

thyme 52

the AUSTRALASIAN SF NEWS MAGAZINE

March 1986



NOVA MOB NOTES - COLLATING CAN BE FUN! (This is not true.)

This month's Nova Mob meeting was noteworthy for being the first appearance of the revived ASFR, with a small, changing circle of people collating the issue round the Blackfords' kitchen table, and John Foyster on the other side of the kitchen bench in charge of stapling, exchanging witty asides with Marc Ortlieb.

The issue's pages collated and John left to his device, Cathy Kerrigan launched into a discussion of Gene Wolfe's work featuring 'Doctors, Islands and Death'.

Someone at an earlier stage of the evening had remarked that Nova Mob meetings could in the past have been subtitled 'The George, Lee and Damien Show', but well-known local author and noisyperson Lee Harding hasn't put in an appearance for some time now, while this week both George and Damien were absent. And with John hiding away behind the kitchen bench - no pearls for the swine this time around - the discussion of Wolfe's work was kept reasonably short, in the end echoing an article in the first issue of the new ASFR by Bruce Gillespie (also absent) which bemoans the great difficulties one has with Wolfe.

Yvonne Rousseau had made an earlier appearance, discreetly dropping ASFR subscription forms into people's laps, and afterwards it was clear that at least a few people had taken the hint, to judge by the way another Collective member Lucy Sussex was jealously guarding a massed pile of unmarked twenty dollar bills - and a good time was had by all....

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The Birthday Party....

A report by Jean Weber.

The Birthday Party was held at my place on the 22nd of February in honour of Valma Brown, Bruce Gillespie, Gordon Lingard and myself. (Alas, Bruce was unable to attend.) Everyone seemed to enjoy it very much, and several said it was the best party they'd attended in a long time. I think this was because many of the attendees are people who, like myself, don't like large crowds, music playing, videotapes, heavy drinking or cigarette smoke, some or all of which seem to feature at many fannish parties.

We had none of the above, just a small group of people who lounged around on chairs and mattresses in the shade of the fruit trees (until dusk, when it became chilly and we moved inside to lounge around the lounge), eating and talking. Actually, the party had two parts: the afternoon outside bit starting around 4pm, and an evening bit when the entire population of the Transfinite household appeared about 9pm just as the rest of us were about to pack up and go home. This turned out to be convenient timing, and we all sat around until about 1:30 in the morning nattering away and cleaning up the remains of the food.

Speaking of food, there was plenty of it. Gordon Lingard made spinach lasagna and wholemeal bread, everyone brought steaks and sausages (the evening contingent came with cheese and bikkies), my garden contributed masses of tomatoes, and Sandra Hyde turned up with a huge yummy chocolate cake. Eric was so impressed with the homebaked bread that he made a batch on Sunday morning - wiol wonders never cease!

The best part, however, was without doubt the conversation. Such a joy to be able to talk to people without either having to chase them all over the place, or shout above the noise, or be interrupted all the time. The group was small enough for everyone to join in if they really wanted to, so one didn't feel one was missing that really interesting conversation over in the corner. We did fragment a couple of times when Eric took the computer buffs off to admire his new Atari, but that was quite acceptable (the rest of us knew we weren't missing anything). The weather cooperated, being sunny and warm (but not stinking hot) in the afternoon and cool in the evening - Sunday was overcast and later rained. Must have been much good karma at work for our party!

Big parties have their palce, and I don't begrudge them to those who like such things, but I prefer small parties. It was especially nice to be able to talk to some of the Transfinite household - at their own parties they're always too busy!

Jean Weber.

Thyme #52, the disgustingly light hearted science fiction newszine, is brought to you with a hearty chuckle by the makers of Peter Burns® and Roger Weddall®, either of whom can be reached at... P.O.Box 273, Fitzroy 3065, AUSTRALIA, or on the 'phone: (03) 347 5583.

Thyme is available in return for newsy bits, reviews of Australian or other relevant fiction, artwork, letters of comment, all sorts of 'phone calls (yum yum), for help with collating... you can even *kid* us into sending you copies. Or you can send us money, in the following amounts:

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND/NORTH AMERICA - ten issues for ten dollars.

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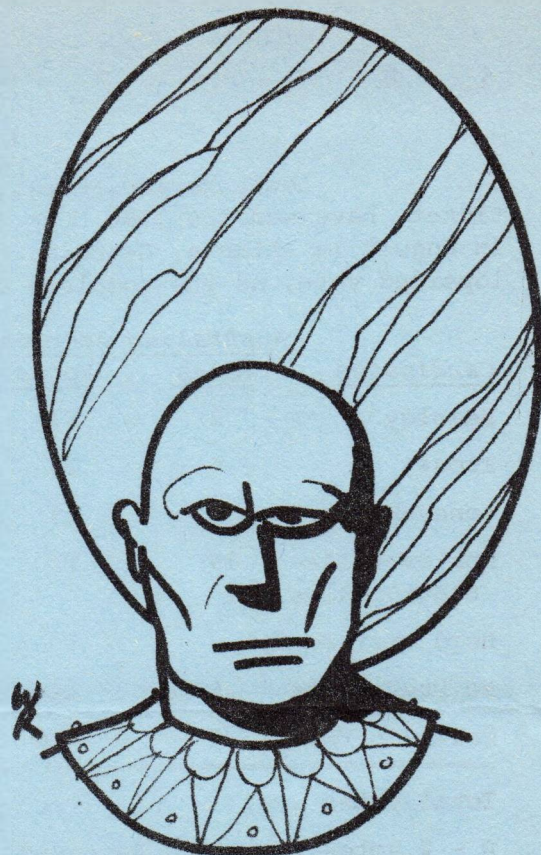
Do we have local agents? Ha! [Yes.]

EUROPE: Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER, U.K.

NORTH AMERICA: Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Avenue #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401, U.S.A.

NEU ZEELAND: Nigel Rowe, P.O.Box 1814, Auckland, N.Z.

Don't forget now, if there's a big, silver X next to your name on the front cover mailing label, this could be your last issue for a while unless you... DO SOMETHING!



"You have to go through a period of self-disgust and come out the other end when you realise you're just doing a newszine like anybody else. But it's a form of literary exhibitionism, you see, and I think exhibitionism of any sort probably leads to certain moments of self-disgust. I can't put it any plainer than that." William Golding

+++++ 'AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW' REVIVED

Melbourne, Wed.5th March. There was rejoicing in the streets of the city today as news of the first issue of the revived Australian Science Fiction Review (ASFR for short) came to hand. Crowds dressed in clothing and making the sign of The Science Fiction Collective with their hands thronged into the city centre to celebrate the revival of the famous Australian fanzine.

In its day the original ASFR was recognised as being the best Australian fanzine. Then edited by John Bangsund, and with regular contributors such as George Turner and John Foyster, the new version of the fanzine is edited by The Science Fiction Collective, a group of five people who modestly describe themselves as 'an off-shoot of the Nova Mob'.

Pressed to explain the objectives of the new ASFR by many who remember the high standards set by the original, the Collective has issued a press release in which it is stated that it is hoped that ASFR will be able to encourage thoughtful engagement in the problems related to the production and consumption of science fiction.

ASFR (Second Series) will appear six times a year, and will run the usual features - articles, reviews and letters. The first issue contains an introduction by John Bangsund "who lent us the name"; an article from Russell Blackford (Collective member) on 'Taking Wynne Whiteford Seriously'; a transcript of a Nova Mob meeting talk that Bruce Gillespie gave on the subject of Gene Wolfe; and the beginning of an open-ended serial review by Collective member John Foyster, called 'Science Fiction - The Long View'.

