

# CLEAR ETHER!

Personal-genzine of Samuel Edward Konkin III for distribution in Amateur Press Associations (with companion commentzine . . .AND ON GREEN!), for trades, locs, artwork and even subscription. Address all correspondence to New Libertarian Enterprises, Box 1748, Long Beach, CA 90801; Personal: SEK3.

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## OUTLAW FANDOM

The recent purge of the New York University Science Fiction Society (NYUSFS) from the campus of NYU may well be just the first neutron into a mess of U235 nuclei. The mundanes' power elite may well regret their move to drive the most radical SF club underground, and the rest of fandom may well be blasted out of its complacency.

NYUSFS began just like many campus clubs in the late 1960s. The New Wave was cresting, and so was the New Left, but the early club members had little sympathy for either. They would have been fen in the 1950s or 1940s; most had been reading SF and fringe material for years. Two factors made a difference with their club.

In the fall of 1970, Richard Friedman (who would become known as the "Mayor"—*Cities in Flight* style—of NYUSFS) and the other founders set up the first recruiting table at registration week at NYU. His TANSTAAFL sign attracted none other than yours truly and soon the club itself became the center of libertarian-leaning SF fen (*frefen*). Until 1975 libertarians would come from anywhere in the New York metropolitan area to meet their *frefen* brethren at the weekly Thursday NYUSFS meetings, especially after the Movement split in 1973 over the Libertarian Party. And this in turn produced a majority of non-students attending meetings, though both Richard and I were registered graduate students.

The second factor was the structure of New York fandom itself. Long known as the Balkans of fandom, the New York SF fannish community was a mess of scattered clubs and feuding factions. There were the Lunarians who were seen only at Lunacons for they had a closed membership, something unheard of in the rest of fandom. Then there were the insurgent breakaway groups from Lunarians, with names like Fanarchists, Fanoclasts, FISTFA. Finally, there were clubs at the densest concentration of colleges in North America. No one talked to anyone—most of the time.

The *frefen* in NYUSFS never politicized the club for the simple reason that they were entirely of the anti-

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political, anti-party movement. But they left two legacies to NYUSFS, even after the Western Hegira of 1975 when many of us moved to Long Beach. (Friedman got as far west as Philadelphia a couple of years later.)

First, officers were considered an amusing gag for the purpose of satisfying university mysticism with such nonsense. Nobody spoke for anybody, there was no power to compete for, and so the most heterogeneous group you could possibly imagine with some of the wildest individualists got along. The major decision each meeting was deciding where to go for the aftermeeting. Programmes were set up when tired old Richard felt like putting himself out. Calling for a vote was tantamount to asking a roomful of Quakers to bear arms.

Only one vote was ever indulged in, at least by yours truly. Having come from a Western tradition and been long appalled by the closed "fandom" of the Lunarian mold, I had started using the phrase "Solarian" to describe those of us in disagreement with this concept. As the membership of the club became mostly non-student, I suggested those uncomfortable with calling themselves NYUSFSians use the non-specific Solarians label.

Neil Schulman entered it as a genuine motion that NYUSFS change its name "officially" to that of NYUSFS/Solarians, and since it was for the benefit of bedazzling the Authorities, I went along with it and it passed, about two-to-one. I can't remember any other motions passing but we may have just ignored them. I never voted before or after that once.

NYUSFS/Solarians would probably have remained an obscure fan club or even died out if it had not been for a unifying glue and self-publicizing project that got started just before the Hegira. While attending a sample LASFS meeting in February, 1974, I was smitten with the concept of APA-L (on which I later soured considerably) and attempted to start a monthly version in NYUSFS called APA-NYU or APA-v. (v = "nu," a pronunciation pun.) APA-v somehow limped

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# SKYLOCS OF SPACE

Written at Westercon, July 7, 1979

Sam,

This is in response to your **CLEAR ETHER! IV/2** on the space program. As one might expect, I have no substantial disagreement with your point of view. I must say, though, that I find your rhetoric and presentation irritating. I keep looking for the cloak streaming in the breeze behind you.

(I caution myself: I have a strong bias toward dense, closely-reasoned argumentation, even when I am thoroughly familiar with the issues...)

**Imprimis:** I am surprised that you expected your audience to be thoroughly familiar with the economic theory underlying your assertions re government hindrance of space travel and state monopoly on space industrialization and utilization.

**Secundus:** I am surprised that you included at all the mention of the intra-party gabble-mongering "Space Cadets vs Grubeaters." If most libertarians can realistically be expected to take no interest or pleasure in the really byzantine ideological slogan-mongering of the LP, I seriously doubt that an average group of apans will find the issue anything but gibberish.

