach them by themselves, you see) so that they can have a little swim. They must have a great time frolicking down the plug-hole and into the drain. It's very popular, there's always some of them waiting for a go, frisky little things.

HARRY!!
SAVE ME HARRY!!



21 September 1974 (Skel)

Yesterday we collated INFERNO 5. Today copies are winging their way all over the show (four copies got to go 'airmail') and a big vote of thanks is owed to a certain Mr. Robinson who assisted muchly in the actual collating and who provided the paper at such short notice. A slightly smaller vote of thanks to Roy Sharpe who came round to borrow a pair of football boots and who knew not what hit him. Miss Shayne McCormack is mentioned in despatches for the valiant way in which she tried to assist with the collating before being ejected forcibly from the ~~dining~~ collating room by the aforementioned Mr. Robinson.

.....Jennifer felt a thrill of fear as she heard the footsteps striding purposefully to the door. Her nipples prickled against the tight cotton of her blouse. She knew what was coming to her. She knew what she was going to get. She was going to get it alright. She felt a rising moistness, there, above her thighs. "Oh my God," she thought, "I'm getting horny again." She knew the pain and the humiliation in store for her and yet her body was still the great betrayer. Already she
(Cont. on page 48)

PAUL SKELTON 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5NW.

Look, be reasonable. Be bloody reasonable! After all, I am the co-editor. It's hardly fair that I should have to send a LoC too. OK, I'll admit that I'm not Brian Robinson and I'll admit that I don't send you any fanzines and that the only other way of getting this is to send a letter, but you're supposed to make an exception of yourself you fool. But, like you said, no exceptions and start at the top.....

I would like to take exception to something that Phil Payne said in that quote from MADCAP 4 to the effect that it isn't much of a reward for the LoCer just to get to read his own LoC again. Well, the thing is, it is, if you get what I mean. British fanzines are so prone to such long lapses between issues that one's LoC comes across as if written by some other guy of the same name. More than once I've come on a LoC of mine which I just couldn't remember having written.

Come to think of it, maybe I didn't write them. Could it be that certain unscrupulous fan-ed's are writing the LoCs themselves and just sticking some poor joe phan's name on the top? Come on, let's get it out into the open, Skel.....who's writing this, you or me?

O.ODamn, caught out at last. OK, I'll admit it. I'm writing it, but don't be too cocky. I mean, a guy who writes letters to his own fanzine must really be round the twist. Certifiably so.. O.O

MAYA MAKE A FEW COMMENTS IAN?

Yes, speaking of fanzines having the occasional lo-oooong lapse between issues.....

But Ian, unlike HELL, Maule's MAYA was a fanzine with a world-wide reputation. How could you just throw the final issue out like this with your editorial forming a massive Vsign to its readers? You didn't care.....you just simply didn't care enough to re-write and update that which was re-writeable and up-dateable. Oh yes, you spent the money on it alright,

but since when has spending money been what fan-pubbing is all about? You say that if you'd had to take time out to revise it it would never have come out - which is no justification at all really. It still means that you didn't care enough to go to the trouble of doing it properly. Ian how could you let yourself down like that? There haven't been all that many British fanzines recently ('recently' is used very loosely) in which one could take some pride. MAYA was one of these (as I feel were the last two issues of HELL). There weren't many others and none of them seem to be anything other than annuals at the moment. By the way, if anyone reading this feels a bit slighted because they are regularly publishing a fanzine in which they feel we could take pride I must hastily point out that there are some fanzines which do fit into this category but which somehow aren't what I'm talking about. Three stencils were all that needed typing Ian. We had to re-do ten when we finally put out HELL 10.

.....and what's this Piggott has got to say, lurking in the shadows of the letter-col? Oh boy John, I bet you were hoping that this issue of MAYA would never come out, or that if it did your letter wouldn't be in it. Poul Anderson a 'competent hack'? I wonder who's opinions he values most John, yours or those of all the fans and fellow writers who've voted him that bagful of Hugos and Nebulas? Well, if your definition of competent hack is someone who does lots (whatever it be) then you must include Picasso, Van Gogh, Mozart, Asimov, Sir Laurence Olivier (he's been in one or two plays) ad infinitum. Or are we all out of step but you John?

30 September 1974 (Skel)

I picked my copy of MAYA 6 up at the anniversary party which Harry and Irene gave. That wasn't all I picked up, which is why I'm laid in bed this rainy Monday covering this stencil with a few scattered black marks and loads of little red blobs. Yes, the Curse Of The Fangathering was once more called down upon me. This time it's a stinking cold which caused my nasal appendage to start dripping just as I took my first glass of whisky. Despite this I still managed to enjoy myself and my thanks go out to Harry and Irene for inviting us, Mike and Pat

for taking us up there with them, Rob Jackson for putting us all up afterwards and Ian Maule for ~~gripping/Cas~~ keeping Cas company after I was finally forced to go somewhere and drip in peace and solitude. Ta.

On the way back we went via Carlisle so we could get a shuftly at Hadrian's Heap of Rubble or Hadrian's Wall as it is optimistically referred to in the guide books. We pulled into an information centre and whilst Mike, Pat and Cas went inside I stayed in the car and suffered. After Cas had signed the visitors book in the information centre (presumably in case we needed an alibi) she flipped back through it to see if there was anyone we knew in it. Fat chance.....but Lo and Behold a certain Mr. Ken Bulmer was there at Easter, either going to or coming from the con, complete with an avalanche of Bulmers (surely the correct collective noun). This brush with Glory is so unbalanced her that she never thought to check if any other Eastercon attendees had been/gone that way.

However, it was around about this point that the Skelton/Meara theory was first propounded. It has always been assumed that Hadrian's Wall was built to keep the Picts and Scots out. (This was before they discovered that they could get highly paid computer jobs in Germany, you understand). This rather shaky theory is based on no real evidence whatever and Herr Professor Skelton and his team of dedicated researchers, which include the famous and infamous Doktors Mearae, have come up with a theory which fits the facts much better. How many such ~~smalls~~ have we first hand knowledge of? Correction ---- how many such walls have we first hand knowledge of? Just one, The Berlin Wall and this was built to keep people in. Couple this fact with something we know about the contemporary version of the Roman Legion, the US army in Vietnam which we know for a fact had serious morale problems and the conclusion is inevitable. Hadrian's wall was built to keep the Roman's in and not to keep the Picts out. Now in order to prove this theory we need just one piece of unrelated evidence, and by golly we have it:- Ever since Roman times the phrase for deserting or escaping has been "Going over the wall." Now I know it took a research team of uncommon brilliance to put these facts together but I do feel that it should have been done long ago.

GRAHAM POOLE 23 Russet Road, Cheltenham, Glos: GL51 7LN.

A few years ago I went along to my first convention, the PeteWestcon in Worcester. Six months later I went to the first of the Novacons. Both times I thoroughly enjoyed myself and both times I heard about these fantastic tales of local fan groups and the antics they allegedly got up to, including the old Cheltenham SF Circle in the fifties and early sixties. Knocked out by this idea I decided, in a drunken stupor, to revive the Cheltenham group and a month later saw adverts placed by me in the local paper. Two people replied.

Of these two people, one of them happened to be John Newman (and wife) who once ran a con in London in the war years but who has since settled down to the easy life and now only attends the occasional con with all the relations, including (my 'ghod!) Bram Stokes. So, we held a meeting. At the meeting nine people turned up at John's place, a lovely detached residence in the satellite village of Southam. The meeting was a disastrous flop.....nothing serious was discussed and, to all intents and purposes it was like an upper-class women's institute social evening. Not that I've ever been to any Women's Institute Social Evenings, but one can imagine them talking about the same inanities and small-talk in between cocktails and crisps. There ended the first meeting.

The second meeting was just the same and by then I didn't quite like the idea of cycling all the way out to Southam, especially as the lights on my bike weren't all that good so that I had to cycle most of the way by car headlights. Many was the time I found myself illuminated by a car ahead, after a lengthy period of no traffic, to find I was on the wrong side of the road. Malcolm Smale, on holiday from University, was with me that time and judging from his lack of comments he was not very impressed. I wasn't very impressed either and damm-itall, it was my own bloody group. But I was young and innocent (???) and lacked the confidence to exert any authority. Besides, the meetings were held in other people's houses so how would they have felt if I'd suddenly got up and started directing things? I could have held them here, I suppose, if we'd knocked the wall down between the front and back rooms or

threw out half the junk so's to get more than four people into just one room.....but I was still a fledgling neo and there was *gosh*wow* John-ran-a-con-Newman and, (blush), I hadn't read all that much SF at the time.....so I just let things happen instead of directing them.

The third meeting was held in Cheltenham at a friend's of John's. Again I was in strange surroundings, another's house, and this time I didn't even know the darn woman who owned it. Her name was Bobby. I don't think it was Bobby Gray (of VAGARY fame, or infamy) because John said she was plain not interested in fans or fandom. Strange people.

The fourth meeting.....never took place, at least not in 1972.

