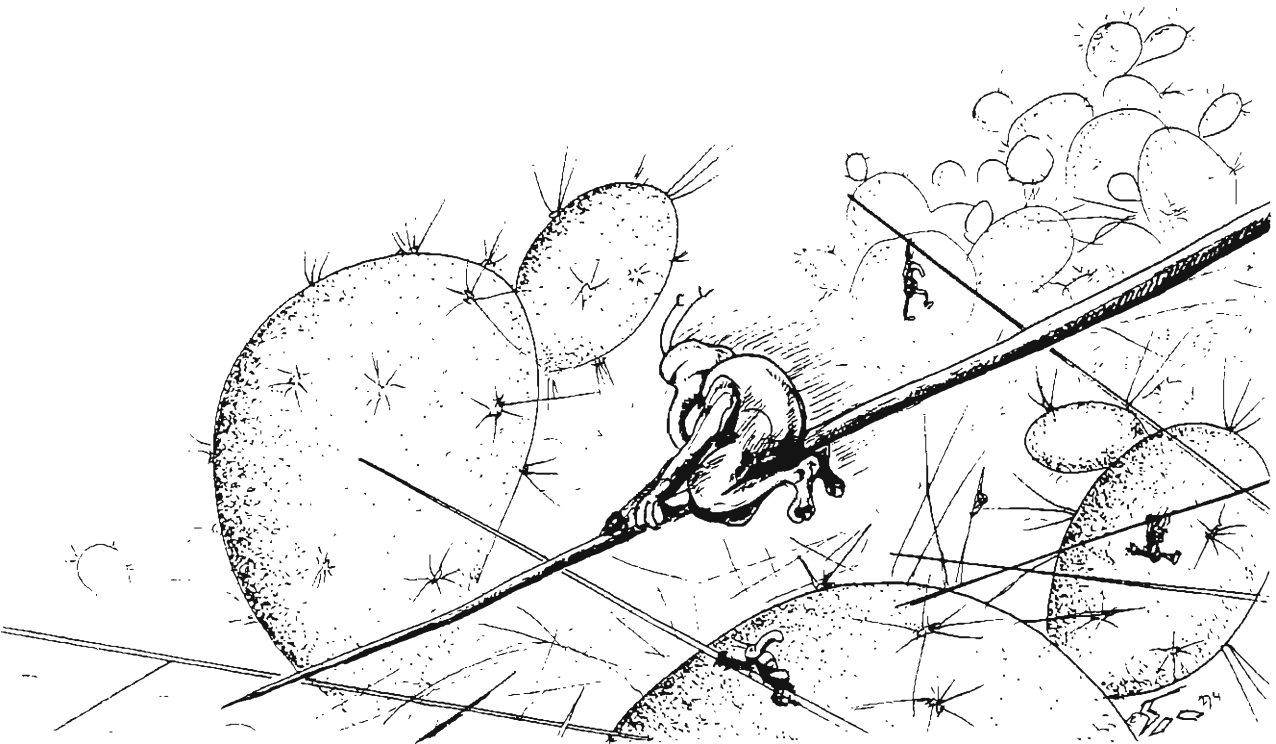


OPUNTIA

22.1



OPUNTIA #22.1

December 1994

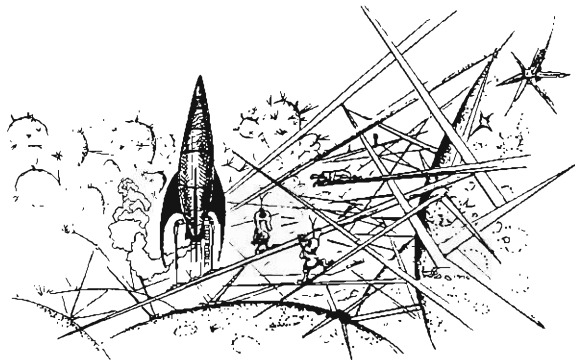
ZINE REVIEWS
by Dale Speirs

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OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment.

ART CREDIT: And so the exploration of OpuntiaWorld has begun, depicted by Franz Miklis. (His address is A-5151, Nussdorf 64, Austria)

On the cover of OPUNTIA #19.1, shown below, was seen the initial landing of the expedition from the planet Wuzilia. Now, with this issue, begins a series about the Wuzis as they explore OpuntiaWorld.



Unless otherwise noted, most of the zines mentioned are available for The Usual. This generally means \$3 cash for a sample copy, trade for your zine, or contribution such as artwork, letter of comment, or an article. It is best, however, to see a copy of the zine before sending contributions, to ensure your contribution is suitable for the zine.

ANSIBLE #88 (Available for SASEs from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, England. For outlanders, this would mean a SAE plus a couple of IRCs) This is a single-sheet, double-side newszine of micro-print. Unlike the earnest reportage of LOCUS, Langford takes nothing seriously; this is the funniest zine out there. He covers the British SF scene: pros, cons, and fannish exploits. We learn, for example, that Chuck Connor is persona non grata on certain computer nets for using taglines such as "Her hopes fell when she found an 8" Wang was a disk drive" and "PROBLEM CLOSING LEVI.ZIP; REPLACE FLOPPY AND RETRY?". Even as the IRA and British government kiss and make up, we learn from Langford that "Irish Fandom Plunged Into War", a chap having offended Octocon execs for jesting too much about Star Trek.

FANTASTIC COLLECTIBLES MAGAZINE #124 (US\$2.50 from Ray Bowman, Box 167, Carmel, Indiana 46032) This is an adzine; Bowman is a dealer in SF pulps, specializing in ASTOUNDING mostly. It does carry ads for other dealers, and the front section starts off like an ordinary zine, with locs, editorial, book reviews, and two pieces of fiction written in the style that SFdcm would rather forget. One of which starts off "Canda Eliss stretched her firm young limbs to their utmost, yawned luxuriously, and relaxed again on her narrow, straw-padded bed.", and goes downhill from there. Langford would have great fun with this stuff.