Only about three hundred copies of each issue are being published, and they will be selling for \$2.00 each. The first issue is officially being launched at this year's NatCon Swancon XI in Perth, over Easter; but if you want to ensure getting a copy you should send money to: The Science Fiction Collective, GPO Box 1294L, Melbourne 3001.

DUFF GUFF FFANZ STUFF

Lewis Morley, Marilyn Pride and Nick Stathopoulos, standing on a joint ticket, have won the 1986 DUFF race, and will be sent to attend the 1986 WorldCon in August in Atlanta, Georgia, Confederation. It was a surprisingly close if somewhat lopsided vote, as the complete voting figures below show....

<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Australian</u> <u>Votes</u>	<u>American</u> <u>Votes</u>	<u>Combined</u> <u>Votes</u>					
Beasley	2	37	39	*Dd*				
Frost	5	25	30	+12...42	+0...42	+7...49	+17...66	+1...67
Loney-Muysert	6	13	19	+7...26	+0...26	+0...26	*Dd*	
Morley-Pride-Stathopoulos	39	15	54	+9...63	+1...64	+1...65	+6...71	+1...72
Hold Over Funds	-	10	10	+1...11	+2...13	*Dd*		
No Preference	1	12	13	+10...23	+0...23	+5...28	+3...31	*Dd*
Write-in Votes	-	3☆	3	+0...3	*Dd*			

Total Votes

☆ - 2 votes for 'John Bangsund', 1 vote for 'Wal Footrot'.

Dd - '(Votes) Distributed'.

A word on how the counting and elimination of preferences was handled.

First of all, all votes for Sally Beasley - ironically, easily the most popular candidate in America - were discounted. Sally officially withdrew from the race some months ago, although many Americans may not have heard of this, to judge by the voting figures.

Secondly, the 'Write-in' votes were distributed. John Bangsund made his yearly (deserved) appearance on the ballot, but not with enough votes to avoid immediate relegation.

Third, the votes for 'Hold Over Funds' were distributed. Interesting to see that more than half of these went to Terry Frost.

Fourthly, the vote for the Loney-Muysert team, with 26 votes, were distributed, then the 'No Preference' votes, most of which listed no candidate after 'No Preference', or which were exhausted ballots in the first place, leaving the Morley-Pride-Stathopoulos team the winners by a mere five votes. Congratulations team, commiserations everyone else.

With all votes in and counted, Jack Herman, current Australian DUFF administrator, reports that the fund has A\$3,000 in it at this end, US\$3,800 at the other. The fund is doing well. Regarding expenses, the main one being the cost of the flights over and back, although this is the first time that a trio has won DUFF (or any other fund, if memory serves?), only the cost of one return air fare is being paid for by the DUFF fund (although, I don't know; do you think it would be too horrible for words if we helped our artists' collective out a little bit extra? As Charles Burbee would indubitably suggest, three's not too many....).

○
This year's FFANZ race is now underway; the closing dates for voting being the end of the wee after Easter, Friday the 7th of March. Voting minimum is \$2.00.
CoA for Australian Administrator: John Newman, P.O.Box 1004, Thornbury 3071.

Meanwhile, with less than a week to go before the close of nominations for this year's GUFF race, only one candidate has yet submitted their platform and list of nominators, etc., although that hasn't stopped Irwin (I am running) Hirsh from adding his name to the long list of possible contenders. Irwin notes 'I'm not sure how many of the rumoured will be running, but if half of them do this race will have more candidates [than] any fan fund race in my memory.' [What was it... there were 10 at last count, yes?]

On the subject of Trip Reports, the very happy news is that Hugo-winning Famous-person Dave Langford has finally produced copies of his The Trans Atlantic Hearing Aid 1980 TAFF (UK-USA) Trip Report. 76pp. offset, copies are available for £2 + postage (make it A\$5.00) from the man himself, at 94 London Rd., Reading, Berks., RG1 5AU, U.K.

A QUESTION OF BALANCE

Acting on the principle that it's better to do than to be seen to do, it's not often that we'll take time out to discuss Editorial Policy.

Occasionally, however, a point crops up that cries out to be explained; with the receipt of Rocky's article (printed below), we have come to such a point.

It's all a question of what sort of material belongs in Thyme. As a news-zine we are obliged, and relied upon, first and foremost to publish news.

The review material that we accept and/or solicit must fall into one of several categories.

We are in the business of promoting Australian science fiction, and reviews of such material will always be acceptable.

Then there is review material dealing with such things as may be topical in Australia, and of interest to our readership, such as anything nominated for a Ditmar Award, or possibly for the Hugos. We aren't interested in publishing reviews of general sf; there are better venues for that; likewise we don't consider ourselves some sort of alternative science digest, a point which has not come into question before now.

The article below deals with something that is of great interest to us both, and which we had not heard about before; it is an article about a truly revolutionary discovery that we hope you find as startling and thought provoking as we did when first told about it.

In other words: it's okay, folks, we're not trying to replace New Scientist or Nature; you can go back to sleep as of the next issue....

A FORCE BY ANY OTHER NAME...

by Mark Lawson

According to the story told to every High School Physics student the most brilliant scientist of the Renaissance, Galileo, is supposed to have proved a point by simultaneously releasing a musket ball and a cannon ball from the edge of the leaning tower of Pisa.

The story has several versions and is probably not true, but whatever the version the punchline is the same; the two objects hit the ground together - a result in direct contradiction to the then prevailing belief that the heavier an object was, that faster it should fall.

Galileo went further and said that a hammer and a feather, if dropped together in a vacuum, would fall at the same rate and hit the ground at the same time.

Several centuries later on one of the Apollo missions, and just to finally prove Galileo right, an astronaut dropped a hammer and a feather from about the same height, in front of a television camera. ~~The/Leve/has/badly/damaged/~~

It was not an exact experiment, but on the airless moon the hammer and the feather hit the ground at about the same time.

The experiment was just a way of honouring the sixteenth century scientist - the result was a foregone conclusion. But after being accepted gospel for several centuries, work by groups of Australian and US scientists has upset the entire theoretical apple-cart.

There are now deep suspicions that Galileo's principle does not hold for short-range distances (10cm to one kilometre), and although the variation is tiny it is enough to set off quite a rumpus in the 70-year-old sport for formulating Grand Unifying Theories (GUTs).

Some explanation is necessary and for that we have to start back on Earth well before the Apollo missions and just a generation after Galileo, when an apple fell on Newton and he realised that the same thing that had made the apple fall made the moon move around the Earth.

Having thought of gravity, Newton discovered that the attraction between two bodies declined inversely with the square of the distance between the two bodies.

That formulation, which also required a gravitational constant known as 'G', and mathematically works out to the single acceleration for all bodies in a particular gravitational field, was found to be obeyed universally. Comets, distant binary stars, and even whole galaxies were all found to dance to the tune Newton had discovered.

Further, it was discovered that lumps of static electricity and magnets also obeyed the inverse square law in attracting, or repelling, one another.

Physics progressed, variously making new discoveries which complicated things, or coming up with some grand mathematical formulation which simplified the picture.