I placed adverts in the papers, wrote to schools and colleges, and placed an ad in the local library. What I was really after was someone of my own age who could help me run the group and lend a hand. All the other members, apart from Malcolm who was still at University, were very much older. A few names trickled in.....three or four. The schools were a complete waste of time and for six months nothing came of the library advertisement. I renewed the ad for another six months thinking that surely someone must see it. A year passed and 1974 arrived. Still no fourth meeting. A chap from Gloucester saw the advert but then proceeded to ignore my letter telling of the great things the group ought to have been doing. Another chap called in to see me. My last words to him, as he left, were - "And don't you go and disappear like some of the others, OK?" He disappeared and my letters went unanswered.

Time dragged on until this Summer. For some reason, and SF Craply was only partly responsible, scores of people (well, about ten then) started writing. My hopes rose and one evening round at Malc's he told me that his parents would be away all that week. I told him about the latest enquirer and said I'd write to suggest that he come round for a visit on the Thursday. Malc agreed but added that he wanted a quiet week. I wrote off that evening and decided that I might as well get in touch with at least two others. I hardly expected all three to turn up.

One chap couldn't make it before a certain time so I gave him Malc's address. Thursday came around and first one young chap turned up and then the other arrived.....I suddenly paled. Malc had wanted a quiet week. Well, he could only throw us out. We paused on the way to buy boozy provisions and finally arrived staggering under the pile of bottles and age-old fanzines. Malc already knew the worst.....the third chap had already turned up. Fortunately, when I went inside, I found that Malc's idea of a quiet week was to hold a party with about seven of his mates round. Again, not much SF was discussed that night, but a lot of booze disappeared.

The Monday before last I finally resigned as Company Secretary of the BSFA, throwing off all the totally unnecessary burdens I'd laid upon my back only to find that no-one gave a damn or would give me a hand. "Sod it!" I thought. "I'll run an SF group and I'll show the BSFA how to do it properly." So now, in a couple of days time, the re-revived Cheltenham SF Group is to meet in the Star Hotel, in the Hurdles bar, and this time I'm running things. No hosts to worry about, no struggle to reach the destination (a car comes in very handy these days), people of my own age, plenty of booze. There's a carefully worked out agenda, plans for a Novacon 4 trip, Pete Roberts' little gem guide to hand out, fanzines to display, photo's to show, past con booklets to entice them..... in fact a complete 'Indoctrinate-A-Neo' kit.....and they will be advised NOT to join any national organisations which ask for £2.00 for each mailing.

So, just two more days and I'll know if a re-revived group is viable, whether or not there is going to be a demand for a CSFG clubzine, whether there will be enough for a CSFG genzine and whether or not I'll be able to sprinkle my personalzine with the witty remarks made by the cretin of the group. Either way I expect to produce some sort of tradeable zine before next January.

IT'S AN ILL WIND (coming in through the open windows as you belt down the motorway at 70 mph) THAT BLOWS NOBODY ANY GOOD.

A certain party from Derby and that certain party's wife

have a special system of heating and air-conditioning in their Volkswagen. This will henceforth therefore be known as the Two-Party system. The heater part of the system is ingeniously jammed in the 'on' position thus rendering it only possible to have the driver 'rare' on journeys of ten minutes or under. Any time over that and the driver will perforce be 'medium' to 'well done'. Back-seat passengers are not so inconvenienced and could therefore, after twenty minutes, procede to eat the driver in relative comfort. Unfortunately the Volkswagen does not have enough boot space for a sufficient supply of spare drivers, nor are the ashtrays big enough for all the bones.

So, in order to offset this defficiency, the air conditioning has also to be kept permanently in the 'on' position. It's a simple system of air-conditioning.....you simply drive along with the windows wound right down. This makes the driver and front-seat passenger nice and comfortable again. It also makes the back seat compartment suitable for keeping frozen food fresh for up to six months.

It didn't, I hasten to add, actually cause my cold but it did have the effect of bringing it forward a bit, which is why I'm off work today.....and as this is today's seventh stencil I think I can honestly and truthfully claim that INFERNO must be one of the most 'laid-back' fanzines around, this issue at any rate.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE ILLO'S GONE?

You may not believe it but this was the issue where all those poor little underpriviliged illo's were going to make a big comeback. I even wrote Terry Jeeves saying as much when he wrote to complain about the disappearance of same. So where are they then? Well, there was going to be one here, for a starter, but I couldn't fit it in to my new policy for self-illustrated fanzines which I call 'Skel's New Policy For Self-Illustrated Fanzines'. The idea basically is that the illo's should illustrate the text and not just be fillo's. The main problem is that coming up with specific illo of a specific size at any specific time tends to put the block on my artistic abilities. Nor can I simply leave a gap because knowing that

I absolutely had to come up with an illo for this gap would have an identical effect. So, the decision was taken that any illo's would be simple and in the twenty minute time range. I did the one last night for the bottom of page twelve. It took over an hour. I showed it to Cas.

"That's lousy!" she said, "It's the worst thing you've ever done. That doesn't look a bit like you, and Mike Meara looks more like Brian Robinson."

Trouble was, she was bloody well right. It was lousy. Oh, I've seen worse in fanzines, but never by me. I was so obsessed with getting the artwork in that I was forgetting my standards. Lord knows they're not that high, but they do exist. So, unless an illo is suitable for even adequate treatment in twenty minutes, and the one on page five is the only one so far, then there simply aren't going to be any.

EXCERPT FROM 'DAILY EXPRESS - 1 /10/74'.

"Everybody has to die eventually. Apart from being born, it's the most universal human activity."

Now from that particular manner of phraseology I read that to mean that being born is more universal than dying. If he'd attributed the same degree of universality to both he ought to have said..."Like being born...", not 'Apart from'. Now it may be that he knows something I don't, in which eventuality the TV program for which that was part of the blurb could be quite interesting.

1 OCTOBER 1974 (SKEL)

CHECKPOINT 53 came today, which is a bit of a coincidence really 'cos it also came yesterday. I think your mailing list has got the hiccoughs, Darroll.

Question: Will the Gannets return to the Gannet now that the summer of their discontent is over.....or will they stay away and sulk? A surprisingly accurate jibe by the pub manager though, even if not in the way he meant. The Gannets do seem

to have an unusually high ratio of civil servants among their ranks.

"MOMMY, MOMMY, WHY DID THEY USED TO BURN WITCHES, MOMMY?"
"BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY 'PROPERTY-DEVELOPERS' IN THOSE
DAYS, DEARIE."

Society is sick. It shows not in the accepted symptoms such as the permissive society; blatant pornography, the drug culture; high crime rate; the urban guerilla movement.....no, the real sickness can be seen in the underlying factors which cause apparently reasonable people to join gleefully in ill-considered witch-hunts. Currently it is open season on Property Developers. I've never been able to figure out just what the property developer is doing wrong, but then I've been kidding myself that our society had a half-way consistent ethos. Let's take a look at that though, uh?

Everybody wants to make as much money as possible. Well, we're on relatively firm ground so far. Any exceptions to this are so few as to be statistically insignificant. Our whole society is structured around this desire for increased income. The more we have, the better is the lifestyle which is available to us. Generally speaking, the more money we have the greater is our personal freedom.....our freedom of choice. Necessity does not nudge us so hard, nor so often. So, we want more, it's that simple.

Now it also seems that not only do we want as much as we can get, but we want to do as little as possible in order to earn it. I was going to begin that sentence..."Now it is also a fact...." but I don't want to louse this up by leaving myself open to accusations that I'm inventing my own facts to suit my argument. So, 'It seems to me....' Well, look at the papers. The working week isn't shortening because we want to work longer hours for the same amount of money, is it? Take the Seaforth Grain Terminal (and I bet they just wish you would, too). What's causing the hold-up there isn't the money. It's already been agreed how much they'll recieve for working it. The problem now is just how many men are going to share the workload. The dockers want as many as possible because

more men into the same workload equals increased butt-time and an all round cushier number. It also helps keep the Dockers Union big and important. It's the same everywhere. If you see two almost identical jobs with the same salary you go for the thirty-five hour week rather than the forty hour week, all other things being equal.

It's not wrong to want this, it's part of human nature and unless ones job is the thing one would most rather be doing at all times, it would be daft to be otherwise.

Now let's see where that leaves us.

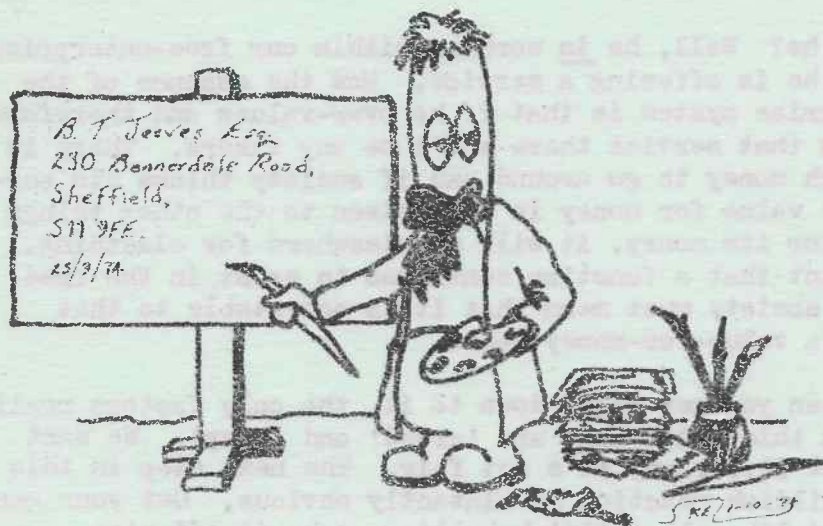
Everybody's doing it. Is the Property Developer doing it too? Of course he is. So what's the problem? Well it seems that he's doing it so much better than almost everybody else. He's making a lot more money and doing it with comparatively little effort.....and he isn't even doing anything constructive, he's just a parasite!

