

OPUNTIA
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ART CREDIT: The cover depicts Opuntia glomerata, by an unknown artist from N.L. Britton and J.N. Rose's 1920 book "The Cactaceae: Descriptions and illustrations of plants of the cactus family."

EDITORIAL: When will they ever learn? I have been reading in the newspapers all the fuss about deficit and debt reduction. Politicians have been slow to move on this because they know that unemployed voters are angry voters and because most of them are people persons, reluctant to be the ones blamed for ruining lives by layoffs. Business owners are used to dealing with bottom lines and giving orders; many of them fail at politics because they are shocked to find that one simply cannot issue decrees and have them fulfilled obediently.

One reason the Kondratieff long wave, the 60-year cycle of the economy currently at its nadir, works the way it does is because it crosses the generations. People who lived through the misery and desperate poverty of the Great Depression are rapidly dwindling away from old age. The 1929 and 1931 recessions were actually not that bad; a Kondratieff nadir is not necessarily severe. But the governments of the day panicked and began slashing spending, hiking taxes, and reducing deficits and debts. By 1933, these policies had destroyed the economy. Those responsible for such bad planning are long dead and gone. The leaders in office today never experienced the Great

Depression. They may have heard stories from parents or grandparents, but stories are not the same as having actually experienced hard times. Thus our leaders are repeating the same mistakes as the politicians of 1933.

Social Credit had the right idea, that the Depression could be cured by increasing the velocity of money as it circulates through the economy, rather than withdrawing it by taxes and reduced spending. But Social Credit was never able to gain federal power, and their provincial leadership was from the lunatic fringe.

It took WW2 to demonstrate that deficits did not make any difference. At one point, Canada had full employment despite a debt of 110% of the GNP. Huge quantities of armaments were manufactured, then used up in the fighting. The war economy proved that most of the workers could have been used in productive manufacturing just as easily as in building ships that would be sunk, warplanes that would be shot down, etc. There was no worry about money in the fight against Germany, yet today people say we can't afford a space program. The subsequent Cold War used up trillions of dollars and 50,000 lives in Vietnam alone, yet productive use of that money elsewhere on social programs is considered inflationary, wasteful, etc.

Those unemployed workers of the Depression were put to work producing items that could just as easily have been dumped directly into the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Their labour was not really essential. After the war, there was a brief trend to shorter work weeks and longer vacations, made possible by the surpluses of technology. But in the last decade, people have been forced to work longer for less pay, producing items of little value. Billions are wasted on corporate takeovers, legal papershuffling, real estate flips, and such. Instead of working fewer hours for the same pay and enjoying the fruits of technology, we slave.

THE CANADIAN SF & FANTASY AWARDS (Part I)

by Garth Spencer

In 1980, four people in Halifax (John Bell, Bob Atkinson, George Allanson and Sheldon Goldman) decided to start an annual Canadian SF and Fantasy Award. As he wrote later, Bob Atkinson had discussed such an award with John Bell "as a sort of Canadian Hugo equivalent" several years previously. Bell and Atkinson had researched and taught SF for several years.

What were (and are) the reasons to have such an award? First off, the fact that up to this time, Canadian SF readers were generally liable to assume there were no SF writers in (or from) Canada. This was part of a mild, persistent national inferiority complex. From time to time, some Canadians try to challenge this attitude, in a variety of ways. Secondly, since the awards were conceived there have been more and more Canadians writing SF and fantasy in Canada, increasingly with Canadian characters and settings. As Robert Runté wrote, "the purpose of the award is to publicize the existence of Canadian SF authors, artists, film makers, etc."

I suggest that the publicity effort comes *first*, both for the SF works and for the award; and the success of the award depends on the preceding publicity. What this means should become clear as we go along.

Phase I: Shakedown Cruise

The first CSFFA was presented at Halcon 3 in March 1980, by Spider Robinson to A.E. van Vogt, for "lifetime achievements". (Mr. Robinson, who moved to Halifax from the States, has won awards for novels such as *Telepath*, *Stardancer* and *Mindkiller*. A.E. van Vogt, born in Manitoba, wrote and published over 600,000 words of SF for the American market, while living in Toronto, before moving to the States in 1944.) The award this year consisted of a sculpture by one Mike Spencer, modeled after the "Coeurl" in van Vogt's story "The Black Destroyer" (valued at \$500). (Note: no subsequent con was willing to shell out this much.)

The original rules drawn up by Bob Atkinson and John Bell were that

- nomination and then voting forms would be disseminated to fans in Canada in advance of the Convention. Publicity, ballot formulation and distribution to all Canadian natives and residents was left up to hosting cons.

- the award would be open to Canadian natives, born in Canada, regardless of current address or citizenship, OR to Canadian residents, now living in Canada, regardless of their birthplace or citizenship.

- the award might be nominated and awarded on the basis of a specific work, of any length, of SF, fantasy, or academic research or criticism, published in the calendar year previous to the awarding convention; OR for lifetime contributions to these fields.

- the Convention of the year would go to the trouble of providing the winner's trophy.

— the Convention function would rotate in a five-year cycle among five Canadian SF conventions (Halcon, V-Con, NonCon, Maplecon and Boréal).