I must admit, however, that the Randian infelicity of Tonie Nathan's solecism gave me a bit of a chuckle. Rand managed to carry off that sort of thing by sheer force of intelligence and a strong sense of melodrama. Unfortunately, when anybody else uses one of these rhetorical devices, they come off, at best, as sententious.

It happens that one of my closest friends has an unfortunate affection for the NASA Space Program. Naturally, the issue has come up on several occasions. Aside from the usual objections about the inavailability of available private capital to get space industrialization into effect (which has all been properly countered and accepted), he raises one issue which he regards as insuperable, while I, of course, do not: the exhaustion of natural resources means that if we do not get into space now, it will be impossible to do so ever again in the future.

Of course, the argument is nonsensical, for several reasons: in terms of the frame of reference, say of a Golden Age Roman, our planet has been exhausted of its material resources for nearly half a millenium (which is to say that game is immeasurably less plentiful, we live on an incredibly impoverished diet (in terms of variety), and firewood is prohibitively expensive. Such a Roman, if he were interested in mining technology of his day, would look at the richest ores coming out of copper and tine mines as being little better than dirt and of no mining interest at all.

There may well be an end to what can be done by switching from one resource to another and refining refining techniques, but we aren't anywhere near that limit yet. Nor, despite the Club of Rome fofooraw in the last decade are we anywhere near the exhaustion of even the most vulnerable of our natural resources—petroleum. The Colorado plateau contains nearly 50 times as much shale oil as the total of known

petroleum reserves—and I recall an article last year in Science which indicated that shale oil could be competitively produced and refined when the price of free oil reached \$18 (1977 standard) per barrel (e.g. as of 2 weeks ago), using the recently developed "rubelizing" techniques.

What is happening now is not "exhaustion" of natural resources—things are simply getting more expensive for awhile, until production technology catches up to the demands placed on it. We are entering a lifetime of relative resource austerity, to be sure, but at a time when we are also learning to compensate for that austerity, to some extent.

This probably sounds beside the point, but actually it is a preliminary to another set of space-related ideas—namely, that there is an irresistible set of economic factors pushing man into space. Fundamentally, it doesn't matter whether NASA does it now, ten years from now, or never: eventually, humankind will be spacefaring, at the very least within the solar system. The new dark age which threatens (and is a serious threat at this point) may mean a setback of centuries, but we will get there eventually, simply because there comes a time when it's cheaper to use space manufacturing than planet-based.

I realize that to the space-freaks (although not necessarily to the space-advocates) this is a horrifying idea, but in many ways this speculation eases my mind: I cannot reconcile myself to the exportation of Middle-American bourgeoisie values to the stars.

Well. I haven't written a loc in about three years. I suppose that I owe you the pleasure I got from doing this one. Thank you.

Bill Patterson

P.S. I find it more satisfying to regard NASA as a public-funded art institute. I find it difficult to take it seriously as a scientific nature.

And thank you, Bill, for one of the best letters-of-comments I've seen in any zine for a long time. Perhaps you will find faneds beating down your anarchodoor as soon as you get a stable mailing address.

Naturally, I find myself in large agreement with many of your premises, and in disagreement with matters of tone, style and direction. Most importantly, I think we should both review what were my intentions in writing "Je M'Oppose A La Programme d'Espace!"

The main thrust, you will remember, was a plea for live-and-let-live, an end to the shutting out of debate on this subject by sheer intimidation. Perhaps it is not so prevalent in other fan areas, but L.A. certainly has a powerful, or at least loud and influential, "lobby" for the State's Space Pork Barrel. Judging by the responses so far, I seemed to have succeeded in that.

Secondly, I was interested in opening the debate on the programme itself, and alternative methods of space exploration and colonization. Notice that I spent only the last segment on any of those arguments, the "economics" you fear I take for granted. At Westercon where this was first distributed, Barry Gold told me he thought it would be ineffective in that area. The next

day I ran into Tim Kyger who told me that he finally made up his mind after reading "Je M'Oppose"—*against* Space Statism. A marginal case, to be sure, since Tim is already quite libertarian, but then one always gets the marginal cases first, if at all.

"Space Cadets and Grubeaters" was only slightly connected with the "Je M'Oppose" article. The main reason I wanted to run it alongside was to present hard evidence that the writer (myself) was not "secretly in cahoots with some anti-space lobby." The article itself was justified by my wanting to go on public record for *frefen* as dissociating ourselves from the Partyarchs once again, stressing this specific issue.