Or is he? Well, he is working within our free-enterprise system and he is offering a service. Now the essence of the free-enterprise system is that if he over-values and therefore over-prices that service there won't be any takers. There is only so much money to go around and if society thinks his service is not value for money in comparison to the other things competing for its money, it will go elsewhere for elsething. The very fact that a function continues to exist in the free-enterprise society must mean that it is acceptable to that society on a value-for-money basis.

No, when you get right down to it, the only factors really involved in this witch-hunt are 'greed' and 'envy'. We want it, he's got it.....and it's not fair. The next step in this whining, childish reaction is blatantly obvious. Get your gang together and like all childish bullies, take it off him. Purely and simply because there's more of you and you'll bash him if he doesn't hand it over. Mob rule, plain and evident. He's doing what we're trying to do but he's doing it better so let's get him. A beautiful picture of our great system of Western Democracy in action. Like I said.....SICK!

Who are you to measure the contribution that any particular group makes towards society? Who is anybody? Only Society itself can do this and the expression of the value it puts on a contribution is the amount it is prepared to pay for it. If it's wrong then it's the society that's wrong. Nothing could possibly be corrected by the hypocritical act of dragging down someone who is merely working within the framework of this society.

So Ro, when you say, in LES SPINCE 32, that 'Property Developing' is 'wrong', define your terms of reference. There is no conceivable way in which it can be wrong for a member of a society to offer to other members of that society a service which that society as a whole wants, and wants badly enough to pay a substantial price for. Certainly it can't be morally wrong as morals are simply a mirror of society at any particular point in time. It can be made 'legally' wrong, as witness the prohibition period in the U.S.A; but look at the problems that caused.



Glad to see you laying down the law about LoCs and an editor's duties. I'd add the following....."Three or four hours typing a LoC..." Egad! I have spent longer than that on a single illo for ERG. The scraper-board cover for No. 45 took twelve hours.....apart from Jim Diviney's photolith time.

The whole time taken to produce a fanzine makes that few hours on a LoC look like peanuts.

I look on a LoC as payment for the zine recieved.....and an entitlement to the next. Enough. I sweat and strain to put out a fanzine. In return the recipient either contributes, pays, or LoCs by way of thanks. If he makes no response I assume he wants no more. End of deal.

Now I agree with you that it is nice to be able to make further comment back to the LoCer.....but on any large scale this is impractical. ERG seldom exceeds twenty-four pages and to give more than four of them to LoCs would unbalance it. So I can't print them all. Some fall out.....c'est la guerre. OK then, why not write back to the LoCer? Again, I try to do this where I can.....but just look at the economics:

I charge ten pence a copy for ERG. Of this it costs 3¹/₂p to 5p in the UK to mail out. If I then reply to a LoC it costs a further 3¹/₂p. Very quickly I can use up all the spare sub money.....and remember, only a fraction of readers pay. Many trade.....others are publishers who send review books.....and LoCers usually get another free copy. My cash goes only so far, so to keep things simple my policy is simply.....respond to show you want more.

Final point.....replying to LoCers could very quickly take more time and money and exceed in volume the fanzine output if you don't keep it under some control.....and as for those who say they have a right to have their letters published!!! - I shudder to suggest that a faned should get LoCs back from everyone as a right because he sent them his fanzine. Unless a fan has been on the fan-pubbing end of the game he doesn't always appreciate how unrewarding some angles of the game can be. The other angles make up for it though.

I liked the idea of you watching B-ro out of the windowlegs disappear, waist, shoulders.....whole body. The thought struck me that this is not a proof of the world being round, but only that he vanished down an open manhole. Occam's Razor old boy.

Gee Brian, we could
be onto something
really big
here!!



OH MY CHOD, WHAT THE HELL'S THIS THEN?

When twenty loose sheets of paper, full of staple-holes but no staples, arrive in the post, neatly shuffled, rolled up with an elastic band around them, from an American fan living in America who publishes an English fanzine.....and as if that weren't enough, posted in Sweden..... Well, it could only be you Sam.....couldn't it? Don't say there could be others.

Yes Sam, I vote QWERTYUIOP 7 'The Most Faaanish Fanzine I Have Ever Recieved'.....and that's without even opening it (or unshuffling it, or whatever the term is). Mind you, I don't half wish that I'd left it unshuffled and it's your Tynecon report that's to blame. Well there you are, running down the list of people you saw arriving on the Friday and there in black and white, sniffing hot on the heels of Meg Palmer as was you list "...the Skels..."

Well it's like this you see Sam.....Cas didn't go to Tynecon at all. Now she wants to know just who the hell I was with whom you mistook for her.

Now I keep telling her that it was only little Justine Presford, Sam.....but she plain won't believe me, so here's what we'll do: I demand that you write to her immediately and apologise for your mistake, telling her it was two other guys entirely. Yes, that's what you can do for me Sam...and shtumm!

THE SWITCH-BACK SPECIAL NOW LEAVING PLATFORM THIRTEEN.....

No, no Sam, you always go 'up' to the capital city. From the highest point on the Mount Snowdon Funicular Railway you would go 'up' to London.

Ah, those 'SF Books That Didn't Make It'.....can I just add a few here.....Harry Harrison's 'One-Degree-Under World'; Isaac Asimov's 'The Caves Of Bacchoil'; Frank Herbert's 'Dune Messier'; Brian Aldiss' 'The Spit Shrub' and Poul Anderson's abortive 'Three Hearts, Two Lions, and A Stale Spam Sandwich'. Ah, what books they would have been.....

ALAN STEWART 6 Frankfurt Am Main 1; Eschenheimer Anlage 2 etc.

Ah (**I edited that down from "And now for something completely different..." Alan, so that everybody else wouldn't know I'd missed out most of your letter. Damn, what a give-away!**) - John Denver, currently appearing tonight and every night at 25 Bowland Close, Offerton. To find the reason he hasn't been very successful in Britain up to now - although he may well be at no. 1 by the time you read this - you only have to look at the kind of music he sings and plays. Once upon a time he was the lead singer with the Mitchell Trio after they stopped being the Chad Mitchell Trio. The Mitchell Trio are probably best known for their hit version of Tom Paxton's 'The Marvellous Toy'. It made about number seventy-five in the American Hot Hundred.

Then there's 'Take Me Home Country Roads' (which I think is very good, by the way) which got into the Country and Western top ten as well as the pop top ten in the States. In other words his songs are very much in the American Country Folk idiom, which is not best known for its aversion to sentimentality, moralising lyrics, and wishy-washy backings. Also American singing voices in that field are often pretty high-pitched, nasal and whiny. Notice I haven't actually said that John Denver is any of the above. If the cap fits though..... He is most definitely sugarily oriented though, which is why I don't usually find him to my taste. There's just not enough attack in his music for me.

This is of course my personal opinion, which I know very well you totally disagree with. From what I read in the Skel-zines however, it seems you think the British musical press and dee-jays are just being obtuse and have some sort of plot to keep your favourite singer out of the charts. It's just that the people in Britain don't go for the kind of American music you two like. In the realm of American Rock Groups the Allman Brothers Band is one of the most successful and critically well thought of in the USA. In Britain they get nowhere because they also have a country-based sound. The country sound just doesn't go down very well in Britain, with the majority that is, although it has a large minority following. See, I've relegated the two of you to a minority interest group.

It's rather like fanzines, isn't it. There's no plot to keep the world ignorant of the existence of our funny little interest group, but they still don't know anything about TTCCH (advt.) or INFERNO. I've been rather worried about the state of British fanzines lately. It seems to me that INFERNO, MALFUNCTION, MADCAP, ZIMRI and CYPHER are the only non-apa zines still being published in the UK. I mean real fanzines, not things like CORRIDOR which are really 'small magazines' of a literary nature. TTCCH is not a British fanzine really as one editor is not British and it's published in Foreignland.

5 OCTOBER 1974 (SKEL)

But I don't totally disagree with you at all, Alan. I do partly disagree with you, but many of the things you say are quite correct. Possibly all of them, but I do feel that they are only part of the picture.

Of course there isn't a 'plot' to keep John Denver out of the public eye, but look at the facts. OK, so look at my facts then, if you prefer.

The 'Melody Maker' is supposed to be a respected British music paper, which has pointedly not covered John Denevr (who he?) or even John Denver, except to make clever-clever, shit-heaping comments from out of the way corners of its pages.