The intention was that the award would be given by some hosting Canadian convention, and this function would rotate among a number of Canadian conventions. Atkinson wrote that eligibility requirements, and an administration plan were finalized in September and October of 1979, and in January to February of 1980, it was decided that the Award should move between the major regional SF cons in Canada — Halcon, Boréal, Maplecon, NonCon and V-Con. Atkinson also writes that telephone contacts were made with organizers of all these cons except Boréal, and agreements for 81 through 83 made with V-Con, NonCon and Maplecon; and that the next three sites were announced at Halcon 3.

[March '80]: There [was] some discussion about setting up a National Committee for the Award ... Things were going so smoothly, however, that a Committee didn't seem necessary. (This was, in retrospect, a mistake; the early Hugo organizers made the same one.) (Atkinson, 84/85)

By Dec. 1980, Atkinson wrote, John Bell took over Halcon and the CSFFA, and wrote out "Notes on the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award" and sent it to "many fan leaders across the country".

In accordance with the rotation, V-Con bestowed the 1981 CSFFA. The chair, Fran Skene, wrote in 1985 that the first she ever heard of the award was in Bob Atkinson's

long letter, telling her more-or-less out of the blue that V-Con 9 had the honour to host the CSFFA. Fran wasn't impressed with what amounted to an edict directing V-Con to spend \$500 on a trophy.

As it worked out, V-Con 9 ("Convention 2") gave a posthumous CSFFA to the late Susan Wood, for "lifetime contributions to the field".

Susan Wood, an alumna of Carleton University, was both a Big Name Fan and an academic who brought some respectability to SF. William Gibson, now a Big Name SF author in Vancouver, was a member of her writing workshops. By the time of her death, at 34, a friend in Seattle (Jerry Kaufman) figures she was on the verge of a professional editing career; she had co-edited a volume of heroic fantasy, *Amazons*, and edited a collection of Ursula LeGuin's non-fiction, *The Language of the Night*. Her posthumous award took the form of a calligraphic scroll.

Robert Runté adds that Dr. Susan Wood would have won a ballot hands down in 1981, anyway. Fran recognized that V-Con 9 did nothing to help define the award, by designating the recipient "by executive fiat."

Fran Skene later wrote (in CASPERAPA, in 1985),

... I'm not a great believer in giving a writer an award when the main reason that he/she, instead of author x, y or z, is getting it is a geographical one (Fran wrote). It is only human to sit on one's laurels, and a writer who might, after a great deal of work, become great is, instead, stalled at the "pretty good" stage ... But at the same time, I have listened to Robert's impassioned plea for a recognition of ... Canadian SF ... that wouldn't be

appreciated by the primarily American voters for the major SF awards.

Convention 3 (1982) was NonCon 5, which gave the CSFFA to Phyllis Gotlieb for "lifetime contributions to the field". This year's award consisted of a sculpture by local artist Frank Johnson.

Probably this is why a controversy arose in 1982 about the definition of "Canadian". Partly this was because the first recipient, A.E. van Vogt, had moved to the U.S. as far back as the 40's, and, in part, this was a controversy because Spider Robinson lives and writes in Canada, but is a Landed Resident. (There's a long, bureaucratic story about this, and I guess, judging from some of Mr. Robinson's published remarks, it's really too wearisome to go into.) What, then, were the criteria for choosing nominees and giving out this award? Partly the controversy arose because, in the view of Atkinson,

someone (Robert Runté?) at NonCon decide[d] to try and *change* the eligibility rule to Canadian CITIZENS ONLY. The publication of this change in the semi-periodical *New Canadian Fandom* causes quite a stir in the mails, especially between Runté and Spider Robinson. (Atkinson, March 1985)

Runté wrote later that Atkinson's foregoing account "does not entirely jibe with my own view. At the risk of confusing readers further, here is my version (revision?) of what happened:

(1) In 1980, I was under the impression that Atkinson *had* set up a national CSFFA committee,

and that I was the representative for Alberta/NonCon. Atkinson had discussed his plans for such a committee in March of that year and I assumed he had gone ahead with them. When Vaughn Fraser phoned me from Vancouver to discuss the Convention II award, we agree[d] that it was important to keep the committee and the award going, even though Atkinson had gaffiated without a trace.

(2) John Bell, on whom the CSFFA organizing seems to have fallen ... did not send *me* a copy of the "official" CSFFA rules, supposedly distributed to "fan leaders across the country" ... This was rather an unfortunate oversight, since at the time I was both publishing the main national newsletter and chairing the committee appointed by NonCon 5 to administer the award.

(3) For the first time in the history of the CSFFA, I arrange to print and distribute a ballot for the Award. I believe that a nationally distributed ballot is essential to both the award's credibility and its usefulness, since the purpose of the award is to publicize the existence of Canadian SF authors, artists, film makers, etc.