.NET #1 (€2.95 from Future Publishing, Freepost (BS4900), Somerton, Somerset TA11 6BR, England, or at newsgroups) A colour glossy, the British equivalent of WIRED, focussing exclusively on the Internet. More general news and intro for neos than product reviews or technical stuff. And why do I read zines like this when I don't even own a computer? More technical journals are quickly outdated as the machines become obsolete, but trendspotting zines like WIRED and .NET provide useful background against the day I finally dip my toe into Internet waters. But not just yet, mainly because of financial constraints, and partly because I am waiting for the nets to settle down and become more user friendly, as they will over the next few years. Getting back to the zine, .NET has an introduction to the Internet and how to get on it. Lots of reviews of newsgroups and special-interest sites on the nets, much like zine reviews. After reading this issue (and WIRED), I get the impression that the anarchy of the nets will be gradually replaced by fewer, more expensive services that will prevail because of better quality.

REASONABLE FREETHINKER #3 (The Usual from Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson, Mississippi 39236) Detailed movie reviews, not just the usual capsule reviews or breathless fan style. Feller ties in movies with history and books, such as a review of NATURAL BORN KILLERS that points out media circuses are nothing new; Wyatt Earp wound up in Hollywood in the 1920s and dime novelists wrote on Jesse James in the 1800s. Various other movie reviews in the same manner, correlating the movie with the outside world that had me thinking "Why didn't I think of that?". Con reports and locs.

LOWER ROSEDALE REVIEW #7 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K6) This is a reviewzine with emphasis on Canadian small-press and alternative press, with some American SF or other zines. Also an account of the Toronto Small Press Fair.

DRIFT #64 (Same as LOWER ROSEDALE REVIEW) A bit of everything: short fiction, manifestos, and things found in the trash.

ANGRY THOREAUAN #11 (US\$4 from Randall Tin-ear, Box 2246, Anaheim, California 92814) One of my favourite zines, covering alternative music and zines, not to mention the weird stuff that the world gets up to. A page on fork-lifts, this time around depicting the one used by Epitaph Records; if you own a current release from this label, then it sat on the prongs of this machine at one time. A section on phone sex, as seen by the women who provide it. Daniel Bauman dissects a suburban mall, analysing the layout of the mall and how it has been carefully set up to encourage the proles to stay at one end and let the upperclass enjoy the high-priced shops in peace and quiet. There is a look at the radio stations in the Los Angeles area, which are much the same usual mess as up here, excepting that their classical music station is a commercial station, not like CBC Radio Canada. A tour of an old battleship by a Boy Scout troop, a three-day trip wherein the lads discover that when the ship was taken out of service, the sailors just dumped all the old ammo into the hold to let it rot away in peace. Except when the Boy Scouts come along and collect unstable explosives as a souvenir. Various book, zine, and underground rock musics reviews; I always find some weird zine to send off for. Recommended.

THE ZERO-G LAVATORY #2 (The Usual from Scott Patri, Box 1196, Cumberland, British Columbia V0R 1S0) Starts off with rants on space cadets, separatists, and ferrefans, then the locs, including one from Piers Anthony. Two good pieces of fanfiction, one on time travel and V-Con 21 (you have to be a Canuck to appreciate the humour on CSIS, RCMP, and the Reform Party) and another on Santa Claus as a serial killer.

FOR THE CLERISY #11 (Zine trades and letters only from Brant Kresovich, Riga Business School, Riga Technical University, Skolas 11, LV-1010, Riga, Latvia. If you don't publish a zine yourself, he will take others in trade. No cash, please.) In this issue, book and zine reviews, such as a Trotsky travelogue. Also a note on the various ways to play solitaire. I have enough trouble figuring out how to play it on my sister-in-law's computer, the Microsoft version being different than the one Granny taught me all those years ago when cards were still played with cards.

FOSFAX #172 (The Usual from FOSFA, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) A few hours reading, with 68 pages of microprint. A variety of book reviews, mostly capsule reviews, but also continuing Joseph Major's extended series on the Heinlein novels. Todd Jensen on Vortigern, an early British king, con reports (including ConAdian), Clinton-bashing, and Gary Lovisi on which cities are mostly likely to be nuked by terrorists (Tel Aviv, Washington, D.C., and New York City). Thirty pages of locs, with all the usual shouting and simplistic declaratives.

RELUCTANT FAMILIUS #36 (The Usual from Thomas Sadler, 422 West Maple Avenue, Adrian, Michigan 49221-1627) One of the distinguishing characteristics of this zine is the editorial, which starts off each issue with the continuing adventures of a trio of mad scientists and somehow always ends the installment with a visit to the editorial universe. rich brown has a well-written essay on why fan fiction is a bad thing. This is followed by several fan fiction stories. Book reviews, con reports, locs.

THYME #99/AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS #60/ARTYCHOKE #10 (The Usual from Alan Stewart, Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Three zines bound into one. The first two are newszines with the usual material. The last is a zine specializing in SF art, with a featured artist and samples of his work.

BUSSWARBLE #21 (The Usual from Michael Hailstone, 14 Bolden Street, Heidelberg, Victoria 3084, Australia) The supposedly-final issue of this conspiracy zine, although the editor hedges a bit and suggests the possibility of another issue. A review of the film about Leni Riefenstahl and political correctness, and an essay on the editor's voluntary redundancy that manages to work in global warming and drought. More complaints in following essays, then locs.

FANTASY-SCOPE V3#1 (The Usual from Roger Sims, 34 Creekwood Square, Glendale, Ohio 45246-3811) Perzine of the Sims', starting off with a diary of a tour in Kenya, but which was a bit too much a catalogue of places visited and a list of animals seen, boring after a while. There is an account of Dave Locke's leap of faith into the computer age, assorted conreports, cat stories, and locs.