They don't like him. OK, they don't have to like him, but they ought to cover him. They owe that much to themselves and their 'broad-spectrum' reputation. In the past eighteen months of non-coverage he has had three number one singles hits and three times he's topped the album charts. Any two-bit US group that gets a hit into the US top ten almost immediately gets an article in Melody Maker telling us how big they're going to be. Six number ones - no coverage.

If a record gets to number one in the states it automatically gets lots of air-time in this country. Not so with 'Rocky Mountain High' or 'Sunshine On My Shoulders'. It wasn't until 'Annie's Song' that he broke over here and that was probably due entirely to Noel Edmonds making it his 'Record Of The Week' and playing it every day. After that it got picked up everywhere, but without that it would, like the others, have sunk sans trace. OK, he isn't the sort of artist who usually does well over here, but the first time he gets any plugging he makes number one???

Now I'm not getting paranoid. There is no plot, I know, I know. I even know why he isn't getting coverage. It's based on the old false argument -

A is not B

He likes A

Therefore he does not like B.

Make the same statement about Strawberries 'n Cream and a nice thick charcoal-broiled Steak and one can see how utterly stupid it is, but say the same thing about John Denver and Bob Dylan and it's germane.

John Denver has captured in his music the current American need for the simple life, for a little unreality, for a time when things were better. So, in a concert review the NM says ".....and his audience are the kind who turn their backs on the realities of life too." But then so is everybody who ever read a novel, dreamed a daydream or even turned on to a Monty Python sketch. This is not a case of failing to face reality but rather a case of choosing just which bit of reality you want

to face at any particular time. The MM bases its argument on the fact that he doesn't sing about Watergate, the oil shortage, or New York's appalling crime rate. They say that this is because those things just don't exist in the world of John Denver. This statement is on a par with saying that because Dylan hasn't written a song about sex-starved amputees in Birmingham, that they wouldn't fit into his world-picture. I accept the fact that poverty exists here in Stockport. I have not written a poem to that effect. This is because I choose to express what is in me in the ways I feel best able to express it. Just because John Denver doesn't usually sing about the worse aspects of our society doesn't mean that he denies the existence of these aspects, just that he wants to sing about something else. Hell, there are enough people chronicling the seamy side of life today, who seem only able to put emotion into what's wrong.

John Denver feels for something else. The guy is sincere. He sings about the good things and about the way they maybe aren't so good as they was but they can be again.....and like that. Surely we haven't all got to go out and 'attack' everything in our music, Alan? Surely that's not all it's for? You are saying the same thing as the Melody Maker when they wrote "... (his admirers) are the people who won't go all the way by liking Bob Dylan, and people who want to go a stage further than Andy Williams."

But, I think Bob Dylan is fantastic. I just don't think that means that everybody has to write like him, about the sort of things he writes about. It's this assumption that this is all that music is for that gets my goat in this respect. No, that's wrong. That's not what gets my goat the most. What does that is the inference that because he is offering the US public what it wants, it's all a big hype. That there's just no sincerity - he's just cashing in. He's not. He was offering what he's offering right from the start, before ever the great American Public decided that this is what it wanted too. There is continuity all the way from his first and relatively unsuccessful albums. When he wants to sing about what's wrong with society he borrows someone else's song. He writes about what he cares about. What else should he do?

Anyway, he's number one in all the charts this week which is, I feel, the best time to drop such a limiting topic once and for all, uh?

Gee Skel, uh, thanks.

THE QUIET JOYS OF FATHERHOOD.

My baby daughter is extremely clever. She has been able to climb up the stairs for some months now. She is nine months old and yesterday she went down the stairs all by herself. Backwards, head-over-thumpety-clattery-heels. She seemed none the worse for it afterwards, but she is a bit tired at the moment. Well, it is six o'clock in the morning and the ~~xxxxx~~ ~~xyx~~ poor thing has been awake and crying since about two-thirty. Naturally Cas and I have been likewise, if you substitute banging our heads on the wall and uttering large quantities of exceedingly foul words for the 'crying' part of the description. But then she stops crying for a moment and she is so tired and she wants desperately to go to sleep and she can't understand what's wrong and she looks at you so trustingly because you will make it all better again and - it's like a miracle. The cussing stops and you feel so full of love and protection for her that you just want to.....to.....oh, unravel your heart and knit her a little cardigan with it, to keep her as snugly warm as can be. Yes Ro, 'babysell' may be what cons a lot of women into having a baby, but something keeps making them go back for a refill. It could just be that once you're trapped you're trapped so you might as well.....but it could also be that feeling back there. It's addictive. I want to feel like that all the time.

Well, Bethany finally went back to sleep, but by then I figured I'd feel better getting up straight away rather than trying to go back to sleep. There'd be just enough time for me to sink into a deep sleep, but not enough for me to come on out of it again, so I'd wake up feeling thoroughly knackered.

It's nearly six-thirty now. This stencil has taken half an hour, which shows how fast a typer I am. Still, I've got to do something, haven't I? I suppose I could have a bash at

that article for Terry (Hi!) but somehow my creative faculties have been dulled. What do I mean 'somehow'? I know exactly how. Well, it seems the Chancellor Of The Skelchequer, when working out the Skelbudget for this month, balanced it in a manner both beautiful and lavish. It wasn't until two beautiful and lavish weeks had passed in the truly irrevocable way that is only possible with 'spent' money, that she realised she'd only budgetted for a three-week month. I ask you, how could anybody budget for a three-week month? Ghod only knows! So it's 'Draw In Your Belt' time at the Skels for the next month or so, what with chrimble imminent, and my weekly bottle of sweet inspiration was one of the first things to go.

8 OCTOBER 1974 (SKEL)

Just a date-check, that's all. It's still me, waiting for the world to start.

I'll not be typing long though 'cos I'm also waiting for the postie to bring my OMPA mailing. According to your operating procedure as published in a previous OFF TRAILS Mike, you will have posted the bundles off on Saturday. It's the Day of Woden today, so they ought to be in Postie's little bag. Well, it's my last mailing Mike. It'll be like saying "Goodbye." to a lot of old friends and I can't wait. No, that didn't come out right at all. It's not that I can't wait to say goodbye, it's just that I always was the impatient type and this mailing has a sad significance for me which makes it kind of special.

Everything's sort of imminent at the moment. Terry's posted me a copy of ERG 48, Lisa's finally sent me a copy of the penultimate issue of ZIMRI, Ian Williams is bringing round the two recent issues of SIDWOTNOT (can't spell it from memory Ian) which I didn't get and Alan Stewart assures me that the third issue of TTCCH will be in my hot little hands before another week is out.

Yes, yes, yes. It's all going to be happening. Meanwhile, let's give this world another kick and then try the starter again.....BANG (Ooh!)....whrrrr-c-c-c-chuk-chuk-chucka.

13 OCTOBER 1974 (SKEL)

Life was pretty grim on Friday morning. I'd just come out on the losing end of another election. OK, OK, I'd lost the one before as well, but I was getting over that, and here I go and lose another. I'm in a very 'rights of the individual' mood at the moment and I'm convinced that we are now in for four years of whittling away at those rights. Anyway, back about Friday I was even grimmer. I went to work convinced that the Labour Party had a majority of about one hundred. I hadn't bothered to stay up past the local results and the last tally before Cas came up to bed gave that sort of majority. So, I was down. Just as I got to the end of the road I saw the bus coming and dashed to the kerb for to cross over to the bus stop. I couldn't get over the road. The cars on my side were coming too thick for that and they were also going too fast for me to dash out and make them stop for me. I'd have ended up as a smear on the road. So, the bus sailed off past me whilst I was still stuck at the kerb.....and I was even further down.

The next bus, a quarter of an hour later, didn't come at all. It was bloody freezing at that bus-stop and I had the option of keeping my hands warm in my pockets and being totally bored, or reading ZIMRI 6 and freezing to death. I chose to freeze. I froze for forty minutes before another bus came by. Boy, was I down by the time I got to work. I got to thinking about that science-fiction story about the guy that voted. Well, about ten seconds after the polls closed they were on our screens with the probable result (hopelessly wrong as it turned out) but I got to thinking that if they get their polls so sophisticated that they do manage to give the right result so soon after 'lights out' it is only a small step away from selecting the one average voter and letting the election be decided by the way he votes. In the story (Can't think of the title, but I'd be interested if anyone could tell me) he votes wrong. He fails to see through the wool that's pulled over his eyes and history judges him for a fool.

God though, just think of the responsibility of that system. To know that you were not only failing to waste your vote but that it was the vote and that no other vote counted.

Simply because no other vote existed. God, what a responsibility. Is that perhaps what our system is all about. We can take refuge in the sheer anonymity of numbers and abrogate all responsibility by saying that our own vote being miscast was not in any way significant.

ARCHIE MERCER 21 Trenethick Parc, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 3LE.

I detect a slight paradox around Kevin's folk-music section. "It tells you," he says in one place (p.17 to be precise) "what the people, the folk, the little man in the street, the common man feel and think about the issues of the day.... But they don't care, they never have...." he goes on. In which case, what the hell were they doing feeling and thinking in the first place?