(4) Thus resisting the temptation to simply award the CSFFA to local Edmonton SF author (and my personal favourite), H.A. Hargreaves, I draw up a ballot. In our earlier correspondence, Atkinson had been quite specific about who qualified for the award in terms of "professional" activities (the [1983] CSFFA is not open to fans), but simply said "Canadian" in describing nationality. I interpreted this as "Canadian citizen", since this appeared to

me to be the only logical line that could be drawn. To the best of my knowledge I was not *changing* any regulations nor did I expect this definition to be in any way controversial. It did not occur to me that non-citizens might want a Canadian SF award. (5) While bracing myself for a storm of protest over the exclusion of fans and/or a fan category from the CSFFA, and another possible fight over the inclusion of non-writers; while continuing to fight the intense apathy and ignorance of Canadian fans who didn't believe there were more than two writers in the country worthy of the award; while fighting a losing battle with a number of American fans who saw the CSFFA as an affront to American SF, motherhood and apple pie; while trying to convince various local cons that they really did want to hold a "Convention" and come up with the extra cash for the award; and while trying to generally revive an award apparently abandoned by its founders, I was shocked to discover that the major controversy that arose was over the world 'citizen' on the ballot." (Runté, "CSFFA Meets NonCon", *Cause Célèbre*, May 1985, pp. 2-3)

It was about 1983 that a recession hit Canada; this apparently is why *New Canadian Fandom* did not appear for almost half a year. This was when, and this was why, I started publishing *Maple Leaf Rag* from Victoria.

This was also just about the time that I first heard of the CSFFAs at all, and started asking whether this was a dead issue or not. To my knowledge, almost the first anyone in Victoria knew that the CSFFA even *existed* was when a correspondent happened to send my club a letter

enclosing the Maplecon ballot. In August, after the deadline. I wondered if it were mere chance that anybody in Victoria got to see one of the things.

"Why Did You Change the Rules in Mid-Game?" "Who, Me?"

Spider Robinson objected to what he perceived as a *change* in CSFFA eligibility rules, and said so, in an open letter and article to the *Ottawa SF Statement*. The interminable "What is Canadian??" issue got dragged into this controversy. Robinson's article and Robert's reply appeared in NCF 6 (dated Jan. 1983), in which Robert argued that there were two purposes for the award: a) to spotlight the best Canadian SF or fantasy in each year, and to remind Canadians, and the world at large, that there are quite a number of Canadian SF and Fantasy authors. And quite a body of published work already. He feels there is a tendency for Canadian work to be ignored, become invisible, even be refused publication, largely because it is Canadian.

[May '83]: I receive a copy of the January 1983 issue of NCF, and learn of NonCon's CSFFA rule change and the mail controversy it has created. I write a letter to Runté at NCF restating the rule structure, with copies to several other people around the country. I then check with the Maplecon people in Ottawa, who are slated to handle the 1983 Award at their convention in July.

I find that they're in something of a quandary as to which rule to use. They were originally told the rules back in 1980, and now NonCon has told

them something different. They try a plebiscite to fans to determine any preference (handled by Irving Altman), but get little response. A poll is put on that year's [award] ballot, and John Bell and I decide to go along with the results of that poll. ...

John and I decide to attend Maplecon to see the results of the poll, AND to try and contact someone from Boréal, who still have not made any commitment to the Award for 1984.

In my letter to Runté, intended for publication ASAP in NCF, I give something of the history of the CSFFA, and the fact that, despite rumours to the contrary, *no National Committee for the Award had ever been set up*. Unfortunately, we never saw another issue of NCF, so I presume my letter did not see the light of day. Several others got copies of the letter, however, including Spider Robinson, the Maplecon people, John Bell, etc.

In the letter I also stated that I felt that we now DID need a National CSFFA Committee, and John and I agreed to chair it, with reps appointed from the cons involved. Since the letter was never published (to my knowledge), no one heard about this. By the way, whatever DID happen to NCF? (Atkinson, March 1985)

Diane Walton-LeBlanc wrote to MLR (I believe about Sept. 83):

This whole business of a Convention makes for a great deal of speculation. As co-chair-being of Convention 3 (NonCon 5), I was never very sure if

it had any great significance to the majority of those attending. We were constantly assured that a "national" convention would draw more out-of-province fans, but I don't think we attracted any more than we usually do. The hot competition for this coveted award was not exactly front-page news.

Meanwhile, the convention hosting this event is expected to foot the bill for cost of ballots, and the trophy awarded to the winner.

So what is the point of such an award, or such an "honour" for a convention? If the award does continue, should there be a single selection committee, who handle the voting, purchase the trophy, etc.? Perhaps all conventions across Canada could contribute a set membership fee towards this. And as long as we're speculating — maybe the committee could publish a newsletter to provide the badly-needed communication line that we obviously lack.

As they say — who's in charge here?

Maplecon 5/Convention 4 awarded the CSFFA to Judith Merrill, for lifetime contributions to the field. This year, the award took the form of a blue and silver plaque, mounted on a wooden escutcheon. (Judith Merrill is not only a semiretired SF writer, who immigrated from the States; not only well known for her editing of SF collections, and for introducing "New Wave" SF to North America; but she also donated to the Metro Toronto Library some 5,000 SF titles, the core of their SF division.)

(To be continued)

A TENTATIVE AND TENUOUS SASKATCHEWAN FANHISTORY
by Dave Panchyk

Despite Saskatchewan's collectivist attitude, its fanhistory is mostly about individuals, often living in isolation from each other. Any groups that form have to overcome the human apathy factor, an inertialessness that drags down any human endeavours there, even politics.