HABAKKUK C3V4 (The Usual from Bill Donaho, 626 - 58 Street, Oakland, California 94609) Another doorstep zine, with 76 pages of microprint. Conreports, essays, and the killer zine reviews by Ted White. The more I read his reviews, the more I'm convinced that he is far out of touch with the modern zine scene. Also fanhistories and faghistories, with 46 pages of locs. Hours of reading, in the FOSFAX class, but without so much politics and not as frequent.

CORE #6 (Free at Calgary newsagents but by mail probably \$3 for a sample from Connection Publications, Suite 508, 1011 - 1 Street SW, Calgary, Alberta T2R 1J4) Musiczine that covers Calgary rock bands and clubs, books, movies, and underground. The usual interviews, such as the band Chixdiggit, which recently went on a tour to the east. Quote: "In Québec City the band opened for Lagwagon at a Christian youth centre called Patro-roc-amabour in front of 1000 people who were so anxious to get the party started that they were moshing in line outside before the music had even begun. "They were stage diving off the

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roofs of vehicles ... it was weird", describes KJ. "It was hard to tell if they actually liked us cause they were moshing anyway", added Mike bemusedly."

INTERREGNUM #7 (US\$3 from Peter Maranci, 81 Washington Street #2, Malden, Massachusetts 02148) This is an apazine devoted to fantasy roleplaying games, with eight zines in this issue. Includes news in the RPG world such as yet another raid by the FBI on a games company (don't the G-Men have enough to keep them busy?), a scenario of a quest to the frozen lands, an outline on how to organize an RPG world, some bad fan fiction, and game reviews. I picked this up for free in a Calgary SF bookstore which also deals in RPGs. The blurb said this zine was being distributed likewise elsewhere, so check your local games dealer.

BEN'ZINE #4 (The Usual from Ben Zuhl, 2239 Highland Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia 22046) A lot of oldtimers are re-emerging from gafiation. Zuhl has a better excuse than most for not having pubbed his ish; it is difficult to do so when your wife is in the Foreign Service and you spend your time in places where photocopiers are illegal, such as Poland during the military rule or Serbia. Most of the essays are by BOFs or fanhistory, Zuhl explains an exciting life in strange countries (see above), and there is a piece of fanfiction about ConFusion in 2024.

CONTRACT V6#6 (The Usual from John Mansfield, 321 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B9) A source for those interested in Canadian cons, with listings and news. A bit of a fuss about CUFF (Canadian Unity Fan Fund), which doesn't seem to be living up to the 'U' part.

MARKTIME #35 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, ELCA Copy Centre, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois 60631) Travel issue through what seems half the counties on the American east coast, taping radio stations, and all kinds of lists.

ATTITUDE #3 (The Usual but it is an editorial collective so they ask three copies of your zine in trade. Via John Dallman, Flat 4, 27 Terront Road, London N15 3AA, England) Much British angst about the state of their cons and fandom, interspersed with accounts of the horsey set and a patriotic Brit. Fifty pages, with excellent art.

MALADE #? (The Usual from Kev McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF, England) A perzine on how McVeigh was beaten by hooligans who thought he was IRA, and the consequences to his life over the years. I'd like to think such couldn't happen here, but Canada is no exception; we laugh at those who feud over religion, then abuse our own over language. Catholic/Protestant or anglophone/francophone. As Goethe remarked, "If we all swept our own doorstep, then the world would be clean".

FILLING STATION #3 (C\$6 in Canada, US\$6 elsewhere from Filling Station, Box 22135, Calgary, Alberta T2P 4J5) A literary small-press zine out of a writers' group. The usual experimental poetry and stories, translated poems, book reviews written in New Wave style, and an account of PAROLE (Performance Arts, Readings, Opinions, Laughs, and Experimentations). Theatresports and improves have always been popular in Calgary, and there are still lots of cheap-rent spaces left over from the collapse of the 1982 oil boom to stage them in. PAROLE originally went 22h00 to 01h00 but as Fred Holliss writes: "By 1 am the only people left were poets; all the audience had left. This showed me that the audience for poetry goes to bed early, so PAROLE now starts at nine and runs to midnight.". Somehow that doesn't surprise me about Calgary. This is the only city in the world where, when students staged a massive protest against the government, a police inspector loaned a loudspeaker to the protesters so they could be heard better. Calgary has dozens of writers' groups publishing zines, mostly crud but better than watching TV or drinking at the tavern.

BCSFAZINE #259 (\$24 per year, payable to WCSFA, c/o 1855 West 2nd Avenue, Apt. 110, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6J 1J1) One of the liveliest clubzines around, appearing monthly with lots of interesting reading. Includes a Q&A column from the Leather Goddesses of Phobos, ConAdian trip reports, lots of news and locs.

FICTIONS #6 (comes with subscription to BCSFAZINE) Annual fictionzine done by the B.C. SF Assoc. Writers' Workshop. Much like the usual fanfiction.

FINSTERGRUN (The Usual from Franz Miklis, A-5151, Nussdorf 64, Austria) A perzine acting as GALACTO-CELTIC NEWSFLASH #11.5. While we North Americans host our cons in the same old boring hotels, Austrian fandom has the advantage of hosting their con in a castle. Role-playing games take on an added dimension when enacted in an old pile. Also an account of a tour of an underground canal beneath Salzburg, built in the 11th century and still in use. The final section is a tour of the Vienna Necropolis and plague-holes beneath that city, giant rooms filled by countless skeletons.

DEROGATORY REFERENCE #79 (The Usual from Arthur Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers, New York 10704-1814) Perzine, with commentary on Disclave, O.J. Simpson and the Internet, bad psychiatry, Readercon, troubles on the information highway, and much, much more. Ends with a proposal to make Wile E. Coyote (the cartoon character) into a god, because he reflects the real world. I liked the comparison of Acme Corp., who supply Wile E. with all those devices that never work properly, as a typical defense contractor.