Reason is, I think: they weren't. There's a bit of defining to be done right here, because so far as I'm concerned the only true folk-song (or folk-anything-else) is processed - ie; it's been passed from folkperson to folkperson over a period of time and its father or mother would only recognise the result with difficulty, if at all. The socially significant songs that pass for contemporary folk are not folk at all. They're composed by articulate thinkers who seek to give voice to popular feeling but are incapable of recognising true popular feeling. The population in general is entirely happy with moon-and-June lyrics hung on the beat of the moment. In that sense the only true folk music is the Top Twenty.

Sheer entertainment (for the uncritical masses) apart, any songsmith who set himself to express true popular sentiment in his lyrics would almost certainly come up with some stuff that would shock the folk-movement rigid - and get the author in trouble with such authorities as the Race Relations Board while it was about it. The protest-wing of the folk fringe expresses many a praiseworthy sentiment - but were a referendum held on any of the questions thus posed, I doubt very much if the 'ayes' would have it.

As a matter of fact, it seems to me that folk-themes could be used a lot more positively than they are. Irish tunes and

rhythms, for instance, are among the best in the world - if only words could be put to some of Ireland's tunes condemning extremes and pleading for a saner approach, and the result given full publicity on all available media, it would at a stroke cut one of the strongest planks from under the feet of the assorted troublemakers. Anti-social elements (Irish and otherwise) would no doubt retaliate in kind, but nobody would be under any obligation to grant them equal, or any, time.

17 OCTOBER 1974 (SKEL)

Bearing in mind that you and Kevin hold totally irreconcilable views and definitions of 'folk' music, I seem to detect some form of paradox or at the very least an illogical ambiguity in your statement, Archie. You seem to hold that no song is a 'folk' song until it has gone into at least a second generation, been processed as you term it. Surely it is the same song, no matter how transmuted and transmogrified when it first goes in to the folk process? Surely it doesn't suddenly become a folk song? If so, when? When Third Maternal-Uncle's Second-Cousin first told it to his son? Or maybe when Third Maternal-Uncle's Son sang it to Great-Grandfather's Half-Sister's Cousin's niece? You can't pin it down in the processing Archie. I agree that it is only confirmed as what you define a folk song to be, when it is passed into the body of the folk tradition, but that is only the confirmation of the fact that it is a folk-song. The folkyness exists from inception. Some of today's socially conscious songs will make it - those couched in suitably loose terms, such as 'Blowin' In The Wind' which can adapt to any state of affairs. Songs which restrict themselves to specific targets are just that, socially significant, and will not get into the body of the folk repertoire. We stick the 'folk' label on them because it is the handiest label and they do not make such strange bed-fellows, do they?

Also, if the articulate thinker (Bob Dylan) was incapable of recognising true popular feeling, how do you explain the tremendously vibrant movement that swelled up behind him (I make it sound like a boil on the backside) when he expressed all our bitterness and discontent? OK, OK, he was only ex-

pressing the feeling of one particular section of the community but dammit, the guy's only human.

THE SKEL, MY FRIEND, IS BLOWIN' IN THE WIND.....

I love him...I love him not...I love him...I love him not. Ah, the saga of the skellish opinion about Ian Williams' refusal to permit the MANCON 5 bid drifts with the dandelion down, whichever way the wind is blowing.

Now Ian, you've finally set down all your rhymes and reasons for disallowing the Manchester bid two years in advance and I do basically agree with one of them, namely that as no prior discussion had been made, it might not have been the time for a two-year bid. But, that is my personal opinion and I had no more right to enforce that over the wishes of everybody else at that meeting than you did. You no more had the moral right to refuse the bid than you had the right to say, "Because I personally am in favour of the SEAcOn bid I won't allow Keith Freeman's bid to be presented.....and if it is presented and accepted I will overrule the convention." Unthinkable isn't it Ian, but it is essentially no different to not allowing Harry to bid. What colossal effrontary to decide that only you knows what is best for fandom and to say that you would overrule the entire damn convention if necessary to have your own way. No Ian, that's what it boils down to. Your tremendous conceit in putting your opinion ahead of that of five hundred fans is galling. They had the right to decide for themselves Ian. Fandom doesn't need you to make its decisions for it. However well-intentioned Ian I think you were basically wrong in preventing us from making our decision. But the laugh is, Ian, that it was all so pointless.

You should have kept your finger out, because it didn't matter a toss. All this bullshit about the vote being binding on the next convention is merely that.....bullshit. YOU proved that Ian, when you overturned Bram's bid. So what was all the fuss about? All that bitterness and shit-throwing in the bidding hall was totally meaningless and could have been avoided if you hadn't been so determined to stamp your 'presence' on the bidding event. No, in retrospect I don't think you did

handle it very well after all. In fact, I think you made a right cock-up of the whole thing. You handled the mess you made well enough, but in its totallity the whole thing was a right cods. Two-year bids are permitted, Chester proved that. Two-year bids are not binding, Bristol proved that. The Manchester Group weren't trying to get in by the back door. We were trying to get official backing during the time when we would be approaching the hotels and GoH and such. We didn't back out because we were scared of a fight, but rather because we thought we could put in a better bid for '76. We wanted to put on a con. We settled, at very short notice, for '75 because we thought that nobody was going to bid so we figured we'd better do it. When we found out that there were more than enough people wanting to put on the '75 con we rather relievedly moved our bid back a year. Our '76 bid will be much stronger than that '75 one would have been. In '75 we had no more to offer than the other two bids, namely that we were enthusiastic and thought we could put on a good con. It isn't really enough, unless there's no option. There was an option, so we pulled out to put the bid we really wanted to put.

The only fly in my personal ointment is that I just can't see myself getting to SEacon to help the bidding.

Buy you a pint the next time you come over Ian, just to make sure any animosity gets burried. It's not personal, even though it may sound like it. You asked me, I told you. Now I've changed my mind (again) and I'm telling you different, that's all.

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

How come you class sado-masochism as porn, just because you're 'normal'? I'm pretty sure a sado-masochist wouldn't consider "everything else" as porn. Having squashed that definition pretty quick I find your others to be even less likely. After all, just because I don't practise troilism or wife-swapping doesn't necessarily mean I don't want to because I consider them to be pornography. In my view, anything which contributes to the degradation of an individual is pornography.

(I assume you wish to consider only the sexual aspects of pornography.....) Thus prostitution, which endorses the view of women as sex-objects rather than human beings, is pornography. Likewise even the mildest 'glamour' photo, regardless of how much it conceals or reveals. Conversely, no sexual activity that two or more people participate in can be regarded as pornographic, provided that those concerned participate of their own free will. That, broadly, is my view. I realise that there is a lot of fine detail to be filled in, which might provide good arguing room next time we meet (if we remember).

I just don't understand how you can get as much or more out of recorded music than from hearing the same stuff 'live'. Granted that concert halls aren't always what they ought to be as you so graphically describe.....and yet thousands of people every year go to open-air concerts, with no seats except the grass, lousy food (if any), inadequate toilet facilities, even sleeping in makeshift tents or in the open air. I doubt if many of them would agree with you! Possibly part of the answer lies in the type of music you prefer, which largely lacks the improvisation found in 'progressive' music or jazz. Thus a live performance by, say.....John Denver, would be essentially the same as a studio performance - maybe even inferior, taking into account poor acoustics and the like. Yet this can't be the whole answer, because I'd far rather listen to a concert performance of classical works by an average symphony orchestra, than hear a recording of the same music, be it by the best orchestra in the world, played on the best equipment, quadrophonic sound and all.

Pat and I went to a concert by Lionel Hampton in Nottingham recently. Now this chap is about sixty or more, and regarded as one of the greatest jazz musicians ever. His recordings are among my favourite jazz works. Although thirty or more years old they just bubble over with talent, enthusiasm and inspiration like little else in my collection. And yet they paled into insignificance compared to the man in the flesh, even considering the fairly mediocre band he had with him. He played the vibes, he played the piano, he played the drums.....at one point he even led the whole band (except the organist!) on a march round the hall, playing as they went.

The atmosphere in that place was absolutely fantastic. Never have I seen so many faces almost literally shining with happiness. Even as he went into his classic "Flying Home" for what must have been the ten-thousandth time in his career, it was as though he'd just made it up on the spot, so enthusiastic was he. So, as Neddy Seagoon once remarked, "Get that on a long player!!). For me there's no comparison: records can be good, sometimes they can be great, but they're only a means of conveying to a mass market that which should really be heard as it happened. I'm sure it's not a question of "snottery", not with most music lovers anyway, but a genuine feeling that live music is "the real thing".

24 October 1974 (Skel)

Hmmmm, it's a week since I started stencilling ya letter Mike and I'm having a bit of trouble making sense of the cryptic note in the margin of the original. It says 'wanking and typing'. No wonder this corflu bottle doesn't seem to get any emptier. It's no good (mind you, I haven't tried it) I'll have to read back and see if I can figure out what it all means. Don't go away.

.....Ah yes. They're not connected at all really, it's just that I must have been in a perverse mood when I made that note. Well the first bit refers to your comment about"no sexual activity that two or more people participate in....." By definition then Mike, that makes the lonesome traveller pornographic. Or was that a significant Freudian omission?