This history will deal mostly with Regina, the capital city. I can't assume that it is complete, as fannish history is dependent there on the fragile thread of memory. With individuals rarely communicating, one can have a Chester Cuthbert in one's midst and never know it. This isolation was brought home to me when Cuthbert mailed me a copy of CANADIAN FAN DIRECTORY, circa 1952. In it were seventeen people from across Saskatchewan, none of whom I have ever heard of.

[These people are (hometown in brackets): Leslie Bailey (Wadena), Mrs. B.H. Blanchet (Lucky Lake), Marian Byford (Moose Jaw), Tom Callaghan (Prince Albert), C.W.A. Conley (Saskatoon), Vernon Cragg (Arborfield), E.A.J. Davies (Saskatoon), Ross Dougall (Invermay), George Freeman (North Saskatoon), Everett Gerrard (Hazel Dell), Nels Johnson (Buchanan), J.C. McAllister (Yellow Grass), Shirley McLean (Saskatoon), Carl Menzenhauen (Dilke), Howard Nichol (Pense), Morris Rodl (Saskatoon), John Suggitt (Saskatoon)]

As far as I know, the first fan in Saskatchewan to put it on the map was Leland Sapiro, who was publishing RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY from 1964 or 1965 to 1974 while teaching at what became the University of Regina. Here he also published the official organ of The Saskatchewan Sasquatch Seekers Society, THE SASKATCHEWAN SASQUATCHIAN, which for its last two issues became THE SASQUATCH SASKATCHEWANIAN.

After this point there seems to be a huge gulf during which nothing seems to have happened. I think it was in

1982 that the Wizard's Challenge, an annual gaming tournament and con, began in Saskatoon. It is now held mainly in Regina, though it was supposed to alternate between the two cities. During the mid-late 1980s, Colin Hinz ran his fanzine NOVOID from Saskatoon. In 1989, I believe, he moved to Orillia, Ontario.

In 1987 I went to my first con, a Keycon, and was most impressed by a sercon group, the Speculative Fiction Society of Manitoba. I immediately started the Speculative Fiction Society on campus back home, and over the next few years we published five issues (one of them a double issue) of SPINTRIAN.

In 1990, we had a one-day minicon in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Writers Guild Spring Conference. We had Elizabeth Vonarburg, Candace Jane Dorsey, and Robert Runté as guests. The only piece of programming was a reading by Cliff Burns and a discussion afterwards. It got a number of Aurora votes because of the way in which we piggybacked on a mundane literary event, getting our guests for free and our room at a reduced rate. The con was nothing special, just over a dozen people (twenty at the most crowded) sitting in a room talking, with a keg of beer as the room's centrepiece.

I thought Regina fandom died after I left, but in May 1993 there'll be a convention integrating Trekkers, the Wizard's Challenge, the S.C.A., and a couple of other groups; the second Northern Prairie Convention.

God, what a bland ugly name, I first thought. Then I realized there is a short form of the name, one that typifies the brave struggle of Saskatchewanians to work against the inertialessness of the land.

NoPrairCon.

THE INAPPROPRIATE ATTEMPT TO PROFESSIONALIZE AVOCATIONAL SUBCULTURES,

or,
WHY BETTER ORGANIZATION IS THE ENEMY OF FAN CONVENTIONS

by Robert Runté

In Garth Spencer's recent series of articles on the history of Vancouver fandom he makes the complaint that:

"... rather too many people abhor details, planning, and analysis, and don't want to get overorganized ... and consequently they resist getting organized enough. It has shown up in our refusal to define what we do cons for and how to do them successfully. Up to 1987, there was no documentation on how Vancouver fans normally ran their conventions."

There are several fundamental misconceptions here which are worth addressing. The immediate objection is that Garth fails to recognize the importance of the oral tradition or the role of informal apprenticeship in con running. Written documentation is unnecessary because most consoms are already familiar with their jobs from having worked their way up from simple attendee, through general gofer, to specialized staff, and finally the core committee. A strong concomm will suggest, remind, and supervise its staff to ensure that new recruits have thought of, and attended to, the many necessary details. Writing all this down in a formal operations manual is entirely counter-productive. Not only does the compilation of such a manual represent a major additional burden on a concomm's time and energies, but any staff member too stupid or lazy to ask his predecessor how the job is done is even more unlikely to take the initiative of reading the manual.

More fundamentally, Garth has missed that the whole point of fandom is to participate in an enjoyable hobby activ-

ity. We spend our working lives reading job manuals and having our work appraised against written job descriptions, and it is to escape these onerous tasks and chaffing constraints that most of us seek out fandom in the first place. By demanding that conventions be run according to the principles of sound business management, Garth is necessarily advocating the bureaucratization of fandom, and the colonization of our avocational careers by the same unrewarding relationships which plague our working lives.