FILE 770 #106 (US\$8 for five issues, from Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Avenue #2, Van Nuys, California 91401) Newszine with a preponderance of WorldCon reports, this time around on ConAdian, of course. An extended account which I thought was quite reasonable.

KNARLEY KNEWS #48 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Perzine starting off with a ConAdian report, including travelling with a week-old baby. Book reviews and lots of locs.

PROBE #94 (The Usual from SFSFA, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Clubzine, digest size, and very nicely produced. A substantial proportion of fanfiction, with lots of locs and reviews.

WHITE TRASH #4 (The Usual from Thomas and Denise Longo, Box 130121, Roseville, Minnesota 55113-0121) This ish has a women's theme, as considered from the right wing of American politics. Movie, television, and computer reviews. A piece of disquieting fiction about tempers flaring in the heat. Clinton bashing and locs.

LITTLE FREE PRESS #112 (The Usual from Ernest Mann, 714 SE Third Street, Little Falls, Minnesota 56345-3510) A zine that discusses the utopia of the Priceless Economic System, mixed in with an account of a boat trip. One must question some of the remarks such as a corporation president " ... not about to reclaim and recycle all his corporation's wastes. He can't risk making no profit or his board and stockholders would soon fire him." I've not heard of specific instances where this happened but to the contrary know from my work in hazmat and recycling that businesses are falling all over themselves to reduce waste. Part of this is economics; waste costs a corporation money because of increasing disposal rates and because waste indicates an inefficient manufacturing method. I get quite a number of hazmat periodicals at work, all of them punching the same theme that if you have wastes, you must re-arrange your production process to eliminate them. Even more important is the impact of due-diligence case law, where CEOs and company directors are finding themselves in deep trouble for failing to control hazmat wastes. Fear of jail time does wonders in ensuring compliance.

The Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers hosted its eighth annual film festival today, known as "The Best of Local Heroes". Despite the title, it is actually a compendium of films from across Canada, not just Calgary. I took in a few of the films; the only SFish type film was a comedy short called WITHOUT ROCKETS, by Keith Tomasek and Gary Yates. This film is set at the Churchill Rocket Range in northern Manitoba on the shores of Hudson Bay. The storyline involves Fred, the caretaker and sole occupant of the abandoned space centre, and his pet and best friend, a pig called Booster. It is an idyllic life of settled routine. The film being set at Christmas, we see Fred and Booster (who has a pair of cariboo horns tied to his head, dressing up as a reindeer) going in search for a Christmas tree. Not that easy in the Canadian Arctic, but they finally locate a single scrawny, lopsided spruce that will do, felled with four strokes of an axe. Fred and Booster spend their evenings playing poker (don't ask) but, alas, during one of those games Booster suddenly collapses and dies. Fred is heartbroken, but grief must give way to practicalities such as disposing of the deceased. Fred is certainly not going to eat his companion nor leave him for the wolves or bears. After breaking a shovel trying to dig a grave in the frozen ground, Fred tries to stuff Booster into the freezer until spring thaw but the freezer is only a small one and the pig won't fit. Finally inspiration strikes; Fred digs an old rocket out of storage from where it was forgotten in a warehouse. He sets up the rocket on the launch pad, straps Booster to the outside of it, and ...

Unfortunately the years of storage have not been kind to the rocket. It blows up on the launch pad, and Booster is cremated rather than orbited. Ashes to ashes, etc..

A very funny film, but one destined to disappear into obscurity because of its short length and unlikelihood of being put onto video or CD.

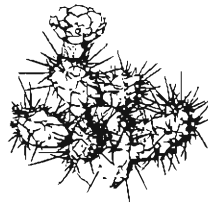
A Canadian Press wirestory today said that the Manitoba government had signed a lease with Akjuit Aerospace to use the abandoned rocket range at Churchill. Akjuit is to pay \$1000 per year on a 30-year lease, and hopes to launch its first satellite in 1996. First it will have to spend \$250 million to build a new spaceport. Although the company chairman is James Richardson, of the Winnipeg Richardsons (sort of Canadian Rockefellers), I wonder if they can raise the capital in time to meet their deadline.

There are a number of private companies looking to be in the launch business, but Akjuit is the first to get its own spaceport. The Churchill rocket range, on the Hudson Bay shore area, was in use from 1957 to 1989. It specialized in small rockets; no Saturn 5s in case you are wondering why you never heard of it before. Akjuit intends to compete in the small-satellite, low-orbit market. They have hired Col. John Angell (ret.), who used to be in charge of launch operations at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. No contracts to launch have been signed yet, but Akjuit says they have several letters of intent from various firms.

... OR RECYCLED

1994-9-3

It is my understanding that the Hugos handed out at Canadian included bits of rockets from the Churchill range.



THE DOWNFALL OF COMMUNISM AND SATIRE

Communism, like television, is an easy target for satire. Indeed, both often turn into parodies of themselves without any help from satirists such as Vladimir Voinovich of whom more in a moment. I work in a city of immigrants (half of Calgary is less than twenty years old), among whom are many from former communist countries. When I first started my job, most of them were Hungarians escaped from the 1956 revolution or East Germans who fled before the Berlin Wall went up. In the 1970s and 1980s, we took in an influx of refugees from Laos and Cambodia. The former group are mostly retired and gone now; the latter group have replaced them. For years I collected communist jokes, all of them from Europe, as the Asians don't seem to find much humour in their life back there. A few of the best jokes cite in a nutshell the basic conditions under communism.

Joke #1: Hans and Helmut have patrolled the Berlin Wall for years together but seldom speak except the usual talk of work. One day Hans suddenly asks Helmut, "Tell me, comrade. What do you really think of our government?" Helmut is, of course, suspicious of why Hans would ask. So he plays it safe and says, "Why, the very same as you do, comrade." Hans replies, "In that case, it is my duty to arrest you."