Last century one enormous, unifying step was taken when it was realised that a moving magnet created an electric current (and an electric current created a magnetic field) - pointing to a unification of electricity and magnetism and the method of generating the electricity we all find so useful.

Later, the Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell pointed out that an accelerated electric charge threw off an electromagnetic wave, and that those waves were anything from ordinary light, through to radio transmissions (radio waves were later discovered, working from Maxwell's mathematical prediction).

This breath-taking mathematical unification kept everyone happy until around the beginning of the 20th Century, when some startling inconsistencies in the accepted explanations of how the universe worked showed up.

In tripped Einstein who, apart from his very famous Special Theory dealing with the speed of light and time dilation, wrote another paper known as the General Theory.

The paper tackled head on a subject that puzzles every High School student, namely why bodies separated by often vast distances ~~far from each other~~ should affect each other's motion, and this was mostly what started the idea of creating a GUT.

Roughly (very roughly) Einstein proposed that space and time should be considered together as a single, four dimensional thing - a 'space-time continuum' - and that because it had those four dimensions space itself could curve, without us ordinary, three-dimensional-seeing creatures being aware of it.

One thing that could cause space to distort was mass. The more mass the bigger the distortion, and the bigger the effect if another body happens to move in the region. This is a difficult concept for the average ground dweller to grasp, and a number of analogies are used to explain it.

To amalgamate a few of these analogies into one no sillier than any of the others, imagine a flat creature only able to perceive two dimensions, say a two dimensional ant, crawling around the surface of a trampoline. Then say some big, three dimensional person decided to put a melon in the centre of the trampoline and roll marbles onto the trampoline surface, to see what would happen.

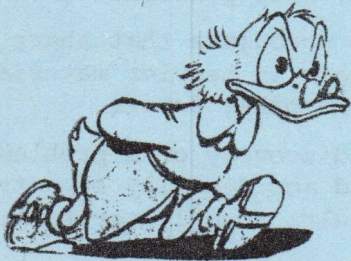
The melon creates a depression in the previously smooth surface of the trampoline but our ant, crawling dejectedly around on the surface, can only see the melon and the marbles - yet when the marbles (comets or planets) are rolled onto the surface, they either fall into the melon (the sun) or, if they have been given an extra hard push in the right direction, they roll around it.

Those who mock should remember that Einstein's General Theory is still alive and healthy after some 70 years (although it falls short in some other areas, as we shall see) and that some alternative GUTs require 11 dimensions to work.

Back on Earth, scientists were making life more difficult for theoreticians by probing ever deeper into the mysteries of the atomic nucleus and, in the 1920s, discovering two more fundamental forces.

Both have no effect outside the nucleus and they are the Strong Force, which binds the nucleus - the neutrons and the protons - together, and the Weak Force, which causes particles and nuclei to break up, causing some forms of radiation.

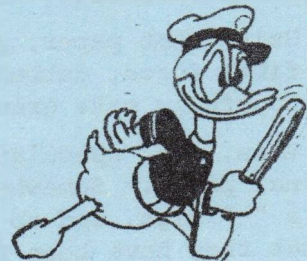
They also discovered a zoo-full of elementary particles of exasperating diversity, the explanation of which is another long-running saga, but the new forces proved the more puzzling.



STRONG FORCE



WEAK FORCE



POLICE FORCE

For most of the rest of his life after the publication of the General Theory, Einstein tried to fit Electromagnetism, the Strong and the Weak forces into his concept of four-dimensional space-time, and failed. Part of the problem is that magnets can both attract and repel, and only affect certain materials, like other magnets or lumps of iron; on the other hand gravity appears to affect everything.

Some of the more imaginative GUTs get around this by postulating the existence of more dimensions, with the up and coming Superstring Theory proposing 10. However, these are still speculations. A more solid theoretical result was obtained when Drs Stephen Weinberg, Abdus Salam and Sheldon Glashow succeeded in mathematically uniting the Weak and the Electromagnetic Forces.

In this theory the forces are identical at high energy. At lower energy levels (cooler temperatures) the symmetry is broken, rather as the uniform mix of molecules in water is broken when it is cooled into ice, and the molecules set in crystalline form.

The theory gained solid experimental confirmation in only 1983, but physicists are hopeful that the Strong and the Electroweak Forces will also be theoretically joined. Whatever the theory or the description of these forces, however, gravity has remained an unrepentant outsider that refuses to fit into any picture.

So, it was into this on-going struggle to simplify the picture of our world that a team of researchers at Queensland University, led by Geophysicist Professor Frank Stacey, was catapulted last year.

Professor Stacey, Dr Gary Tuck and some postgraduate students have been looking closely at the precise value of the gravitational constant 'G' since 1976. Prompted by one of the many theoretical papers on the mathematical treatment of forces, which predicted a weak repulsive force superimposed on normal gravity, they started taking measurements of 'G' in the mines of Mt Isa some seven months ago.

As the Mt Isa geologists have accumulated around 14,000 bore core samples from the area, the density of the material surrounding the mine shaft - and so its mass - can be calculated with considerable accuracy. By taking measurements down to 950 metres and with a good idea of the mass above the measurement instruments at each stage (slightly weakening the force of gravity felt by the instruments, as they descended) the group was able to come up with some precise calculations of 'G'.

They were looking for very small changes over distances of between 10 centimetres and one metre, and found all data gave a value for 'G' about one per cent higher than the conventional, laboratory measurements.

In other words, Galileo's principle and Newton's inverse square law, used for all but extreme cases, are not followed at close ranges.

At about the same time, a Dr Ephraim Fischbach, of Purdue University in Indiana, in America, started to re-examine exact tests of Galileo's principle made by some Hungarian scientists headed by a Roland von Eotvos, in 1922. Using a sensitive torsion balance the Hungarians had measured the degree to which gravity affected different materials, and the figures showed slight differences.... At the time those discrepancies were easily dismissed as experimental error, but Dr Fischbach's team thought they had discovered some pattern to the variation. Their findings, along with the Australian measurements, touched off an upheaval when they were published last year.

Using that paper, physicists had happily begun to speculate that there was a repulsive fifth force, dubbed Hypercharge (supposedly stronger in heavier materials), which would hopefully make gravity easier to reconcile with the other forces.

Alas, that speculation has been pole-axed by the discovery of a problem in the original paper. Somewhere along the way a "+" sign had accidentally been transformed into a "-" sign, and so instead of the two sets of results roughly agreeing, it turns out that they have been found to totally disagree.

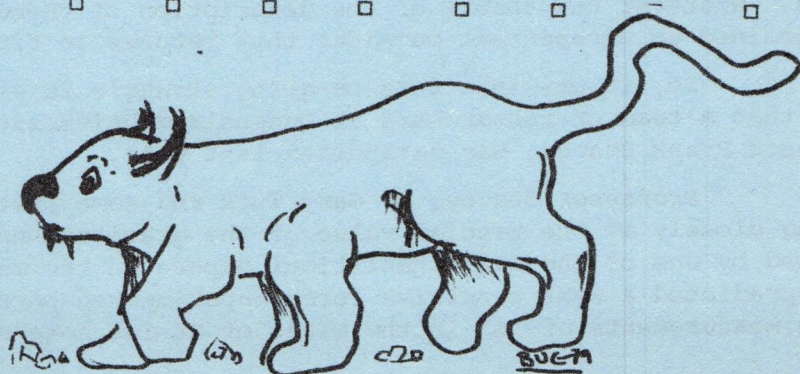
The only way out is for more measurements to be taken, and the Queensland group is already well advanced with another set of measurements from instruments hung on electricity poles in the middle of Splityard Creek - a storage lake for a hydroelectric facility attached to the Wivenhoe dam.