For example, having recently observed my (former) government department expending enormous and largely wasted effort on renewing its mission statement, I find Garth's suggestion that we need to "define what we do cons for" triggering an allergic reaction. Not only do I have no wish to repeat in my recreational activities the trauma of trying to get thirty colleagues to agree on a single interpretation of our jobs, I am convinced that such an activity is by its very nature antithetical to a healthy fandom. Why should conventions serve only one purpose or set of purposes? Might it not in fact be to our advantage to have a multitude of motivations, and the potential for different attendees to draw a variety of experiences from the same event? Anyone who has compared notes on a recent convention with fellow attendees knows that no two people have quite the same experience at a con, since so much depends on who one meets and the conversations one has. Indeed, unless one is prepared to include things like "getting laid" in the convention's goal statement, any such attempt to define its purpose is likely to miss the spontaneous and emergent qualities which make fandom worthwhile. Indeed, the reason managers find mission statements so attractive is precisely because it provides an additional method of control over workers by narrowing the range of acceptable activity. While we may have to tolerate this top-down direction in the hierarchical bureaucracies which typically dominate our working lives, I don't want this insidious logic to

invade and constrain my private life as well.

Garth's phrase "documentation on how Vancouver fans normally ran their conventions" reveals the potentially stultifying effect of an official operations manual. For example, I was aware of fandom for several years before there was an Edmonton club but made no attempt to start one because I knew, from reading hundreds of zines from the big metropolitan centres like New York City, Los Angeles, and Vancouver, that it was impossible to start a viable club in such a hinterland. Fortunately a bunch of neos who didn't know any better started ESCFAS. Once I found and joined the club, I explained carefully and forcefully that this or that project they planned could not possibly come off because it had been tried in such-and-such a city and bombed there. Eventually my constant chorus of "It's been tried and it doesn't work" led the then-president John McBain to take me aside and warn me that if I didn't stop giving the club the benefit of my greater fannish experience, I might end up killing it altogether. He then proceeded to organize a number of theoretically impossible but unquestionably successful events. The moral is obvious: an overreliance on previous experience constrains innovation, risk-taking, and progress.

Similarly, when the Edmonton club subsequently went on to organize the first NonCon over the strenuous warnings of many Seattle fans, who sensibly (but wrongly) suggested that NonCon could not possibly compete with V-Cons for out-of-town attendees, we used the Vancouver cons as our operations blueprint. The Calgary con similarly modeled itself on NonCon. But with the proliferation of conventions on the Northwest circuit, people started to complain about the sameness of the convention experience. Already by the mid-1970s, Jerry Kaufman had written a widely discussed fanzine article in which he asked "Are you going to more conventions, but enjoying them less?". No one goes to panels anymore because we have heard it all before. Indeed, what made the recent NonCon 15 such an outstanding success is that its Chair, Adam Charlesworth, threw most

of our sacred cows out the window, not the least of which was our assumption that NonCons (the Alberta Regional SF conventions) had to be held in Alberta. It is only in doing things differently from other clubs or years, in defying tradition and experience, that we create the opportunity for new and rewarding outcomes.

Of course, it could be argued that in refusing to allow our purposes or procedures to be set in stone, we also risk chaos. For example, practically every Canadian SF convention has experienced critical fiscal problems in the last three or four years. In many cases, this has been followed by recriminations, an outcry against the concom's overspending, poor planning, lack of organizational skills, or alienation of traditional clientele. "We used to get way more people when Fred was running our convention!" or "We used to have way more people volunteer to work the convention before Mary was Chair." are typical but completely wrong-headed reactions to what are essentially universal trends. Vancouver's Westercon disaster, for example, had more to do with demographics and the recession than with any lack of knowledge or leadership, in spite of the widespread scapegoating of an unpopular Chair. Attendance is down significantly everywhere in Canada, often as much as 50% below projected figures. Conventions are failing in Canada today because the population base that supported the massive proliferation of conventions in the late 1970s and early 1980s has now disappeared.

Fandom as a whole has been in decline since the 1980s when the Baby Boom generation graduated from college, entered its 40s, and gave up fandom for career and babies. Even though SF's increased respectability has slowed the defection of adults from the ranks of fandom, the smaller population base of 13 to 18 year olds has inevitably meant that we have not been able to bring in recruits at a sufficient rate to replace those retiring to other interests.

[continued next page]

The smaller available pool of potential recruits has been further eroded by the emergence of alternative vocations, most notably live role playing and computer BBS systems. Both of these serve the same socialization functions traditionally served by fandom: providing a safe haven for the junior-high introverted intellectual to rehearse his (and I do mean the male gender predominantly here) interpersonal skills before trying them out in the real world. Now, in the 1990s, these trends have reached crisis proportions for many local fandoms. Of course all fandoms go through cycles, but where this down cycle corresponds with the decline in teenage population base and the upsurge in computer BBS and gamer societies, some clubs have now completely disappeared, as recently happened in Edmonton.

Nevertheless, many in fandom have failed to understand and appreciate the significance of these trends. Garth, for example, suggests that:

"... conventions have continued to grow and complicate themselves, and to demand more and more professional performance from what is, let's face it, a loose network of hobby clubs."

The problem is not incompetent consoms, a lack of professional management skills, but of unrealistic expectations on the part of the fans who attend them. Conventions are not continuing to grow but must instead face up to the inevitability of retrenchment. NonCon 15 worked because Adam Charlesworth realized there weren't enough fans left in Edmonton to support a NonCon, and so moved it to Vancouver. It remains to be seen whether there are sufficient fans left in Calgary to support NonCon 16.