Joke #2: A man is detained for questioning. The KGB ask him if he has ever wavered from the Party line. This is a serious offence, and the man is terrified at the accusation. "No, no," he blurts out, "I have always wavered with the Party line."

Joke #3: A prison cell with two prisoners in it. The door opens and a new prisoner is slung in. "What did you do?", the new arrival asks the first prisoner. He is told "I supported Slansky." The new arrival turns to the second prisoner and asks him the same question. "I was opposed to Slansky." There is silence for a moment, then

the first prisoner asks the new arrival, "So tell us. What did you do?" "I'm Slansky."

I first came across the works of Vladimir Voinovich in KONTINENT #2, part of an anthology series. The story of his was "Incident at the Metropole", an account of arrest by the KGB and subsequent attempted poisoning. The part of the story that stuck in my mind was detention, where a bit of bureaucratic trouble occurred when KGB officer Zakharov "... led me to their main building, where an angry warrant officer grumbled for a long time, not wanting to let me through on my driver's licence; I had forgotten my passport at home. I thought if you could not get in there without a passport, it would be worthwhile to burn mine, but it turned out that under Zakharov's sponsorship you could be admitted without it."

Voinovich writes in a humorous tone. Like many Russian authors, his books are hard to find in print; English translations are mostly out of print. (The Strugatsky brothers are a little easier to find because they were published as DAW paperbacks, but I still haven't located SNAIL ON A SLOPE in translation.) Voinovich has a number of novels, but the only one I've come across is MOSCOW 2042. Like many authors in communist countries, he used SF as a somewhat safer method of making fun of the Soviets. Satire was a bit easier when one could claim that it was only a fictional society being parodied. Not that it was much safer; authors still ran the risk of exile or a free trip to Siberia. Voinovich himself was eventually exiled to Germany, although not because of MOSCOW 2042.

After a slow start, getting all the preliminary details out of the way and setting the background for the point of origin in 1982, Voinovich takes a sixty-year trip into the future. (The story is told in first-person) He boards a space shuttle equipped with photon engines and in space the passengers make the jump forward. After

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arrival in the future, he is treated as a hero and is given the obligatory extended tour that all characters receive in utopian fiction. Then the dark side shows, a revolution breaks out, and he manages a return to 1982. It is not difficult to anticipate how the future communists live, and I won't bore you with all the details. It could have been heavy slogging reading through Voinovich's vision of what might be, but he breaks the book into numerous short chapters, so one can pick it up and set down easily. I pick and choose a few points in the book at random.

As mentioned, the book takes a while to start, involving a side trip to Toronto before jumping to the future. All kinds of digressions, such as an essay on beards, which every prophet must have. Writes Voinovich, "... Marxism would never have been able to win over the masses if Marx had shaved at some point ... Lenin, Castro, and Khomeini could not have produced revolutions if they'd been clean shaven."

But Voinovich arrives in the future and settles in. He expects to discover all kinds of scientific miracles. A Moscow of soaring buildings, and travel through the solar system. But what staggers him the most is that newspapers are printed on toilet paper, a brilliant solution to the shortage of the latter. PRAVDA is printed so and he was later pleased to discover his picture on a toilet roll. Actually I'm surprised that ad agencies of today aren't already doing this. Perhaps not a newspaper, but a selection of ads on your roll, making it cheaper than the blank stuff, and providing something to read without the expense of subscribing to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.

KGB merged with the Communist Party and was replaced by a new secret police group called SECO. The CIA is completely infiltrated by SECO, but SECO is likewise completely infiltrated by CIA. Neither side dares smash the other's spy ring for fear of having no one left in the home organization. The CIA runs Russia and SECO runs

the USA. A Mexican standoff for the Cold War.

Writers are now better organized. They work normal business hours, finish at six, and have evenings and weekends free. None of this nonsense about writing when the inspiration seizes you. The Writers' Union has two departments, one for Paperless Literature, the other for Paper Literature. The former department allows one to write anything; the catch is you can't put paper in the typewriter. (Computers have vanished for the usual reasons.) The two departments are further divided into sections for poets, prose writers, and playwrights. A nice little sting from Voinovich: "And what department are the critics in?", I asked. "They're not in any", said Smerchev. "Criticism is the direct responsibility of SECO".

"I'm very glad to hear that from you", I said, deeply moved. "We had a perfectly stupid arrangement in my time. The organs of state security dealt with criticism then too, but in fact all they were doing was duplicating the efforts of the Writers' Union."

About three-quarters of the way through the novel, it becomes self-referential. I first thought this spoiled the book. Voinovich (in character in the novel) can't figure out how the authorities know what he is thinking. But when he had returned to his own time, he had written a book called MOSCOW 2042, detailing his experiences. The authorities of the future simply read the book. The time paradoxes are dealt with not in the usual kill-your-own-grandfather style but rather an argument between Voinovich and the authorities, who want him to rewrite the book more favourable to them. This becomes a running argument; nevermind Grandfather, should this chapter be deleted? The paradoxes cannot be fully resolved (no one can do that) but the self-referential nature of MOSCOW 2042 turns out to be useful to the story. The fall of communism in 1991 has temporarily dimmed this novel, but events suggest Marx might return.

MONEY FOR NOTHING

True or false: When you deposit your money at a bank, it is kept in trust or other form of safety against the time you want to withdraw it. (Answer later in this article.)

A favourite technique of the early Communists was to label their opponents as 'enemies of the people' rather than debate them. Lenin did not want to contest for the hearts and minds of the proles by debate or logic. Part of the reason was that this would only dignify his opponents and give them equal status, whereas repeated name-calling is soon accepted as truth, the well-known Big Lie. The main reason was that Marxism will not stand up to rational debate.