The typing part of the remark was merely a flippant note that recorded music is superior because you can't type stencils whilst listening to 'live' music in a concert hall.

But away from the flippancy..... Of course the overall 'gestalt' of a live performance cannot be encompassed on a little bit of plastic. I agree, I agree entirely. It even applies to 'semi-live' performances because little Yonny D's TV shows were like unto nothing he's ever recorded. How can anyone record his dancing on roller skates with Pan's People? No, every word you say is in accordance with the Skelview.

But.....when I was talking about music I was meaning the dictionary definition, which says something to the effect of 'communicating emotion by means of melodic harmonies and sequences of notes'. That's not a quote, but that is the gist of it. It didn't say anything about communicating emotion by means of dancing up and down a hall..... or any other way of freaking people out. For "music" it's all in the notes and harmonies, man. Now this definition applies perfectly to the extremely formalised world of classical music and it was in that context that I used it in commenting on Leigh's remarks. He was talking basically about classical music and it was on these terms which I stuck my oar in. It is so formalised and traditional that actually being there can't make any difference, except as you say, that you might get lousier sound. So I still hold that in this context, it is 'snottery', even if you do agree with him. So convince me. Tell me what you get out of a live concert, apart from the inconvenience of having to get up and go, of this type of music. What???

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NICHOLAS : "I always know what Deborah is going to draw."

DEBORAH : "Yes, he listens to my mind."

What the hell-kind of kids am I bringing up? Guess I'd better start watching my dirty mind. No, they're used to me anyway. It can be kind of embarrassing when your in-laws are there and your seven year old daughter shouts you to come quick because there's a right fit bit of stuff on the television doing a highly erotic dance.

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Yes folks, the Mad Patternner strikes again. Who's damn fanzine is this anyway? Let's have a bit more, just for good measure.....and to annoy those people who think fanzines ought to be just CRAMMED with imperishable drivel. Then again, we haven't really got enough room on this stencil anymore, have we. Damn! Thwarted again.

HOW I MARRIED A DUMB BROAD AND GOT AWAY WITH IT

Well, she hasn't said a bloody word yet this issue, has she? Course she hasn't. Note to Cas: If you don't get off your ~~fat butt~~ charming derriere (blow it) FAT BUTT, and do something then you can't very well complain about Graham Poole calling it my personalzine, can you? How unfannish can you get.....I mean, watching a re-repeat of the Forskin saga rather than type luvverly-luvverly stencils?

This issue seems to be running a bit on the 'heavy' side. where are all the Skellish irrelevancies? Plays hob with the balance of payments when you've got to import your irrelevancies. Not to worry, Kevin Hall has kindly contributed a 'Guest Inanity' which takes some of the wieght off of my broadmanly-road-whalley-range-three-five-zero-and-closing-up-sing-up-you-shower-with-bright-periods-bodkins/ship-with-all-who-sail-inner-tube-be-or-not-to-be-off-with-you-should-have-seen-wearing-a-bright-red-check-your-eyesight-for-sore-eye-should-never-have-listened-to-that-damned-Monty-Python-LP.

DARROLL PARDOE 24 Othello Close, Hartford, Huntingdon,

Kevin's course on the origins of US Protest Music doesn't seem to have done him much good, does it? He thinks that Woody Guthrie and Joe Hill were contemporaries; Joe Hill was shot long before Woody started his career, although in fact neither of them were primarily singers. Their songs grew out of their other activities; Joe Hill wrote songs as a stimulus to Wobbly strikers, and Woody to while away the time while 'hard travelling'.

Joe Hill's songs had an impact all right. They were some of the most popular songs in the IWW's 'Little Red Book' and after his execution in 1915 he became a martyr and a legend, remembered whenever his songs were sung. Woody was only three years old in 1915, but it was partly due to Joe Hill that in the thirties hobos could still get an unmolested ride in a box-car if they carried an IWW card. Woody Guthrie's time was the thirties, of course, and by golly his songs came as near to setting the USA alight as anything ever written in the sixties.

Perhaps Kevin doesn't realise how desperate a lot of people were in the thirties. I knew a college professor in the States for instance who counted himself extremely lucky that from 1931 onwards he had a secure job (after his college job had folded): the job of US mailman.....and a lot of other academics like him weren't so lucky. Your mailman in those days was quite likely to have a PhD or similar degree.

So what I'm trying to say is that Woody had a great impact, yes, but that Joe Hill had just as great an impact in his own time and his own way, and that they were sufficiently separated in time that to say one was more lasting than the other is meaningless.

KEVIN HALL 328 Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton, Manchester.

It's good being a part of MAD, if only for the fact that you get a chance to answer people's letters in the same issue that the letter appears in. Rotten really, but I'll take the opportunity. Dear Darroll.....

I appreciate your criticisms as being very valid. I do know the historical context of the singers we both mentioned. You are totally correct in that there is that great gap of fifteen years or so between the death of Joe Hill and the songs of Woodie Guthrie.....but tell me..... If you had written that article and had put in all the details, and been absolutely inflexible in your terms of reference, just how long would that article have been. No, I'm not trying to squeeze out. I admit that I really know very little about the subject. Just how much do you expect to learn in a six-week course? Enough to know I like the music. But I do know that the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) were not the contemporaries of the dust-bowl. If I say that I feel them to be contemporaries in feeling if not in time, will that help? If not then I must apologise to you. At least you care.....and I will never deny the power of either Joe Hill or Woody Guthrie. After all, Joe Hill's songs were powerful enough to get him shot, weren't they?

Elen sila lumen omentielvo (I think)

THE FUG-LEADS WE HAVE ALWAYS WITH US

The only advantage to having an obscure surname like 'Skelton' (from the proto-Urdu 'Skaaldu Uun', meaning 'He From Who's arse The Sun Shineth') is that the name is reasonably select. Even in the great wide world of Out-theredom, one can get through a whole ten minutes or so without bumping into another 'Skelton'. Which causes something of a fannish double-take when I come across the name in an old fanzine. Have I passed this way before? I get the oddest feeling when I look at page twenty-nine of GESTALT 5, January 1955 I theenk, and read.....".....Take Miss Goodwin (Ghod no Skelton)..." I wonder whatever became of Ken Skelton, North-East fan non-extra-ordinaire?

Mind you, looking at old zines does tend to give you a better perspective. Looking at some quarters of fanzinedom one would be forgiven for thinking that Kornbluth's 'March Of The Morons' was a historical story. However, Alan Burns at his most pompous couldn't even hold a candle (Hey Freud, anything in that?) to the Fuhrer, Con Turner in GESTALT 5. Con wanted to breed the master ~~fanz~~ zine. Fandom in the image of Herr Turner. He started his article with....."It is time that something was done about the fanzine situation in Britain." Noble sentiments indeed, but what is he complaining about, low literary standards? Duff artwork? Paucity of zines? Small Ompa mailings? Oh no! What's getting on Con's wick is that all these damned fanzines are not the same size. Let's take a look at his suggestions for putting fanzines to rights.....

1. All fanzines to be the same paper size.
2. Only one colour of paper to be used in each issue.
3. No less than twenty-eight pages.
4. No more than thirty-two pages.
("It might be made an exception in the case of Xmas issues. But this would not be advisable, otherwise the editor would want to put out a large zine on his birthday, his wedding Anniversary or any other celebration that comes along. I would suggest in this case -- No exceptions.")
5. Front cover must bear the name of the fanzine, the issue number and, if desired, the fact that it con-

forms to the Advisory Board's requirements. Yep, He was setting up one of them too.

6. Exactly four issues per year, no more and no less.
7. Editors wishing to publish more often will have to put out another fanzine.
8. No editor may help in producing more than two different fanzines.
9. Any fanzine that breaks these rules pay a fine of say ten pence to the Advisory Board.
10. Any excess material to be donated to the Advisory Board to be used as a sort of 'pool' for those fanzines who haven't enough material for their four twenty-eight page issues. More fines to cover any abuse of this system.

Fortunately Con agrees that the content of these 'people's fanzines' must be left "...entirely up to the editor. The Advisory board must have no power to say what must, or must not be published in a zine." However, I'm not sure how he makes that compute with:-

11. Every editor must contribute one item to the contents of his magazine.
12. No editor may write the whole zine.
13. A maximum of twenty-five percent of the zine to be given over to letters.
14. Sercon material must be given between 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ and 25% of the available space.

He ends the whole thing with the simple statement (it is not a question) "Why not?"

Alan Burns was one of his co-editors.....not that I feel this is in any way significant.

Today's fandom is beginning to look cosier and friendlier by the minute.

A POINTLESS ARGUMENT INTO THIN AIR

Greg Pickersgill is of the opinion that the merest mention

of a fans name in one's zine, so long as that mention is basic to whatever context it's mentioned in (ie, it's Greg Pickersgill) then that fan has got to get a copy of the zine in question. Not to do so is sheer bad manners. As usual, I only agree up to a point. If I mention someone integrally then I will send him that issue unless, like Greg and Alan Burns and Alan Hunter, he's expressed either total disinterest in receiving my fanzine or more positively, voiced a definite desire not to get it. However, I don't feel obligated not to talk to someone about somebody else just because that somebody else isn't going to see what I've written. So be it.