Not only are there fewer fans around to attend and pay for lavish professional-style conventions, consoms are increasingly hard-pressed to find the human resources with which to mount them. If current trends continue, the only possible conclusion is that some conventions must close down altogether, so that organizers and paid admis-

sions are concentrated in one or two locales where they may again achieve critical mass. Peripheral conventions will survive only if they throw out their grandiose expectations and over-ambitious plans and retreat into the easier mode of relaxicons.

Take, for example, ConText 89. Ours was the most professional consom with which I have ever been associated. We brought into the core committee a group of people whose working lives provided experience in fund raising, public relations, and convention organizing, and combined our skills into an unusually well coordinated team. We had clearly defined goals and wrote hundreds of pages of the most impressive grant proposals, operational manuals, and minutes ever seen in fandom. We did everything exactly right, everything that Garth asks for and more, but none of the conventional wisdom which has served generations of fans prepared us for the realities of the 1990s. Every convention manual ever composed suggests that planning should proceed on the assumption that pre-registration will triple or at least double at the door, but this has not been true of many recent Canadian conventions, and certainly was not true for either ConText. While ConText 89 was an important convention for professional writers, and probably changed the course of Canadian SF forever, it ultimately was not sustainable because the bottom had fallen out of both the economy and our population base. Stuart Cooper, Chair of ConText 91, commented that he had to work three times as hard for twice as long as for any of the other conventions he had chaired for a quarter of the number of attendees. Under such circumstances, burnout is inevitable. In contrast, the tiny NonCon 15 consom operated on a seat-of-the-pants, make-it-up-as-we-go-along basis, but still managed to pull off one of the most enjoyable cons I have ever attended. Had they attempted to follow the regular NonCon manual, the convention would clearly not have been feasible. Thus if we are to prepare an operations manual for the benefit of

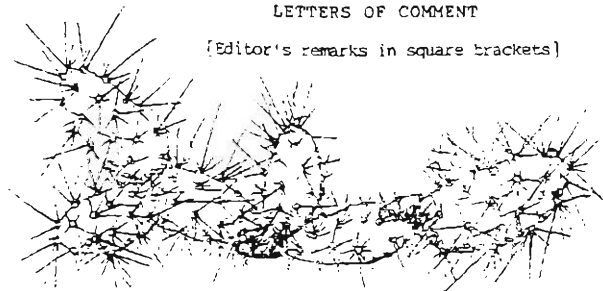
inexperienced concerns, it should read "Forget it!". If there is any hope of anyone pulling off a new or lavish con in the 1990s, it won't be by following the models of the 1970s and 1980s.

I'd like to make an additional observation here. Garth, following Ed Beauregard, draws unfavourable comparison between the reputation of Vancouver conventions and those of the more dynamic PorSFIS group. But what Garth forgets is that Vancouver has been running V-Cons for over twenty years. It is generally accepted that a fannish generation is two years, and even if we double this to reflect the more conservative turnover of recent years, V-Con has lasted for between five and ten generations. Of course Vancouver fandom has gone through periodic bouts of burn-out, but such fluctuations in the number of experienced personnel, enthusiasm, and vision are inevitable in any volunteer organization, and we may well expect PorSFIS to again face its own human resource crisis sometime in the next five years. Whatever V-Con's current status, its historical significance as the original Northwest convention cannot be overemphasized. Half of what we think of as fannish tradition originated in the decisions of this convention's first organizers. It is also difficult to see how Garth's proposed solution of the provision of written documentation is likely to make a difference in performance problems whose origins lay in a lack of personnel or concon burnout.

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LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Garth Spencer
Box 15335
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1993-2-6

I'd like to go on record and say what it means to me to get feedback like Harry Warner's and Andy Hooper's. When someone who has spent a lifetime in journalism tells me I covered Susan Wood's demise just right, and when someone who has seen a lot of water go under the bridge tells me one of my histories was "enlightening and unpretentious", that signifies.

I put a lot of thought into how to phrase the Susan Wood story, partly because I never knew the woman and partly because I gather her passing was attended by a lot of rumours. I also put a lot of work into the penultimate part of the Vancouver fanhistory; because I was a participant in the Westercon episode, and one of the least impartial, it took a lot of effort to cut down the story to what would concern and benefit others.

FROM: Chester Cuthbert
1104 Mulvey Avenue
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1993-2-25

Like most fans, Garth Spencer and Mike Daly were confused by the different local fan groups. I was never a member of either Decadent Winnipeg Fandom or the Winnipeg SF Association which succeeded the Winnipeg SF Society, and I never attended a meeting of either group.

Most people still think that jobs are more important than the leisure offered them by technology. I can only assure such people that I have had no trouble occupying my leisure for the past 27 years fully and delightfully.

[It must be remembered that many people have no ability to plan their own leisure beyond watching television. I once worked with a man who used his vacation time to work at a second job.]

FROM: Dave Panchyk

1993-3-3

I would agree with that aquarium club study when it says 200,000 is the population base needed to keep a club going. Regina and Saskatoon are both under that, and both places require strong personalities to get any project to happen once, let alone continue.