About two decades later, as the Great Depression ground on, the Social Credit party scored significant political victories, terrifying the bankers. Since the monetary system of the banks cannot be defended by debate or logic, the bankers resorted to name-calling, labelling Socreds as the 'funny money' party. Matters were not helped by the fact that Socreds were their own worst enemy, with a few highly visible nutcases detracting public attention from the fact that the basic idea of social credit was correct. The Great Depression was the bottoming out of the Kondratieff long wave, the 50 to 60 year cycle of the economy. By itself, a Kondratieff nadir is not severe, but the stupidity of banks and government leaders in the 1930s made it far worse than it should have been. The problem was that the velocity of money through the economy had slowed; this was made worse by trade wars that all but choked off the flow of currency. Sixty years on, we are going through another Kondratieff nadir, but this time it will not be as bad since the world has actively been establishing free trade agreements. The Socreds of the 1930s correctly identified the solution to the Great Depression was to increase the velocity of money by inflating the economy, although they never got a chance to put their ideas into practice. Ultimately it took WW2 to

inflate the money supply and put the world back to work again. The Socreds were ever after stuck with the funny money tag.

Paul Hellyer is not a Socred. Indeed, he is the opposite, a longtime member of the establishment Liberals. A Member of Parliament from 1949 to 1969, Hellyer served as cabinet minister in various Liberal governments of the day, reaching Deputy Prime Minister. He is best known in Canada for unifying the Canadian Armed Forces and for his work on housing policy. It was therefore a surprise for me to be cruising the shelves at W.H. Smith the other day and discover his book FUNNY MONEY (\$24.95 at bookstores or from Chimo Media Ltd., 99 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 302, Toronto, Ontario M6K 3J8. ISBN 0-9694394-2-3) Not an attack on the Socreds, but rather a critique of our present banking system. Coming from an Establishment Grit, this tempts one to quote the bit about joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, etc..

The book starts off with a quick look at capitalism versus socialism. Those who would dance on the grave of Marx are reminded that "The inability of the western world to provide substantial aid through the transition phase has made a bad situation worse.". It is not too unreasonable to think that X-USSR may become reborn-USSR in a reaction against economic collapse.

Our present system of paper money can be traced back to the goldsmiths of London, England. They stored gold of their customers, for which receipts were issued, circulated as money, and which could be redeemed back for gold. It didn't take long for the goldsmiths to realize that since only a fraction of the gold was redeemed at a time they could therefore issue receipts far in excess of the amount of gold they actually had. In 1694 the Bank of England was created along the same lines, that of the fractional reserve system, creating money out of nothing. As Hellyer writes, "It was to become the most profitable scam in the history of mankind."

[continued next page]

One difficulty in creating money out of nothing is that one walks a fine line between inflation and deflation. If too much money is created, it devalues because of inflation. If the supply of money is restricted sharply and is not sufficient to handle the transactions of the economy, it deflates. Too much deflation, and the result is a depression. Traditionally an oversupply of money occurred when the government printed too many banknotes, but in our modern era banknotes and coins are only a fraction of the money supply, most of which exists as electrons in a computer.

A bank computer, that is. As Hellyer points out, only 8% of new money is created by governments, the rest being created by banks. The latter is debt money, created out of nothing but requiring an additional sum to be paid as interest by the borrower. That debt is taken out of the existing economy. If the banks were to loan to useful businesses that help expand the economy, all would be well. The past record is not promising, as bankers are no better at predicting the future than anyone else and are susceptible to tulipmania group think, such as during the oil boom when real estate loans were oversold. When the boom collapsed and land developers defaulted, it was, as it usually is, the average taxpayer who had to pick up the debt, either as high bank service fees, reduced credit or indirectly through deposit insurance.

In inflationary times, debt money is not such a serious problem as long as the money devalues the debt. When the economy deflates, money becomes more valuable, and debt is dearer. Most of us have never experienced a deflating economy. The last such experience was the Great Depression, so anyone who was old enough to understand it would have been born in the early 1930s or previous. The contractions of the 1980s have afflicted many but nowhere to the amount of the Great Depression. The Kondratieff long wave results in periodic decline in purchasing power that orthodox economists are unable to explain. Yet the average person instinctively knows that in a decline, the

supply of money should be increased. Instead the usual response is to decrease the velocity of money by interest rate hikes and spending cutbacks. During the Great Depression, some local communities got around this with scrip money.

History is written by the victors, and as Social Credit lost its bid to reform the monetary system, it has become fashionable to sneer at it as the funny money party. Writes Hellyer: "I often listened to the Social Credit MPs debate and was interested in what they had to say, but remained silent. I sometimes wondered if anyone else on the government benches felt the same way. You can imagine my astonishment when one day, as I was standing behind the curtain of the House of Commons, ... one of my senior colleagues, David Croll, said "You know, what they are saying makes a lot of sense." I was flabbergasted. David Croll was on the left wing of the Liberal party and the Social Crediters were perceived as being on the far right. ... I was perfectly aware, however, that if a reporter had stopped him on the way out of the House and asked him what he thought of the Social Credit speech just delivered he would have mumbled something like "non-sense" and dashed off. ... If either of us had been forthright we would have been labelled 'nut cakes' or something equally unflattering." Hellyer notes that the politicians are too much under the control of 'experts' who brief them (much like the television series "YES, MINISTER").

The traditional response of bankers is that our economic problems can be traced to government deficits and debt. Such debts soar when the country fights a war, yet the economy quickly moves to full employment and expands rapidly. No banker suggests that we should fight a war to boost our economy, yet they cannot explain why it is wrong to spend it on social programs or infrastructure.

When you deposit money in a bank, it legally becomes the bank's money. As Hellyer points out, you do not own

the deposit; you are only a creditor of a private corporation. The bank immediately lends your money out. Not just the money either, but because of the fractional reserve system it will loan many times that amount. A deposit is a liability to a bank because it must pay it out again eventually, whereas a loan is an asset because it is income. That is why debt money is encouraged by banks.