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WHAT'S 12" x 12" x 12" and covered in hair?

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MIKE GLICKSOHN 141 High Park Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6P 2S3

No you fools, Mike Glicksohn is not 12" x 12" x 12" and covered in hair. The answer to that is at the bottom of the page. I apologise Mike, for starting your letter in such an inappropriate place. Meanwhile, back at the.....

MIKE GLICKSOHN 141 High Park Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6P 2S3

I got a few long letters from Phil when I was publishing, but I don't think I ever had the time to respond personally. At the time I was publishing a big regular fanzine, mostly by myself; I was working; I had regular correspondances of my own;

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A pubic foot (boom-boom)

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I was very active writing LoCs to other fanzines; there just wasn't the time to answer each LoC privately. I'm astonished when people actually respond to a LoC I've written, unless I've requested a specific piece of information such as an address or something. And I generally don't put such requests in LoCs, nor do I send them to the editors of big fanzines if I can help it. Two way communication is an enviable goal, but there's a limit to what any one person can do. Try publishing an ENERG-UMEN or an OUTWORLDS and see how much time it leaves you to start new correspondances.

I guess I'm getting elitist in my old age, but I'm all for trying to keep fandom small. The recent worldcon was so big it was impossible to find all the people you wanted to talk to or participate in all the things you wanted to do. So I'm doubtful as to what positive benifits there can be from mass announcements of the existence of fandom. I'd rather let people discover fandom the way I did, by word of mouth, then through a fairly long apprenticeship. When I was a neo I thought fandom was far too cliquish. Now I wish all those damn neos would go away.....

I should take umbrage at the slurs cast at the Canadian people as far as drinking is concerned. As far as I know we still rate quite highly on the per-capita consumption scale, and I happen to have a certain reputation in that field myself. At this time last year, or even three months ago, I was cheerfully knocking away a couple of bottles a week plus a case of beer or so. I happen to be on the wagon temporarily for the sake of losing weight, but I doubt that my capacity will suffer irreparable harm. Take care, sir, you may have to drink your words someday, and I'll warrant you'll find it a task that will tax you to the fullest.

31 OCTOBER 1974 (SKEL)

Yes, it's Thursday night again, and yet another four stencils bite the dust. Whilever I've got the material I try to do at least four stencils every Thursday. Any typing at any other time is just a bonus. At that rate I might even make it onto a bi-monthly schedule.....but Cas is waving something at me and I have to go to bed now. G'night people.

6 NOVEMBER 1974 (SKEL)

It's Wednesday.....I'm a bonus, enjoy me. Oooo-Ooh, I didn't mean like that.

Getting back to your letter Mike, I must admit I've got nothing but admiration for anybody who can afford to put away a couple of bottles of whisky every week. There's something wrong with the world when a nice lovable, clean-living ~~like~~ guy like me can't afford it and all you damned foriegners can. One thing though.....I'm wondering about your background. I drink whisky 'cos I like it, and yet I steel feel kind of guilty about drinking a 'whole bottle-ful' EVERY week. Two bottles would be ideal. Now I get one on the Friday evening and it's gone with the week-end. But.....I feel enough of a lush as it is. What would two bottles per week do to my self-respect? It's the way I was brought up. My father was a beer-drinker (although now I think that it was the 'pub's social atmosphere' as much as the beer, that kept him out in the evening) from the home of one of the great British brews, Barnsley Bitter. In that area everyone seemed to be beer-drinkers and spirits somehow acquired the aura of beeing 'not nice'. 'Not nice' socially, that is. I'm trying to get over it. This weekend I shall try and take my 'cure' one stage further. I have found the local branch of Augustus Barnett's and they not only do a very nice eight-year-old malt for £2.75, but they also flog some Crawfords Five Star (not your Three Star rubbish) for a mere £2.99 which I think is about seven and a bit US dollars isn't it? What are whisky prices like over there in the US and Canada, Mike? Mind you, when I was in Nottingham with les Mearne we saw this "Guaranteed fifteen year old pure Irish Malt Whiskeys" for the same price in a local Yate's Wine Lodge. Now if the Stockport or Manchester branches have that in...I don't know.....decisions, decisions, too many decisions.

Sorry about that Randall.

Really I ought to stop this and write that article for Terry, or that review for Mike, or stencil Kevin's piece, but I don't feel like doing the first two and Kevin's thing needs a couple of illo's and my damned rotring is so oversexed it

ejaculates indian ink all over me as soon as I start to fondle it. Sexy little beasts these rotrings. Still, I suppose I could try and fix it.

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER - DEPT. OF APPLIED MOLE THEORY.

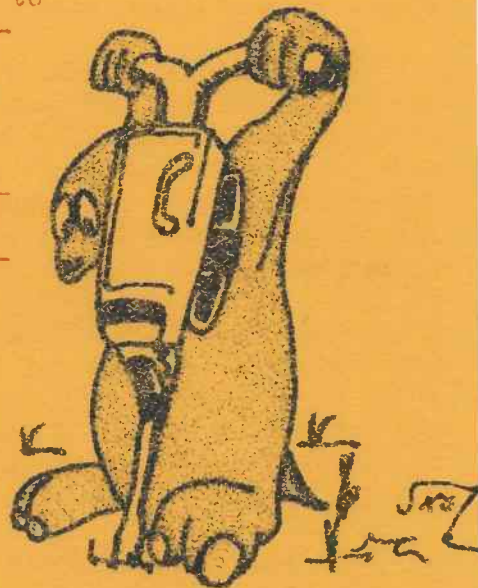
Thank you for your letter of the 7th inst. expressing interest in the history and work of this department. I feel I can best answer your queries with a brief chronological survey of the department's short but full past.

The first stirrings of interest were caused in 1970 when the present Secretary of State was studying a course in applied psychology at college. He discovered, through intensive study, a number of recorded cases of experiments with animals, designed to enhance our understanding of ourselves. No doubt the most well remembered of these experiments is the one conducted by Pavlov in which it was shown that, every time a dog salivated a scientist could be conditioned, by direct stimulus response action, to ring a bell. On further reading it was discovered that many different experimental animals had been used. Ground mealworms, for example, when fed to other mealworms went to prove that a mealworms memory is directly connected to its stomach. All sorts of animals had been used at one stage or another, ranging from caterpillars to squids. However..... the Secretary noticed what he felt to be a glaring omission in all this serried data; no one at all had ever worked with moles. The Secretary set out to think about this and after a great deal of thought and serious debate he set out to fill the gap.

The principle idea was as follows:- The Secretary decided that a mole could be procured and placed in an artificial environment. If the mole was put in a large area of space containing one-and-a-half inches of soil and turf laid over six feet of reinforced concrete the mole would attempt to burrow a hole. However, when it met up with the reinforced concrete it would be forced to stop. Eventually, it was proposed, the mole would cease to attempt to burrow a hole and would be conditioned to life on the surface, where it would soon roll over and die. In this way the Secretary hoped to

find, and I quote, "A vinal zolution to de national mole problem." The principle was sufficient to obtain the Secretary his batchelors degree, 1st class hons. Heidelberg.

The University saw great possibilities in this line of research and saw fit to grant the Secretary a travelling fellowship to the Cavendish Laboratories to follow up his idea. He set up his experiment there in 1971. In the first experiment the subject mole ran straight across the test enclosure, nibbled a hole in the rope barrier and burrowed a hole outside the prestressed concrete test area. Undeterred the Secretary paid the university bursar the requisite £50.00 and was granted his M.Sc. (Christs College, Cambridge. 1971.)



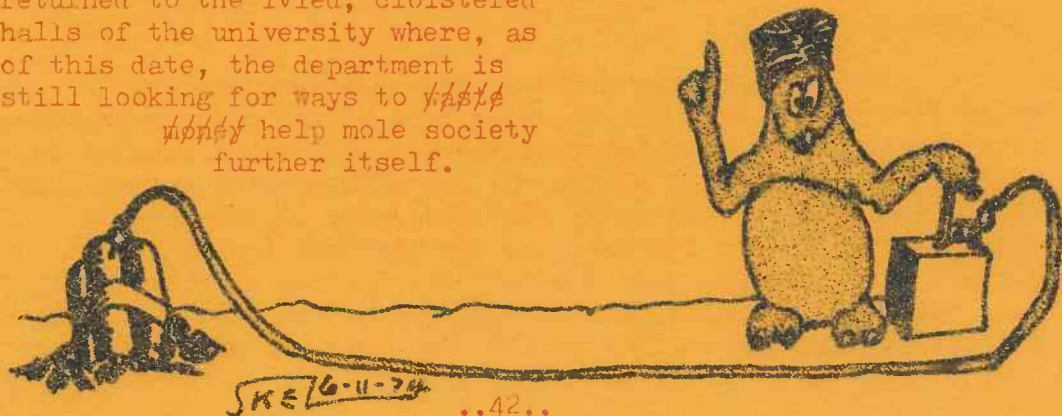
By now the world-shattering humanitarian objectives of the Secretary had been realised and later that year he was granted the Winston S. Churchill travelling fellowship to the USA, for further study. There he produced a masterly theory that if the one-and-a-half inches of soil were to be replaced with bitumen the mole would not be able to dig a hole at all. For this stroke of genius he was granted his Ph.D. (University of Harvard. Summa cum laude. 1971.) In triumph he returned to England.