Now for specific points in your loc: I prefer rhetoric properly synthesizing emotional response and rational argumentation. Ellison, for example, succeeds at the former, reaching many, but leaving little of substance, easily displaced by the first cogent opposition. A scientific paper, by physicist or praxeologist, may be the last reasonable word on a subject, but will be read by few though I am sure thoroughly convince those few who yawn their way through. Both are needed, as the Ancients and Medievalists were well aware when they set up the Trivium.

You are quite correct to bring up the resource-exhaustion argument. I left it out simply because it was too specific for a short, general attack, but it is currently the leading specificity used in defense of the "Lesser Of Evils" style of argument. (The Lesser of Evils in this case is dichotomized as "Better an inefficient, repressive State space effort than none at all because it will be too late!" Of course, the State uses the same argument against competing police, roads, mail delivery, and welfare for candy-mal-nourished children—though not finding that these resources will run out.) And you can add to your Colorado shale my own favorite, the Albertan Athabasca Tar Sands, a giant lake of oil mixed with sand.

But I do disagree with you that the problem that seems to exist relative to scarcity is the fault of laggard technology. On the contrary, technology is proceeding apace quite nicely, enough to stimulate Timothy Leary to paroxysms of pleasure at its exponential growth and extrapolating curves to immortality, chemical-induced genius, and out-of-body space travel next decade, if not next week.

The real problem is the burning up of capital by the State's depreciation of the currency into worthlessness. Using the "price" of gold as the only reliable indicator in a planet of states gone inflation-happy, the U.S. dollar has *halved* in value in one year! Or 100% inflation! Now there's a curve going exponential to a runaway inflation *a la* 1923 Germany: the Crack-Up Boom. And since the Roman Empire went down by inflation, not to mention the Weimar Republic and democratic Brazil, a "Dark Age" is certainly possible from this cause. Then again, an underground economy triumphant (see Neil Schulman's *Alongside Night* for the scenario) could well be an immediate answer—interestingly reminiscent of Asimov's *Foundation* though in a more immediate context.

Considering that the most likely expression of this "Middle-American bourgeois values" exported will be that of Southern California, I have no fear of the lack of diversity, tolerance or understanding—but then again, it will be the Counter-Economy that will get to those stars, not Ohio Senators on the make.

And as far as an Art Institute, NASA is about as ugly as any other State-supported artistic patronage, to be sure, but I think it well deserves to be classified with the U.S. Farm Support Program or the Swine Flu Prevention Program—a fat pork barrel for some congressmen and local politicians.

Keep in touch and feel free to reply again, or when next stimulated.

—SEK3

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*Continued from page one, column two*

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through a couple of years until we left, and those of us who had gone could keep in touch with the old club (and establish contact with new members). With the rise of Marc Glasser and Donna Camp to the organizational responsibility of APA-v, it has become as successful as any other APA—though with an indiosyncratic weirdness unique. The spectrum of zines from standard mailing comments to "psychotic dada" exists if not amicably, at least together. There are no rules other than what Nature sets if you want to reproduce on paper, be stapled and make the copy count: no fees, no membership, no waitlist, no limitations (and some would say, no standards or taste).

So much for background. In Spring of 1979, New York University, after several warnings, denied meeting access to the Loeb Student Center. This much is established. Allegedly, NYUSFS stood accused of having a majority of non-students present at a meeting. Considering that the club had "got away" with this heinous practice for eight years, and even explicitly notified NYU of its non-student composition by a deliberate name change, one assumes something must have triggered this action off. Supposedly the scuttlebutt goes, some of the attendees were obnoxious, loud, carrying illicit substances, and/or offending.

Now this occurred in the United States of America where these activities are considered expressions of free speech and defended especially by civil libertarian [*sic*] liberals—those with which NYU administrators habitually identify.

NYUSFS/Solarians did not disperse nor beg the authorities for forgiveness. They spat upon the Eden from which they were cast and continued meeting: in Washington Square Park, in a nearby restaurant long the scene of after-meetings, in someone's home, on the Staten Island Ferry (an annual tradition). In short, it went underground.

Now, was all Fandom Assembled ready to rise up and defend this perfidious attack on its member? Was NYU surrounded by picketers? Did prominent Lunar-ians, Fanoclasts, FISTfians and members of other

college clubs call talk shows, inundate the newspapers and magazines with letters, stage demonstrations to attract the Argus-many eyes of New York media—the central American concentration of said media? Did any established club even offer a helping hand or offer sympathy?

Release your pent breath.