Inflation, the bugaboo of bankers, has in recent decades been controlled by raising interest rates. This method works in the short term but is too harsh if used for too long. Alternative methods of cooling an overheated economic system should be considered, such as raising the required fractional reserves of the banks, or mandating a higher minimum monthly payment on credit cards. This would restrict available credit to those overspending but not afflict those who pay cash or stay within their personal budgets. Hellyer shows the results of a variety of computer simulations, which demonstrate that there are alternatives to monetarist dogma that work better.

Canada and the USA are each other's largest trading partners. Since the USA has the larger economy, it affects Canada more than the other way around. With regards to interest rate policy, this creates problems because the two countries have different rules. Americans can deduct interest on mortgage payments on homes; Canadians cannot. Canadians, on the other hand, have term mortgages of six months to five years, whereas most Americans have them fixed for 15 to 30 years. Blips in the interest rates thus affect Canadian homeowners quickly and consequently affect consumer spending faster.

Hellyer suggests one method of improving the government balance sheet is to remove the G.S.T. (= V.A.T.) which has crippled Canada's tourism industry. This is not because of the actual tax rate but rather the paperwork and the assessment of tax on items brought into the country even if those items are taken back out again. As an aside, the G.S.T. was the factor that reduced the size of the

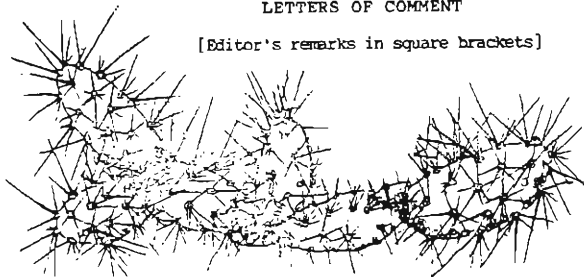
dealer bourse and art show at ConAdian. It is the paperwork of Canada Customs that causes the harm.

Economists like equations, so Hellyer discusses one that many would not rather admit to: Monetarism + Monopoly Power = Stagflation. To quote Hellyer: "There is something structurally wrong with a system where the financial community kicks the economy in the shins as soon as it appears to be gaining strength.". As soon as the system improves, interest rates are jacked up to cool the economy down, but the result is continuous high unemployment and continuous inflation, albeit the latter at a temporarily lower rate.

The fractional reserve system of banking results in the continuous mismatch of money supply and gross domestic product (GDP). Businesses must overproduce to pay down the debt money, and the wild fluctuations in short term economic cycles results in surplus workers, that is, unemployment. We are thus faced with the strange paradox of too many workers, too many goods, and a shortage of money to balance the system. In the long run this keeps the Kondratieff long wave going. The wave bottoms out as everything is in surplus and money is scarce. Over a period of years, the situation will slowly balance for a brief period, and the long wave swings up. As it swings up, debt money increases, whether from margin buying of stocks (1920s) or excessive consumption of houses, BMWs, and consumer electronics (1980s). The result is a long period of time to clear the debt, and the long wave goes down again. Remember that all our money is debt money. It is created out of nothing by banks, but the borrowers must not only pay that money back but take existing money out of the system to service the interest debt.

As much as I agree with Hellyer, the problem, as always, is "How do we reach Utopia from here?". Hellyer is retired from politics and can do nothing. Our protests can only fall on the deaf ears of economists captive to monetarism. What is to be done?

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



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

1994-10-28

The problem with R.U.R., even if the concept worked, is humanity. The entertainment industry would, of course, take over the world, but who would write the scripts? The actors could be robots, but one still needs writers and probably editors. Are there enough people in the world who would write popular material for their own amusement? The people who are "driven to write" do not ordinarily produce mass entertainment, and the masses do not ordinarily read or watch anyone's idea of Literature.

You touch on one aspect of humanity but don't mention it specifically. Where everything is free, what becomes of status? Ernest Mann would probably say it was an evil that should be swept away, but it won't be. People like to consider themselves better than their neighbours. It can attach itself to different forms: wealth, intelligence, conspicuous consumption, technical ability. You name it but it's going to be there, and people want others to know about it. Creation of envy in others is the supreme achievement for millions of humans. A purely equal society would produce the most frustrated humans you saw.

FROM: Mark Strickert
ELCA Copy Centre
8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, Illinois 60634

1994-10-31

Ah, I'm not alone! Your review of ROGUE RAVEN: "I've always felt guilty because I attend a con for the programming, whereas most congoers write of the parties". Guilt I've felt not, if only for all dissing of programming seen in party-animal fanzines. Not only do I like panels and films at cons, I have found few con parties that could keep me in the room beyond a quick check of the snack table. Even the venerated "Minneapolis in '73" party room at Minicon did not interest me, though I have tracked down a few amusing parties at that con.

FROM: Joseph Major
4701 Taylor Boulevard #8
Louisville, Kentucky 40215-2343

1994-10-31

The WESTWIND review shows how some things never change. The Artemis Project for a commercial lunar base seems to be based on the thesis that "everyone likes the idea as much as we do but is not yet aware of it". Instead of studying public relations and salesmanship, they assume that those are not needed. Then they wonder why they did not sell \$800 million in movie tickets. The OMEGA BLOCK review shows how the Internet is excellent for spreading urban legends, disinformation, misinformation, paranoia, and just plain lies at the speed of light if not faster. What was it they said about how the Age of Information would bring an end to lies and usher in a new age of enlightenment? (My spelling checker lacked 'Internet'. And this is supposed to be a computer!)

Never mind the problem of immigrants causing strife under the Priceless Economic System, what about natives causing strife? Those lager louts who smash up soccer stadiums are generally on the dole.

Post-economic theorists seem to have assumed that there is this reservoir of artistic talent being repressed by the need to work for a living. If goods have effective zero cost, then services are the only scarce resource.