FROM: Lloyd Penney

1993-2-26

412 - 4 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

Very interesting fanhistory from Winnipeg. The Star Trek Winnipeg group spawned Judy Zoltai, who moved to Toronto in 1987 and helped Yvonne and myself found Star Trek Toronto, the first new Trek club there in some years.

To Harry Warner ... it is hard to believe that Toronto

doesn't have a central SF club, but it is sadly true. SF author Robert Sawyer, in his own fannish career, was the last convener of OSFIC, the Ontario SF Club, in Toronto. My own knowledge of OSFIC's demise is a little foggy but I believe that after Robert left, Taral Wayne closed the club down as being unnecessary. The vacuum the club left was never filled. Today, Martin Miller and I have some plans for reviving an SF literary club, the way OSFIC was, but the only two literary groups in Toronto are the Space-Time Continuum, a small discussion group, and Teilaxu, a gay/lesbian SF club and support group. Toronto is plagued by dozens of Star Trek clubs, many of whom are fighting, and nearly all of whom have significant tweeish populations (I will not paint all Star Trek fans with this brush). Every so often, the idea of a new Star Trek club is tested, and the attitude expressed by local Trekfans is "What, another club?". I don't know how another club would be taken, even if it isn't a Star Trek club. Also, Martin and I are both chairing conventions in Toronto, and we would have to drastically scale down our convention involvement to take on the management of a club. No one else seems willing to start a literary club, and some say that any SF club would be overrun by the enormous number of Trekfans.

FROM: Alexander Vasilkovsky

1993-3-18

poste restante, General P.O.
252001, Kiev-1, Ukraine

Recently a lot is being written about Kondratieff and his economic theory. Last year his 100th birthday was celebrated officially in Russia. Here many more people tend to agree with his great waves theory because we can see a nadir oh so clearly. Have you noticed the previous nadir affected North America worst of all and the current nadir affects the ex-USSR countries even worse.

Reading about 50-60 year economic cycles, I suddenly thought about the cycles in development of SF literature. It occurred to me that it develops with 20-22 year cycles. 1939-41 -- Campbell's revolution and the start of the Golden Age. The late 1950s (U.K.) and early 1960s (USA) -- the New Wave revolution. The early 1980s -- the cyberpunk revolution. And on the odd decades the achievements of the revolutionary waves merge into the mainstream of the SF genre. This tendency clearly became apparent and is true for the 1990s as well. What will the 2000s wave look like? One can only guess ...

FROM: Harry Warner Jr. 1993-3-4
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

I enjoyed [Garth's Winnipeg fanhistory] at least as much as previous historical essays by Garth, maybe more, because it reveals little-known facts about really big fan projects that were accomplished or almost accomplished at a time when most of us in the United States had links with fandom in only one or two large Canadian cities.

The obvious question about Kondratieff's theory is why did his writings limit themselves to the period from the late 18th century onward? Three cycles since then could be a coincidence, like the batting average of certain ballplayers after the first game of the season when they have been to bat just three or four times. If the economist thought it useless to pursue his studies further back in time because conditions were so different that far back then it's equally useless to hope that the cycle theory will be valid in the future because conditions in the 21st and later centuries will differ at least as much from the past couple hundred years as those centuries differed from the centuries before the Industrial Revolution.

[I believe the reason for not going back further is the lack of good data to work with. It should be noted that

Kondratieff published in the 1920s and predicted the Great Depression on the basis of his long wave theory. By then he had disappeared into the Gulag.]

I'm afraid I'm not as optimistic as Chester Cuthbert about the possibility of an annual income guaranteed for everyone and production of abundance of everything for everyone. One problem is the difficulty communist societies have been suffering from; if everyone is guaranteed plenty of income and goods, where is the incentive to work and then who will do the things necessary to keep all those supplies flowing and supervise the printing of all those dollar bills? The other big problem is the fact that natural resources are limited on this planet. If every resident of Asia, Africa, and South America is supplied with an automobile, a VCR and all the CDs he wants, this generosity will move up by quite a few years the date when supplies of petroleum, ores, and other raw materials will be exhausted or will be so hard to obtain that the amount of energy required to mine or otherwise acquire will be out of proportion to the acquisitions.

[The idea of the guaranteed annual income (GAI) is not to provide a life of luxury, but a minimal amount to survive on, albeit a GAI recipient would have to live in a rooming house and have no spare cash for luxuries unless he went out and got a job. A federal Tory in the backbenches recently suggested every Canadian be entitled to \$4000 per year in exchange for other welfare programs being cancelled. It might be possible to live on \$4000 in certain parts of Canada but certainly not in style. This would be an incentive to work while at the same time providing a cushion of safety. If we ever get out into space, resources will not be a problem.]

FROM: Buck Coulson
2677w-500N
Hartford City, Indiana 47348

1993-3-24

Your mention of the Kondratieff cycle made me go look up Heinlein's "The Year of The Jackpot". Heinlein didn't mention Kondratieff, just "the big 54-year cycle", but I suppose some fan commenting on the story did.