The special attraction of this dam is that the level of the water in it can vary by up to 10 metres each day, and as the water floods in it covers the lowest of a series of poles hung from the lines, on poles, at various heights.

As the group has also carefully surveyed the lake's perimeter, and can measure the depth of water accurately, they can accurately calculate the mass of the extra water that flows into the dam. That extra mass will slightly vary the gravitational force on the cylinders hanging from the poles above and below it, and since that effect can be disentangled from other influences and measured on exact instruments, the result will be a precise measurement of gravitational forces at small distances.

The group hope to release their results about the middle of this year, but the search for variations in gravity will not stop there. The researchers also plan to build specialised gravity gradiometers to measure the tiny variations being sought, and so complete the fine detail of Galileo's proposal, first made at the end of the sixteenth century.

Mark "Rocky" Lawson



What follows is a number of reviews of some of the works nominated for this year's Ditmar Awards. It's hoped that, apart from whatever pleasure the reviews themselves may give, they may be useful as a reference or a guide when voting for the awards. So, without further ado, onto a review by Yvonne Rousseau of a book that is definitely more than the sum of its parts....

The Compass Rose by Ursula K. Le Guin

(Granada, London 1985; 286pp.; pb\$5.95) reviewed by Yvonne Rousseau.

The Compass Rose consists of twelve stories; the earliest published having appeared in 1974, while the two latest make their first appearance here. There are not in chronological order, as the stories of The Wind's Twelve Quarters were. Instead, they are placed to create a new whole - something more than a collection.

The stories are grouped according to compass directions (which can be shown in a drawing that resembles a rose). The European Rose of the Winds has the four wind directions (NESW); but the Rose of the New World - which is to say, of many Amerindians' belief - has two more directions: Above (the zenith) and Below (the nadir). The self - the here and now - is the centre or corolla of this rose, from which the other six directions radiate; they - 'and thus the Universe' - may be sacramentally contained in that centre.

The compass rose defines the directions on a map - perhaps a map of the writer's mind; but Le Guin points out that 'one's mind is never simply one's own'. As she suggests in The Language of the Night, we human beings may have 'the same general tendencies and configurations in our psyche', and thus 'a vast common ground on which we can meet'. We know, however, that Le Guin lives in Portland, Oregon. Although American history and cultural traditions are widely known throughout the world, might Le Guin not orient her psyche differently from people who live (as Australians do) in the Southern and Eastern hemispheres of Earth?

From the viewpoint of the United States in general, Portland in Oregon is located in the North (cold) and the West (frontier country). But if Portland is viewed as the centre, the Pacific Ocean lies West; while Eastward the land stretches on until Boston Bay, with the colonising countries of England and Europe across the Atlantic, in the East (a source of usurping invaders from the Amerindian viewpoint, but of ancestors for the American majority). Overlaying these associations is the Earthwide vision which Swinburne has captured:

'the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.'

In the West of Le Guin's compass lie stories of death and encroaching darkness; and in *Malheur County* the 'unhopeful and impatient' ageing heroine is from the Oregon county named in the title - 'the frontier without hope, the end of pushing on'. Thus, the West symbolises both the frontier of the pioneers' America and the frontier of night (equated with death; and with the relinquishment of light in one's life). In *Gwilan's Harp* and *The Water is Wide*, utter grief is given the power of passing, in some sense, beyond that frontier.

The East is where a new light dawns, but (correspondingly) it is the direction from which the threat to an established culture comes - as it came for the Amerindians. The four stories of the East are about vulnerability to power, barbarian or otherwise. In *The Diary of the Rose*, Dr Rosa Sobel, a psychscopist - honest, naive, and over-impressionable - becomes a winter rose, 'all thorns', in the process of receiving a political education and finding herself helpless to save Flores Sorde from having his mind and personality deliberately destroyed by electroshock treatments. In this story, technology has made mind scanning possible in television-like images from a person's 'Con and Uncon dimensions', alike - although Rosa says that 'Nobody knows if there are any limits to the psyche. Except to the limits of the Universe.' Nevertheless, Flores (and his fate) have to teach her that 'you can't be reasonable about pure evil. There are faces reason cannot see.'

Also in the East, the shipwrecked Second Officer of a ship from the Terran Interstellar Fleet, in a courtly speech full of subtle threat, tells the

Kadanh of Derb about Earth by describing Venice - whose 'first lesson' is mortality, and where warnings are offered from black gondolas 'more elegant even than the boat that brought me here'. Another story, *The White Donkey*, is set in India - culturally regarded as 'the East'; red, as in the Eastern sky of a new day, is the colour of the Goddess and of brides, like the unfortunate virgin with no voice in her fate, from whom the white Unicorn withdraws into the darkness. The final story of the East owes its title to the legendary phoenix of Arabia, with the power of being reborn from its own ashes, like the sun; in a Loyalist-Partisan wrangle, the Phoenix theatre being bombed and a library being burned are only minor aspects of the general cultural vulnerability.

Associations intermingle, in these stories of East and West: relative longitude, light and darkness, the history of colonisation, life and death, legendary creatures. They are not narrowly regional.

Between East and West, Le Guin places her Zenith stories. In all four, creativity is expressed - successfully and joyously in the first two stories; failing in the third story because the observing human is alien and uncomprehending; in the fourth story, flawed by the world-imagining deficiencies of an acne-plagued adolescent.

The Nadir stories are about receiving rather than creating communication - although *The New Atlantis* comes as a message in a bottle. There is darkness, passivity, submersion. *Schrödinger's Cat* suggests that a larger box is needed, to enclose the human observers in this familiar thought-experiment. *The Author of the Acacia Seeds...* not only suggests that ants (unlike humans) would view 'down' (the Nadir) as the desirable direction, but also postulates that plants have an art which is passive - not designed to communicate; and that rocks may be words spoken 'in the immense solitude, the inner community, of space.' Placing this story at Nadir gives it a significance which might be absent if the story were read in isolation.

One's latitudinal location on the globe could be relevant to stories assigned to North and South. Le Guin's North stories are about traumatic change, involving death or madness; two have female narrators who are each defective one morally, the other mentally. The cold we expect of the North in the Northern hemisphere is not asserted even in *Two Delays on the Northern Line*, which is set in a region familiar to readers of *Orsinian Tales* and *Malafrena*. My only confident conclusion about Le Guin's North is that it is nothing like Tennyson's. For him,

'bright and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.'

The South for Le Guin is a place of seeing things differently. *The Wife's Story* is another view of werewolves - compelling, and not one that Angela Carter has treated. Loss of time is viewed scientifically in the second story; and *Sur* tells the secret of the first expedition to reach the South Pole - an expedition which comes, naturally, from South America, the land of Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges. There are fascinating images, such as Shackleton's footprints remaining 'like rows of cobbler's lasts' where the uncompacted snow around them had dissipated. No man such as Amundsen is to know of this South American expedition because then he 'might know what a fool he had been, and break his heart'. Rosa del Sur - 'Rose of the South' - is born during the expedition, but dies before adulthood.