So not only was the oppressive nature and state-collaborationist conservatism of an allegedly liberal college exposed, the seamy hypocrisy of fannish solidarity (at least in New York) stood cracked like an eggshell, with the putrescent gas of empty promises all that filled the rotten inside.

NYUSFS/Solarians will survive, if need be, the Jews (or Palestinians, if you prefer) of fandom, the fannish "boat people," the floating fannish crap game. The New York component may well continue as NYUSFS regardless of whatever group of mundane-collaborator types are "granted" official status by NYU to replace them. The rest of the Solarians across the continent now have the historic example to weld themselves into a mutually supportive underground, no longer counting on the rest of the supposedly fannish "family" to be of any use.

And this is why I say both institutionalized fandom and mundanity may well regret their inaction and action respectively. They have planted and fertilized the seeds of an Outlaw Fandom, respectful of no authority, trusting of no collaborating comrades. The resulting wild blossom will surely provide the headiest fragrance since the Futurians and the New Wave, but the bitterness of the fruit is still to be determined.

To offer support to NYUSFS in any way, write Marc Glasser, 41 Easter Parkway, Apt. 10-B, Brooklyn, NY 11238. To remain in contact with Outlaw Fandom, write SEK3 at address in colophon. ■

## REVIEWS

**Buck Rogers in the 25th Century** [Cinema, TV] At the writing of this review, I've only seen the movie twice and coming attractions for the television program. It certainly has its problems: campy robots (even with delightful Mel Blanc's voice), atrocious taste (disco dancing between Buck and the Princess), and a general scrapping of relationship with the comic strip, film serial, and the original book. Even as Space Opera, it's more *BS Galactica* (RIP) than *Star Wars*. All that said, hope is not yet dead. First, rudimentary plotting was maintained, though strained past pulpish limits, and SF pro Alan Brennert is taking over story control for the series. The previews of the next episode show strong casting—Jack Palance is a perfect Space Opera villain—and hence maintenance of support, especially financial. This show may well go in the opposite direction that *Galactica* did, and for that, bears continued watching. The producers could have used a fan liaison (like Bakshi had for *LotR I*), since almost every fan club I know meets Thursday nights. Still, with videotape, there's hope. ★★

## STFNAL

**Alongside Night** by J. Neil Schulman [Book] Neil's turned pro and his book is now at your local store. There will be plenty of reviews in libertarian magazines—including **New Libertarian**—but I thought I'd mention it in here for frefen who might have missed them. For those who want the most hard-core, radical, New Libertarian position portrayed in fiction a *la* *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* and *Atlas Shrugged*, here it is. For those few remaining fen who don't now that Neil worships the ground Heinlein walks on, have fun looking for "influences." And at the risk of accusation of rank nepotism (he dedicated the book to me), I'll rate it anyways. ★★★

**Fahrenheit 451** by Ray Bradbury [Theatre] Now, I've seen the movie, and I've read the book, and they seemed pretty much the same. But even with a ten-year gap and making allowances for differences among media, the changes Bradbury made for the play version (premiered this past summer in Los Angeles) were strikingly noticeable. After some thought, I think he's improved it—though the basic, libertarian message remains unaltered. This is the only Bradbury I remember with a fairly optimistic ending and it's good to see it get some more recognition. The speeches by the Fire Captain are incredible challenges for an actor, and the one carrying it off in the L.A. Premiere got standing ovations for his labors. Catch it when it reopens this coming month (October). ★★★

[The night I saw this play, Bradbury himself gave a speech to the audience after the play, filmed by BBC.]

**Duty Now And For The Future** by Devo [Recording] "Punk" rock (I dislike calling it New Wave for obvious association) has a strong stfnal influence, especially noticeable in Devo and the L.A. local group, *The Monitors*. (Also Germany's *Kraftwerke*, which I've heard all too little of, but they are responsible for some of Blondie's arcane sound.) Although I found nothing on this newer album to come up to "Jocko Homo" (*Are We Not Men?*), "Mr. Kamikaze/Mr. DNA" is quite amusing. For those tired of finding SF/Fantasy in the neo-classical rock of King Crimson, Procul Harum, and Rick Wakeman, check out the punks. By the way, the anti-*Brave New World* philosophy of Devo is as libertarian as the Sex Pistols' *Anarchy in the U.K.* ★★

**FLASH:** I just received word from Neil that Jacob Fondie, editor at Crown Publishing, is working on a mass-market book on Dungeons & Dragons with E. Gary Gygax. Along with the recent articles by the *Los Angeles Times* on D&D, it looks like it's finally reached mundanity. Review will be forthcoming as soon as I can get a copy. —SEK3

LOCs and artwork are always welcome in Clear Ether!

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