The objection to Cuthbert's economics is that profits are made when finished products can be sold for more money than the cost of the materials, not merely when finished products are scarce. The 1930s were depression years, but gas stations made a profit at 18¢/gallon because oil was abundant. Pulp magazines thrived because the cost of wood pulp was low and there was plenty of it. Now oil-producing companies restrict oil output and there are restrictions on the amount of wood cut, so pulp magazines are out of business and gas prices are high. Overall scarcity hasn't much to do with it; raw material scarcity does.

There's a flaw in your matter transmitter theory. Once any object is built or any food is grown, it can be duplicated. Out of what? Thin air? In that case, we'll all suffocate pretty shortly. Out of dirt? Who do you get to dig the dirt and transport it to your apartment if everyone is self-sufficient? Okay, everybody moves out of the city to his own little plot of ground and digs his or her own dirt. Then who comes up with the next invention, once everyone is self-sufficient? You'll have a nicely static society, and unless procreation is held down, you'll come to a time when everyone has too small a plot of dirt to survive on. Now if you want to postulate a series of alternate universes, then maybe you can draw your matter from them, if their inhabitants don't object.

[Lots of raw material out in space, which is what a Star Trek economy would run on (not to mention that recycling would supply materials). Although matter duplicators can destroy the manufacturing industry, the service economy

would still operate, such as technicians, prostitutes, and movie makers. Inventions would be a pasttime of the bored leisure class. Since we are already partly a service economy, matter duplicators would only accelerate the shift. Affluent societies have declining birth rates since children are no longer needed to ensure a safe retirement.]

FROM: Joseph Major
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1993-2-25

The parallels in matters of club size, survival, and schisms you draw from your experiences with aquarium clubs seems to be more valid than the usual explanations drawing on personality clashes, the illiteracy of the masses, and the like. I suppose you saw the letter from the comics fan in STET who explained that in trufandom, every fan wants to be a fan, while in comics fandom, every fan wants to be a pro. A noteworthy example of "the sneering, them-versus-us attitude that puts down one group", I think.

Looking at past history, one can wonder (with great apprehension) if ConAdian will prove to be a deathblow to Winnipeg fandom, as has so often been presumed to have been the case at other Worldcon venues.

FROM: Harry Andruschak
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Torrance, California 90510-5309

1993-3-22

About why some clubs go on and others die out, it may well be the presence of a strong leader or group of leaders. In the case of LASFS, this would have been Forry Ackerman in the 1930s and 1940s, fans like Charles Burbee and his circle in the 1950s, followed by Bjo Trimble. Since then I think it is strong personal-

ities like Bruce Pelz and his circle that enables the
LASFS to buy its clubhouse.

FROM: Henry Welch
5538 N. Shasta Drive
Glendale, Wisconsin 53209

1993-2-25

FROM: Steve George 1993-2-24
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In Garth Spencer's history of Winnipeg fandom ... [an] error I am concerned about is the depiction of my "scathing editorial" in ZOSMA 20. As it pointed out in #21, my editorial attack was not directed at pre-1978 Decadent Winnipeg Fandom, but at post-1978 DWF, a point in time after the departure of Randy Reichardt, Mike Hall, and Garth Danielson. In his essay, Garth Spencer accurately quotes Mike Daly:

"As a member, you were never sure as to who was running what; what, if anything, was being done with your membership dues, or even who the head honcho was (it seemed to vary day to day as the buck was passed). There was just never any sense of stability in the society whatsoever and nobody really cared enough to give it any."

Yes, this is what post-1978 Winnipeg fandom was like, a state of affairs that utterly horrified me and that I assailed in my editorial. I was utterly embarrassed to be part of a group that was, by its apathy and elitism (two qualities lacking prior to 1978), likely responsible for turning many good people away from fandom.

1993-3-8

... after my original editorial was published, both Mike Hall and Randy Reichardt blasted me with vitriolic letters of their own. This mess never resolved itself until I braved Reichardt's temper and pointed out to him that my editorial was not about his beloved DWF at all. Since then, we've gotten along better than we ever did before.

In his history of Vancouver fandom, Garth Spencer mentions the ubiquitous 'con book'. This has got to be the biggest myth in fandom today. The current concom of most conventions will readily tell you that they are either working from an existing book or are compiling one for the benefit of next year's concom. This is of course not true. For example, in the late 1980s I was repeatedly assured by the powers that be that Genericon (RSFA, Troy, New York) had such a book and it was continually being updated. When I finally took over and tried to dig them out of their budgetary and venuehole I found that no such book existed. Not to be one to perpetuate stupid myths, I remedied the situation that year, and I know the book was used extensively over the next two.

I've long speculated about the causes of depressions and recessions and Chester Cuthbert gives his input on this. I generally don't listen to much that economists say since most of them are espousing some pet theory that you could drive a truck through. I ran across one theory proposed by engineers whose sole goal was to derive a mathematical model for the money supply. They determined that the only way money is ever created in most capitalist systems is when someone takes out a loan (usually the government). However, in this process, no money is ever created to make the interest payments. Obviously the money exists to pay off the principle, but never the interest. Thus, from Day One there is an inherent money shortage that makes the system unstable. The engineers suggest that the government should develop debt-free issues, the precedent for this being \$450,000,000 that President Lincoln authorized to pay for the American Civil War.