Le Guin writes gripping stories, which make readers know themselves vulnerable to loss - when they cannot help caring about characters that they are powerless to save. Features recur on the map as a whole: bereavement; the relativity of concepts; the precarious nature of 'reality'; aphorisms that identify estrangement of one sex from another, rather than complementarity. *The Compass Rose* justifies Delany's view that 'science fiction is a way of acsting language shadow over coherent areas of imaginative space that would otherwise be largely inaccessible'. An excellent example is the Zenith story, *Intracom*; but the Rose's ability to shape a meaningful psychic map is also a revelation, which may bring to life many private roses, their petals unfurling in readers' minds.

Yvonne Rousseau.

When I was given a copy of The Changelings of Chaan (the same time as I saw the Ditmar form) and asked to review it, I wasn't particularly thrilled at the prospect. I've read David Lake books before and they've all been terrible. Artless. So why should this one be different? Happily for me, and fortunately for all the people who'll be voting for the Ditmar awards, The Changelings of Chaan is much better than anything else I've read by this author, who apparently has decided he can stop trying to become Edgar Rice Burroughs, and concentrate instead on writing simple but comparatively charming adventures for adolescents, which older readers can also enjoy.

The book is set in South East Asia, predictably in a land called Chaan:

'You haven't heard of Chaan?' inquires the author of the reader.

'Not many people have. For one thing, its official name on the atlases keeps on changing - one time it was called Chanpa, now it's Chanland, and when I was first there, it was Chandia.' (p.1)

Written in the first person, at times almost in diary form, the book is uncluttered by unnecessary paragraphs of background material; Lake is restrained - all for the good - by his format to simply telling his story, a tale set in a land whose location is uncertain (the map provided is thankfully irrelevant) and whose plot involves the discovery and use of magic, amongst other things.

'There is magic in Chaan, heathen Asian magic, and this is the story of how I gave myself up to it.' (p.2)

John, the fourteen year old protagonist, is the only child of an English-woman working in Chaan as a doctor, and the reader follows the young hero as he makes friends with a local boy of his own age, and comes to feel increasingly at home in his newly-adopted country. The rest, as they say, follows on from there. Throw in a mysterious uncle (not John's), an improved version of astral travel and a centuries-lost magical crown, sprinkle lightly with a smattering of Eastern spiritualism, and you have an enjoyable book that would sit comfortably alongside Victor Kellaher's Children's Book of the Year Award winning Master of the Grove. Much like the protagonist of The Changelings of Chaan, it is clear that, as a writer, David Lake is coming of age.

Janet Hales.

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Thus ends our selection of reviews of Ditmar-nominated material, which will be continued (and hopefully completed) in the next issue, with reviews of Tik Tok, Free Live Free and The Devil in a Forest. We also hope to have a comparative review of the shorter pieces of fiction, and the same for the two categories of novels - and if you believe that then you'll believe anything, but stick around and see if we do, anyway.

Although, what's the point of comparative reviews? Andy Luis, in the recent issue of Ansible, tells of a volume entitled A Readers' Guide to Fiction Authors, intended to make it easy to find a book like the one you just read: "I first tested the Guide by looking up Stephen King. The suggested alternatives are Ray Bradbury and John Wyndham.... It seemed to me that a good alternative to King is James Herbert, so I looked up his suggested alternatives. They are Ray Bradbury, John Wyndham and Isaac Asimov! Despairing of horror, I next turned to sf. Who would the suggested alternatives to Philip K. Dick be? Answer: Ray Bradbury and Isaac Asimov. What about Robert Silverberg? Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury. Robert Heinlein? Asimov, Bradbury and Wyndham. The Guide lists Asimov, Bradbury and sometimes Wyndham as alternatives to all sf authors, from Verne to Ballard...."

This vital reference work was compiled by computer analysis of questionnaires filled in by 600 "practising librarians", and is even more indispensable for crime fans. "Raymond Chandler and James Hadley Chase are good alternatives to John Dickson Carr... P.G.Wodehouse is a rather neat substitute for Dorothy L. Sayers." A fanzine readers' version is clearly much needed.'

Ansible

So much for future issues. Last issue we featured a review of the recent, successful Adelaide Convention, Unicon. Here's Allan Bray with his version of what it was all about...

CONVENTION REPORT: 'UNICON' (8?) - SOME COMMENTS. Allan Bray

I had been worried about Unicon for some time before it happened, mainly because I thought it had not been publicised enough so I thought it might be a disaster. It wasn't.

Anyway Unicon started for me with Carol Woolmer ringing me up and asking me to do a panel, in fact she asked me to do panels on several things but I can't remember what they were and neither can she. I finished up doing a panel on fandom.

Cathy Kerrigan came over from Melbourne for the con, she arrived on the morning of Friday the 24th. I picked her up from the airport (curses - an 8:25 flight that arrived at 8:15) and after coffee and natter we went out to Cathy's sister's place to pick her up for lunch at Uncle Albert's in the (relatively new) Norwood shopping mall. Uncle Albert's is typical of its type, a good selection of light meals and fattening desserts, pine wood furniture, bunches of onions hanging from the beams and small stands of arty farty books and cooking utensils. The food was good though but, even if Cathy did say the tandoori chicken wasn't.

After lunch, and coffee back at the house, the safari set forth and called on another friend of ours, Pat Mathews. Pat's a teacher and a Friday Night Dinner-er in Adelaide. She thought she might not be able to make it to the con: her mother had just had her sixtieth birthday ["Happy Birthday to youuuu..."], the house was full of rellies, there was a wedding or two taking place over the weekend, and some other, obligatory functions to attend; she thought she might make it on the holiday Monday but wasn't sure.

We then proceeded to Paul and Brenda Anderson's. The Andersons, having recently become parents, were not going to be at the con, either; I began to wonder who was. Brenda was also suffering from an infection which, even if not incapacitating, needed cossetting.

We spent two hours there and then made our way to the usual Friday Night Dinner. These functions are becoming somewhat dominated by media fans but this is not derogatory because a lot of them are in a "bridging gap" type phase. They are maintaining their contact with media fandom but are becoming interested in general fandom as well.

We went home earlier than usual because Cathy had had to get up at 6am to catch her flight from Melbourne and was feeling considerably bombed.

The next morning the con was supposed to start at 10am and I was supposed to be on a panel "in the morning" on fandom. So of course due to a combination of circumstances we didn't arrive until 11:06. It was then that I found out that my panel didn't start until 11:30 (so I was early), and then Victor Kellaher's opening speech lasted until midday and the panel didn't go on until 1:00. So it goes.

Victor Kellaher was a terrific Guest of Honour - a smallish, slightly-built, bearded man with a barely perceptible London accent. He claims not to be a science fiction or fantasy writer, but that when he was writing a novel, the techniques he was using suddenly indicated to him that he was writing a fanasy novel....

The concom had arranged for Victor's speech as GoH to be the first item on the programme on the opening day, an unusual arrangement to say the least, but there was a reason for this, as I was to find out. Victor wanted to do an opening speech, not a Guest of Honour speech. Fortunately most of the con members seemed to be present and were treated to one of the best opening/GoH speeches (outside of the recent, ginormous event) that I have heard.

To repeat, for someone who claims not to be widely read in the field, or actually be a science fiction writer, *per se*, Victor has thought much on the subject.

His main thesis was one that will probably be familiar: there is just as much good, great, mediocre and bad in sf as there is in any other branch or form of literature.