On his return he was offered, and accepted, the Regius Chair in Mole Studies. At the same time he was made Professor of Mole Studies at Manchester University so that he would have somewhere to sit in his chair. He was also granted an honorary degree in Ice cream making by the University of Denver as a token of thanks from the colonies for his work towards world peace. Under his guidance the twin disciplines of Theoretical Mole Studies and Applied Mole Theory reached out to embrace all the centres of learning in the free world. University of

Barcelona, Duvalier University - Haiti, Peron Memorial University - Buenos Aires, etc.

Under the direction of the Secretary himself studies were set up to discover how many moles existed in one square foot of Hampstead Heath. This led to the formation of the department of Mole Statistics. The endurance of and hard work by the department of Mole Telecommunications was instrumental in showing that moles do not broadcast on any known waveband. For these and similar studies the Secretary was, in 1972, granted the Nobel Prizes for Physics, Chemistry, Biological Sciences, Literature and Peace. He was also granted an Oscar for his documentary film, "One Day In The Life Of Ivan Molevitch", the story of a Siberian mole and his life in a compound made of one-and-a-half inches of permafrost on top of six feet of prestressed concrete, and a Hugo award for his novel, 'The Day Of The Big Mole'.

His fame assured there was only one way for him to go. In 1973 he was elected Member of Parliament for Clackmannan and Borders by a grateful populace and immediately made Secretary Of State for Mole Studies. He was given a seat and a cabinet to keep moles in. This led to the discovery that the basic job of the department, viz: to exterminate moles by covering the surface of England, Scotland and Wales with one-and-a-half inches of turf over six feet of prestressed concrete was impracticable. The Secretary of State denied rumours that he had only realised this when it sunk in that this would put him out of a job. Neither, he stated, had he been bought off by the mole lobby. Saddened he returned to the ivied, cloistered halls of the university where, as of this date, the department is still looking for ways to ~~help~~ help mole society further itself.



I hope that this brief summary will help in your research into the mating habits of the wallaby. I remain, sir, your humble servant.....

Kenneth Hall

K. Hall, Ph.D. (Neasden-1893)
Associate Professor of Mole Theory
UMIST.

"Let's hear some more," I said, "about this 'Department of Mole Theory' that you were going on about one night at a very early MaD-meet."

TO BOLDLY GO WHERE A VERY OLD SF-MOVIE HAS GONE BEFORE.

The Beeb are running a series of SF films early on Wednesday evenings. Next week it's to be Richard Matheson's 'The Incredible Shrinking Man' WHICH I'VE ACTUALLY NOT SEEN. This weeks offering though was that old bomb 'Forbidden Planet' which has been on so many times it has left an impression on the TV screen. However, Cas hadn't seen it before so I got to watch it again. Now this is the first time I'd seen it 'post-Star Trek'. The other twice I've managed to miss it. So, this was the first time I got to see how it basically fitted the role of pilot film for so many episodes of the series. Look at some of the points of similarity:-

1. They are going to a planet to check up on an old scientific expedition that went there and never returned. Sound familiar?
2. Three of them go off as an advance party. You guessed it.....the captain, the science officer and the doc.
3. They even had an equivalent of Scottie
4.and "some mysterious force".
5.and I can't be bothered going into all the little thisaways and thataways except to say that it was even, for its time (don't you feel old Terry) well produced. Money and care, particularly care, were spent on it.

PHIL S-PAYNE 28 Woodfield Drive, Charlbury, Oxford, OX7 3SE.

I would agree with your views on SF Monthly (and Jimmy Tarbuck while we're at it) but, I think you're trying to apply the term 'fans' to anyone who reads the stuff - which is pushing it. I would imagine that the largest number of people who buy the thing are not fans at all, just the genpub who enjoyed Star Trek, Simon Rack, Hook, Perry Rhodan or whatever, and while they continue to sell so will SF Monthly. It doesn't to my mind fail on its artwork though, the presentation and reproduction are pretty good - it all boils down to whether or not you like what they're presenting. I don't, but a well-respected friend of mine - not a fan, but a guy who reads little but SF, writes reviews and stories and has sold a couple professionally - does, so he buys it. OK, chacun-a-son-gout on that aspect of things. Where I think it does fall down is on the fiction side which, I gather, is generally lousy. None of the rest does SF any harm.....that does. Naturally the rest has faults - the book news is generally out of date and their answers section is often misleading or just wrong - but it really fails, I think, on the poor quality of its fiction.

Pornography? Well, there's a lot of sense in what you said. Your categories are a bit loose, but that's not so important as the very valid point you made that things should really be divided into those that hurt other people and those that don't. The first should be banned and the second encouraged. Where do you draw the line.....ah, that's another question. However, it's a much deeper one than just the sex aspect of it. Not all torturers are sadists. Some are PATRIOTS! For reasons not really understood sex produces many unrealistic hangups, and so it has become too much a focus of attention. What does it matter if someone's homosexual, just because he enjoys something you don't? More power to the ambitions, I say, they probably have the most fun around. But a guy who goes around beating someone else up - well that's a different matter. I don't give a damn if Mr. X down the road is screwing his wife, his boyfriend, his sister or his dog, but if he's standing in an alley waiting to smash me over the head with a brick and whip my wallet then I do care. I wish some of these fucking sex-on-the-brain 'Festival of Light'ers

would stop prattling around and care about something that mattered.

AH BUT.....

Well, if we are talking about sex back there I don't agree that 'things that don't hurt people' should be encouraged. What on earth do they need encouraging for? Surely they can get by without active encouragement. I know we've had International Geophysical Years and Plant-a-tree Years, but International Have A screw Years are somewhat boggling to the skel-mind. We could have loads of posters like in the war - 'Screw For Victory' and public service TV adverts like 'Do Not leave plenty of room between the man in front!'"

And surely the reason why sex produces so many unrealistic hangups is understood? How can anyone fail to have hangups about something that society hides behind locked doors for so many of our young years. When I was a child (last week) I couldn't get hold of any really porno magazines and naturally I felt that something really important was being kept from me. I remember how shocked I was the first time I got hold of a girlie magazine that hadn't been retouched. I was repulsed to find that women weren't all nice and smooth and hairless between their thighs. The reality was a great disappointment to me and for a long time I thought I'd been cheated by the existence of all these ugly, hairy pubes.

By not being open about sex society is turning it into a big thing that, when not available, is bound to cause hangups. If there was no censorship, if anything was available in both pictorial and written form, then none of this would happen. The old saw about protecting the innocent children is just so much bilge. How can you shock an innocent child? In order to be shocked it must already have ceased to be 'innocent'. It must already be into the tittering-behind-the-toilets stage which incidentally is reached at an astonishingly early age.

Cas and I have always been quite open about any and all aspects of sex, without actually forcing it down the childrens throats (Damn, I could have phrased that better) because after

all, they aren't really interested, except purely out of curiosity. However, that we haven't entirely succeeded in countering society's taboos is evidenced from this conversation Deborah had with Cas a couple of years ago.....

"Mummy, there's another sort of 'screw', isn't there?"

"What do you mean, Deborah?"

"Well, there's the sort of 'screw' when you're screwing something into something."

"Hmmm, yes, but what's the other sort of screw?"

"You know!"

The very fact that she went all coy at the end implies that she'd picked up some of the connotations of the 'illicit' with which society surrounds the subject of sex. Ah well.

Whilst at the Meara's this weekend Mike recited the dirtiest limerick he knew, which I'd not heard before, and which I must share with you. However, because I must be mellowing in my old age, and in deference to Mary Whitehouse, I will present a somewhat 'cleaned up' version:-

There was a young man from Nantucket
who's rude part was so long he could do a rude thing
with it.

"Ah," he said with a sigh

wiping a somewhat rude discharge from his eye,

"If my other rude part was a lady's rude part I could do
a different rude thing with it."

Somehow Mary it just isn't the same. Something seems to have been lost in translation.

AYE, AND TOMORRAH

This fanzine has gone on long enough. I could wrap the whole thing up tomorrow. The stencils are typed, I have the paper, and Cas has agreed to take the artwork in to be electroed while she waits, tomorrow morning. Yeah, let's. Last stencil - 12/11/74.

Bitter sun
poking, with mocking fingers,
where is the warmth?
Here,
on the flagged court,
you are a watcher
without a watch.

But look, Silly!
I am The Leader
and you mustn't tread on the lines
or you will get
BEETLES.

So I must build a life
and furnish it throughout
with memories of tomorrow
and mould,
for other eyes,
the person that is me.

But look, Daddy!
I can do it dead good,
can't I?
'Cos you must only go on the red squares
or you will get
BEETLES.

But Son,
I have walked on the lines of my life
and trod the black and white
before ever you were here
to save me
from myself.