Just because something is science fiction, fantasy, gothic or for that matter romance or western does not mean it can be categorised as bad simply for belonging to a set genre. He illustrated this with examples from so-called "great" literature, the one I recall being Wuthering Heights as the Gothic. Another, "all romance is rubbish" but Jane Austen wrote nothing but romance. I have asked Victor if he can provide a full version of his speech (he worked from notes); we may be lucky.

The next item (after lunch) was the panel on fandom which I thought was going to be chaired by Antony Kling the conchair, but it turned out to be chaired by me with welcome support from Cathy Kerrigan and Rosie Peck. Despite the fact that panels on fandom are usually silly (and this one did start that way) this one rapidly became a serious discussion on how to produce fanzines, letterhacking, courses on English Literature and speculations on how to progress to filthy prodom.

That evening, the launching of Aphelion went like a bomb. The somewhat more financial publishers at Aussiecon should have had such a launching, they may have sold more books. Afterwards, Cathy and I then deserted the con to attend a buffet dinner at editor Peter McNamara's place. I was told the masquerade was very successful.

The Business Meeting the following morning lasted about three minutes. Cathy Kerrigan acted as delegate for her college, there was a guy there from Queensland Uni as an observer. Jeff Harris [oh yes?] acting as delegate for AUSFA proposed that the last constitution that ATSFA [Australian Tertiary SF Associations] had had before it died be readopted as new interim constitution. This was passed unanimously. [What is it you have about constitutions, Jeff? - eds.] Adelaide bid for the 1987 Unicon and no other institutions bid so Adelaide won. Let us hope that there are more delegates and some competing bids at that next con.

In brief summary, the con was a interesting amalgam of fannish branches. There was a huge display room arranged by Rosie Peck in cooperation with the Star Trek club, the Blakes 7 club, the Dr Who club and even Colin Norris and his UFO organisation.

There were wargaming and modelling miniatures and a continuous video room and, on the Sunday, the SCA told us all about themselves and gave us an exhibition in full regalia of hitting each other with sticks, very colourful.

I have few criticisms. Some of the panels showed lack of preparation. Memberships were not numbered, this caused a little inconvenience during the auction, also surnames were not used on name tags, this was a little inconvenient also.

Another problem with name tags that had nothing to do with the con, a lot of fans chose to use SCA, fannish or wargaming names. This is great fun for them but it still means one doesn't know who the bloody hell one has met. [Why Allan, you've met Bragg the Barbarian, The Wobbly Twins and maybe a Taral or two, or a Balrog. As long as people don't change their nicknames....]

It was a very small con. Why? Lack of publicity? Maybe but I don't really think so, more likely that it was a bad time of year for tertiary students. This was a great pity because it was a good con and deserved a greater membership. Next year maybe.

Allan Bray.

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That's... not quite it. But anyway, thanks for this issue goto Sally, Jack, Jenny, Mark, Jeff, Dennis, Yvonne, Allan, Janet. For Art to Joan Hanke Woods (Cover), Bill Rotsler (p3), Betty De Gabrielle (p8), Dennis Callegari (p8), Matjaz Smidt (p5). Otherwise, thanks to Nancy, Cath and Marc. 2107 060386

The Story So Far.

There are additionally some new clauses gathered together under the heading of 'REGULATIONS' which serve to explain the fact that there are now 'Regulations'.
(See above: Section 2.)

So much for all that. We shall resist the temptation to reprint in full both pre- and post-'Advention 85' versions of the constitution, although *iff** anyone should write us and ask, we shall send them copies of both.

The Plot Thickens.

With the new, all amended Constitution now in our hot little hands - although without the extensive commentary that Jeff promised [it is coming along later] - we're now in a position to offer some comments of our own on the new document and some of the claims in Jeff's letter last issue.

'If your moves to rescind the current constitution and install your proposed constitution succeed at Perth there will be a curious repercussion.'

Jeff Harris, Thyme #51, p.10 - to Jack Herman

If the Constitution is left as is, there will be an equally curious repercussion. What the revised Constitution actually now says is: "The Convenor for the next convention shall be selected at the business meeting of the current convention." All reference to an "Annual" event or a timeframe measured in years has been removed from the Constitution. So it seems that any business meeting would be acting quite constitutionally to fix the following National Convention to be the next day, the next year, two or even twenty years hence. The question of timing of the National Convention is left entirely open. The Constitution only says that the next NatCon has to be selected at the current one. So, where does that leave Capcon [Canberra, 1987]?

Precedent says that when the Constitution is changed, previously successful bids are not protected against the effects of those changes. Jack Herman's ruling at Eureka!con in 1984 established that. If Spawncon became ineligible to call itself the National Australain SF Convention last year, then similarly Capcon has lost the right to call itself the 1987 National Australian SF Convention also; for what the Constitution says quite plainly is that Swancon XI has the responsibilty the select the next NatCon.

It also leaves it open for Ratcon '86, Capcon, Syncon '88 or even Bathurst 5000 to be selected as that NatCon, if any of those want to bid.

The same clause of the Constitution goes on to say "Voting shall be in person and the winning bid will be decided by optional preferential voting, provided that the option of 'No Bid' be acceptable." So perhaps 'No Bid' could be successful. Under the old Constitution that would have left another full year to find an acceptable bid, but under the new Constitution, things are different.

"The membership of the Australian Science Fiction Society shall consist of all people who have paid membership fees to the convention committee of the current [National] Convention," says the Constitution, but if 'No Bid' is successful then when the gavel descends for the last time to close the convention, there is no convention committee for the new convention to pick it up. There's no convention committee for people to pay membership fees to; nobody to administer the Constitution; no members of the ASFS. In short, the Australian Science Fiction Society, its Constitution and the concept of National Conventions vanishes up its collective arsehole. *Finis.*

'The Perth people have been coping well enough with their problems. People usually have enough sense to cope and the Perth fans have done exactly that, giving very little cause for disquiet.' Jeff Harris, Thyme #51, p.9

Of course, some will say that special arrangements can be made, motions moved to get around the problem. Legal argument and reinterpretation of words and events can, as the affair with Spawncon at Eureka!con clearly showed, get you around any little problem to do with the Constitution. If there is no 'convenient' solution, you simply

* iff: a lovely mathematical term meaning 'if and only if'.

invent one. This is a fairly safe way of doing things since there is no provision for minutes of the Business Meetings to be kept or decisions recorded, and people tend to forget, and memories conflict.

'The only amendment to the Constitution there was the one listed as #2 on the Notice. As Chair of the [Business] Meetings at both Syncon 83 and Eurekacon I can tell you that the Constitution you received for Adventcon 85 was accurate. I am sorry you are having memory problems. Jack Herman, Thyme #52, to Jeff Harris.

I'm not out to criticise the decision making processes of "organised" fandom, but I am left wondering what point there is in having a Constitution, given things as they are. The one we have has very little to say about anything and what it does say can be and has been at various times happily sidestepped. So we asked ourselves: why do we need a Constitution?

What is the Constitution?

Answer:

a document designed to ensure three things:

- § that the running of the yearly Ditmar Awards (the Australian equivalent of the Hugo Awards) occurs in a reasonable and orderly fashion.
- § that each year's 'National Australian Science Fiction Convention' ('NatCon' for short) dispose of any profits it may make in such a way that benefits all the members of that Convention.
- § that the selection of each year's NatCon (the location and committee of which is decided a year or two in advance) occur in a reasonable and orderly fashion.

Jack Herman's suggested Constitution (Thyme #50) incorporates much the same reasoning, strangely enough.

'The new model Jack Herman Constitution is frankly not satisfactory. It fails to build on what has been learned from previous conventions and it will only start a new cycle of constitutional wrangles until we all end up in the same position again. Nothing will be solved. The history of Constitutional funny buggers will repeat itself.' Jeff Harris, Thyme #51, p.10.

Look, then, at the three things with which the Constitution deals....

The point about convention profits being redistributed to the benefit of the membership of the convention is nothing more than the codification of what is after all the universal practice, with which no-one has argument. Historically, as Jeff would know quite well, what the Constitution has and hasn't said hasn't stopped con organisers from disposing of excess funds in any way they've thought appropriate, anyway. It is therefore arguable that this part of the Constitution is unnecessary, or at least not of vital importance, seeing as how it merely echoes normal practice, and when not observed will be quietly ignored.

The matter of the selection of National Conventions, while relevant, is if you think about it more a procedural matter than a principle to be upheld. Everyone seems to agree that NatCons ought be held, and it has been shown in the past that the tradition of there being NatCons has by itself ensured that they are selected; on this point the Constitution is more a reflection of current opinion (should there be one-year or two-year-in advance bidding for the things) than a rule to be obeyed without question.

The only, definitive way in which a National Convention is different from other sf cons is that it is by tradition responsible for the running and awarding of the Ditmars.

At the heart of the Constitution, then, is the concern that there be Ditmar Awards and that they be run in a reasonable, fair and orderly fashion.

How amusing to see, then, that the Business Meeting of Advention 85 has removed from the Constitution the parts that deal with the Ditmar Awards, and made those parts into 'Regulations', without ever explaining what a 'Regulation' is. So: the central concern of the Constitution has been removed from the Constitution.

What is more, two of the new clauses in the Constitution - 3.02 and 3.03, under the section entitled 'Regulations' - contradict each other, one giving any NatCon committee the power to indiscriminately create as many 'regulations' as they like, on the spot; the other stating that only the people at the NatCon Business Meeting are empowered to make changes to any Constitutional 'Regulations'. [It gets better as it goes along, no?]

'The main problem is the lack of appropriate problem solving techniques being applied. No-one seems to have identified the nature of the problem and thence the obvious pathway to its solution(s).' Jeff Harris, *Thyme* #51.

Onto things that everybody knows should happen but that the Constitution doesn't make mention of.

The Constitution doesn't tell us that conventions have to be annual events with a Guest of Honour, a Fan Guest of Honour, and Ditmar Awards. (The term 'Ditmar' is carefully avoided in the Constitution, or the need for awards to be given at all. What it does is to state how many awards are to be given, if any are given at all.)

The Constitution doesn't tell us that there should be a Masquerade or a banquet, either, or room parties or panels or speeches. All of that is determined by traditions and fashions, not rules and regulations.

So where is the line between traditions and Constitutional requirements? My contention is that there isn't one, and that the ASFS Constitution is in fact no more than a sort of vehicle for legitimising the petty power games of some elements of fandom - a document with nothing to say. We would be better off without it.

Sydney Cove in 88

BID COMMITTEE FOR THE 27th AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

To Jeff Harris:

Box 272
Wentworth Building
University of Sydney, 2006.
Australia

February 8, 1986

Dear Jeff,

Thank you for your letter of January 29 and for, at last, clarifying some of the thinking that is behind the moves to alter the ASFS Constitution. You are correct when you assert that my letter, published in NOTIONAL 6 and later in THYME, was an emotional outburst. It was deliberately so. As you may recall I had previously made discreet enquiries of people connected with ADVENTION to discover what had occurred at the Business Meeting and read several Con reports without being better informed (and I still await my copy of the Programme Book). The final impetus to the letter was a garbled Con report in ASPN which made little sense but suggested considerable change. It is now 11 months since that Con and we still have no copy of the altered Constitution. Leigh claims not to know what was passed; he reckons he left (or maybe stopped paying attention) after his nihilist motion was defeated. Those I managed to meet at AUSSIECON weren't talking. How was Perth to operate without a copy of the document? Therefore, the response was not intended as logical - it was intended to produce the start of a dialogue where I could then exercise the cold logic for which I am better known.

So, what are the arguments which need a response?

I have proposed a new Constitution but not one to be inferminably debated. The idea is to produce a document that needs no change. A compromise between the current, annually amended one and Leigh's proposed unwritten one. I have assumed that fandom is basically sensible (only tending to lose that sense when assembled at Business Meetings when they assume the identities of Constitutional Lawyers, trying to draw up ever more exclusive amendments.) Ultimately, the ASFS Constitution will become like the WSFS Constitution - an increasingly complicated document, tolerated to keep the Business Bimors quiet in other areas of the Con. Since the current ASFS Constitution is only observed in the 'breach' (cf the way in which clause 1.06 is observed), one that states only the absolutely necessary and assumes the goodwill and traditions of fandom for the rest makes good sense to me. You will note that it makes no allowance for alteration nor for Business Meetings.

I have never proposed to 'ignore' the current constitution (whatever it might be). It was a move by the Current Convention Committee (to wit, SWANCON XI) to hold a Site Selection Meeting for 1988 at its Con. We, at SYDNEY COVE in 88, had adjusted ourselves to bidding at Capcon, and have had to move our schedules up a year to accommodate Perth's move. Therefore, we are moving quickly now to confirm guests etc. We, however, had the booking of the Hotel well under way, given that Sydney's limited Convention Space is perennially popular. (Things are not as bad as in the US where a bid for 1992 worldcon has had to disband because its proposed facilities have already been booked - but they are moving that way). My proposed Constitution was written after Perth decided to hold the 1988 Site Selection Meeting. If it weren't held at SWANCON, I'd allow for it being held at CAPCON by resolution.

You say that if Sydney were worried about its 1988 bid it should have had some one at ADVENTION to argue its case. This is silly. First, SC in 88 didn't exist at Easter last year. Second, no-one expected the one-year/two-year debate to be revived. It was thoroughly discussed at Business Meetings in 1978 (passed 2 years), 1979 (reverted to 1 year) and 1980 (back to 2 years). I recall that it was discussed at that humungous meeting at ADVENTION 81 and the proposal to revert to one year was resoundingly defeated. It has been a dead issue for 5 years, until the smallest Natcon for an era. I find the decision to revert both incredible and reactionary. And if you remember: Sydney fandom, as a whole, has opposed two year bidding and supported one year bidding. But even the Sydney paranoids have given up trying to change that aspect of the Constitution.

I have labelled those at ADVENTION 85 as the 'Adelaide elitists' not as you assert the 'Adelaide elite'. That is, they were the elitists in Adelaide. Not Adelaide's elitists but the Adelaide elitists. It doesn't surprise me that they emanate from Melbourne and Canberra. They, with Adelaide, tend to be the centre of elitism in Australian fandom.

You assert that a 2/3rd majority needed to change the Constitution will diminish the number of frivolous motions. I contend that if there were no facility to change the Constitution they would be even further reduced. I recall that the SRC and Union Constitutions at Uni needed 2/3rd majorities for change. I also recall a number of silly amendments. Fans are not motivated by the ease or unease of change but by liquor-induced discussions at Room Parties. Making it harder to alter the constitution will not make frivolous motions harder to pass but will make serious ones a little harder. Remember that the Australian Constitution only requires a simple majority in a majority of States for change and that it has been very rarely altered. I would like to think that a change to a larger majority will lead to an increase in sense at Business Meetings but know that it won't. The best solution is to eliminate the need for change.

You assert that Section 2.04 was altered at SYNCON 83 to eliminate the lower limit on nominations appearing on the ballot. It wasn't. Enclosed is an extract from the Daily Sin detailing all motions that went to the Final Business Meeting. The only amendment to the Constitution there was the one listed as #2 on the Notice. As Chair of the Meetings at both SYNCON 83 and EUREKACON I can tell you the Constitution you received therefrom for ADVENTION was accurate. I am sorry you are having memory problems.

I have two other items to note: I doubt the legality of the move to make the ASFAAs regulatory. I haven't seen the exact amendment but prior to 1985 there was no provision in the Constitution to create Regulations, so if such a provision were made at ADVENTION it couldn't be used until 1986.

There is, similarly, a simple solution to all the problems created by ADVENTION's Business Meeting: The Meeting at SWANCON could determine that my ruling at EUREKACON, depriving SPAWNCON of the NATCON and awarding it to Adelaide was wrong and that, therefore, Adelaide's Natcon in 1985 was not a legitimate one and, therefore, not a place where the Constitution could be changed. It would probably be the simplest solution.

Meanwhile, I will move toward simplifying and regularising the Constitution and providing the minimum possible framework for an ASF's system.

I look forward to more light from Adelaide.

Yours faithfully,

Jeff Harris

CC: LEIGH & W. ROSE and J. PETER
SWANCON XI
HRC
OF TRUTH.

2

22/2/85

A SIX (6) CLAUSE CONSTITUTION:

1. The Australian Science Fiction Society is an incorporated literary society. The Society shall further science fiction and fantasy in Australia by convening annually the Australian Science Fiction Convention and awarding the Ditmars.
2. Convention committee members always shall act with the utmost ability, competence and integrity to ensure that they in no way bring disrepute upon the Society.
3. Society membership shall be open to those persons who pay a joining fee to the Committee of the Australian Science Fiction

For example, do we even need a constitution? If it's only to keep SMOFa out of harm's way at the business session, then definitely no. Should site selection be by rotation? There are now 5 fan centres capable of running an ASFC, so has the opening bidding system had its day? This would cut out the uncertainties of preparing for an ASFC as each possible contender would know well in advance when it would be their turn. Obviously variations in the rotation would have to be allowed for (swapping around of sites and default arrangements if centres were unable to mount a bid) and, if it was by state, places like Queensland, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory could be included. An open invitation for newcomers. Do we still need a national convention? These days there are several conventions each year. When the constitution was adopted, there was usually only the national convention. Do the Ditmars still need to be held in conjunction with the ASFC? An independent body perhaps run by the Australian Science Fiction Foundation could manage the awards. Should the awards be made on the basis of a populist vote, or should they be chosen by an appointed panel like the British John W. Campbell Award? Should the number of Ditmars be reduced? May I suggest chopping out most of the fan awards. Firstly they only allow for certain categories (fanzine, fanwriter, and fan artists) and disenfranchise fans who have made major contributions in areas not included in the award categories. Besides there are only a handful of contenders in each category and only few of them actually win! Too few persons eligible and not enough talent to go around. The international sf Ditmar (which could be renamed the best British and American sf award) perhaps should be given for fiction published earlier than last year. Setting back it 2 years instead of only one. How much of published in 1985 have you read? I still catching up with 1984 and earlier let alone 1985!

SH A-

[illegible]

Perth: Cop Swap: immediately after Swancon XI, at Easter, Colleen & Adam Jenkins will be moving to York (about 80 km east of Perth, on the Southern Hwy) as a result of Adam being transferred to duty in the country. They will be able to be reached % York Police Station, York 6302, until a permanent address to live is found. At the same time, almost, Greg & Stephanie Turkich are moving back (similar transfer-type move) to Perth, presumably to their 8 Protea St, Greenwood 6024. Stephanie apparently is having problems with her health.... Kit & Paul Stevens have shifted, to 5 Reeve Street, Swanbourne 6010. Joanna Masters has found a new place to live: 12/198 Labouchere Street, Como 6152. One of the reasons for Sally Beasley withdrawing from (a) DUFF (race that she may well have won, to look at the voting figures - see p.4) is the announcement that she and Dave Luckett are expecting the arrival of a baby sometime in October. Congrats, you 2! Whether the child will be a Beasley-Luckett or a Luckett-Beasley "will depend on the toss of a coin", according to Ms Beasley. □□ John Hall Friedman is to open another bookshop. John is the owner and manager of the well-known 'Space Merchants' bookshop, Perth's specialty sf store, but the new bookshop, to be set up in the central city area will not be a specialist sf shop despite its name - 'Supernova' - it will do a line of popular stuff (with some sf) and will hopefully help offset the losses incurred thus

far by 'Space Merchants'. The best of luck, John, you know how thankless a business it can be; just don't get jack of the thing entirely. □□□ In an unrelated non-move, Trish Crowther has yet to move to Perth, from N.Z., although we understand this is still definitely underway. If you're at a loose end in Perth, of a Wednesday evening, the first one of every month there's a dinner held at some restaurant or other (the venue changes each time) where fans meet to wine, dine and socialise. Michelle Muysert is the person to contact about this - you could probably give her a ring on (09) 367 6745 to see where the next outing is being held. And that's the news from Perth.

Melbourne: It's the year of Little Disasters; after Diane Hawthorne's accident with a steamy car radiator, it's most recently been Lucy Sussex's turn to suffer at the hands of a car. A broken nose and a 'slightly dead car' were what resulted when she was slammed into by someone else, but at the recent Nova Mob Lucy was looking quite well, thankfully. The question to ask, of course, is: who's next? □□□

A new bookshop selling second hand books has opened up on the First Floor of Flinders Way Arcade, in the city - 238 Flinders Lane. Describing itself as a 'warehouse' they specifically advertise having science fiction (as well as about thirteen hundred other lines, it must be admitted), but it could be worthwhile checking out. □□□ Talk about the vultures circling, though... 'The Science Fiction Shop', of 56 Eighth Avenue, New York 10014, USA has sent out leaflets 'to our customers in Australia & New Zealand' mentioning the fact that 'we are aware of the closing of 'Space Age Books', and that they have a 'one time special mailing' to help us 'fill the gap' left by the closure. For the balance of 1986, 'we offer you a 10% discount on paid orders, or a 5% discount on charge orders. The minimum order requirement for the discount is \$25.00 (presumably US\$), not including shipping charges.' How nice of them. □□□ Hmm, we seem to have drifted into American notices which might interest anybody (or nobody) in Australia; another such notice is the fact that there's now a 'Buckaroo Banzai club', Team Banzai, which is set up in America but which is free to join. The address is The Banzai Institute, %20th Century Fox, P.O.Box 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90213, U.S.A. You're supposed to get bulletins, etc... Back to local events, and it's a list of 'Star Trek' episode screenings for the year, held as usual at the National Mutual Theatrette, cnr. Collins & Williams Streets, in the city. The next screening is on Saturday the 5th of April, the theme of the episodes shown being 'Love' (such as is in 'Star Trek', at least), with the first of five shows starting, as always, at 6:30pm, and the last finishing at 11:15pm. The screenings attract a large, semi-regular crowd, with the sale of 'Star Trek' memorabilia as well. Be there?

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