The 19th-Century German Liberal politician Eugen Richter once wrote a SF story about what he thought would happen if the Social Democrats got into power. It started off well, with the triumph of the workers leading to the abolition of repression and its means and the institution of democracy. However the democracy soon turned into a farce and a facade (opposition candidates found themselves assigned to clean sewers at the far end of the country), and the flight of deviationists soon entailed the institution of a system of border control. (He was not so far-sighted to make it a wall). Before long the revived military was needed because of a war with France. Centralized work assignments were necessary, it turned out, because people malignly refused to register themselves for crucial work assignments but instead picked trivial ones. Every deer in Berlin could have had its own personal game-keeper, for example.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

1994-10-27

I'm thankful that I don't receive all the zines you cover because I wouldn't be able to understand about half of them, and I don't know where I would find the strength to increase my loc output. Envy, that there isn't time enough to get myself involved in a few activities that are involved with these publications. Disbelief, that you manage to hold down a full-time job, publish a regular fanzine, and still read such a wildly varied assortment of zines. Perplexity, at why so many far-out individuals publish stuff about their lunatic fringe obsessions while there are fewer zines from well-adjusted and sensible young people.

[As far as your disbelief goes, I attribute my productivity to the fact that I don't have a television set. It is amazing how much typing can be done in an hour rather than vegetating in front of the TV set. People always laugh when I say this.

I'm hesitant to answer your query about why far-out individuals publish for fear of identifying myself in that category. As for why "well-adjusted and sensible" people aren't as likely to publish, I attribute this to them being too busy mindlessly consuming and doing all the other boring things that our "maladjusted" society expects us to do. It reminds me of a business column in the CALGARY HERALD which each week spotlights a "successful" business owner. Almost invariably, the biography of that owner will mention his/her divorce because of long working hours or frequent trips. Well-adjusted and sensible? (Insert diatribe about Economy of Abundance and the original purpose of money.)]

I have a copy of R.U.R. in an anthology of plays somewhere but I've never read it. So I appreciate this detailed description of what happens in Capek's drama, something I don't remember having seen in a fanzine previously. I wonder if the names of the characters in the edition you used are the same as those used by Capek. They obviously aren't of Czech derivation, and several of them seem unlikely choices by him if he decided to utilize mostly British-sounding names.

[I believe this is due to the translation, as I've seen other versions that used slightly different names. This is, of course, one of the problems of discussing translations, as one can never be certain if one is reading what was actually intended, or what the translator put in. I've had this problem with the Strugatsky brothers and other foreign authors. Is it a bad story because it is a bad story or because it is a bad translation?]

FROM: Jenny Glover
16 Aviary Place
Leeds LS12 2NP, England

1994-10-28

I disagree with a comment of yours, that "SF is a quiet backwater". Sure, it's great to find fanzines in different genres and disciplines but I don't think you can automatically assume that they are "at the cutting edge of the future" while SF zines are not. It's just, I think, that you are less familiar with them.

[I was reading underground zines (although most are newsprint tabloids, not magazine style) back in the Sixties, long before I became aware of SF zines. They generally are more daring than SF zines, which, after all, have only just gotten rid of the "If it ain't mimeo, it ain't a real zine" crowd.]

ConAdian must have been an extremely good convention with more fanzines than usual. One might assume that serious envy is expressed. Still, there's Intersection next August in Glasgow, and that looks as if it will be an excellent con with lots of innovative program items and new ideas. All the family are involved with it; my partner Steve and I are arranging the fan programme; Tara is planning programme items for Kidcon, and Rob will be helping with childcare. Plus planning a few more CYBRER BUNNYS too!

{CYBRER BUNNY is the zine Tara and Rob put out, an issue of which was distributed at the ConAdian fanzine room.}

FROM: Ned Brooks
713 Paul Street
Newport News, Virginia 23605

1994-11-1

I was bemused by your contention that the Canadian suppression of WIRED 2.04 was justified, but you want a copy

anyway! I think the business about the O.J. Simpson trial being a media circus is ridiculously exaggerated by the media itself, and by Judge Ito. What good is a jury of ignoramuses, if they can find one? I don't watch much TV but I skim everything in the newspaper and several magazines; those people who neither watch TV news, read the paper, or listen to radio mostly likely have little in the way of a mind either.

[WIRED 2.04 was not banned by Canada Customs, but rather the Alberta distributor refused to bring it in because of one sentence about the Homolka case. They must have a Nervous Nellie for a solicitor, although I can understand their fear; it is no fun appearing in court. Since the publication ban was issued by an Ontario court, and no one out this way is likely to be in the jury pool, I see no reason for the distributor to withhold the issue. In the past, for example, eastern newspapers were banned from publishing details about the McCain brothers' feud, while we out west read all the gory details. I don't care if that sentence about Homolka is blacked out; I just want to complete my run of WIRED.]

FROM: Vicki Rosenzweig
33 Indian Road, 6-R
New York, New York 10034

1994-11-10

I'm not going to shout censorship, but I do have a few thoughts on your request for that issue of WIRED. The first is that the interesting question is not whether forbidding people to publish or acquire certain information is censorship, but under what circumstances, if any, it is legitimate to do so. Here in the United States, thoughtful people (~~ALL THOSE OF THEM~~) are aware of the tension between freedom of the press and a defendant's right to a fair trial. It sounds to me as though Canadian law has put more weight on the fair trial. U.S. law tends to have more interest in freedom of the press,

perhaps because people accused of crimes are less likely to have expensive lawyers and friends in high places than the people who own major television networks and newspapers. But, to pick an example, it is generally accepted that jurors in any criminal case may be asked to avoid newspapers. My other thought is, if the court order is still in effect, and you have said you agree with it, why do you consider it proper to be asking for that magazine?

[An Ontario court order should not apply in Alberta if the ostensible reason is to ensure an impartial pool of jury candidates. This is particularly so if WIRED 2.04 only had a brief sentence on Homolka. It would be different if they had a splashy cover story on the case giving the horrible details of what his wife pleaded to or what she will provide in testimony against him when he finally goes to trial in 1995. That sort of thing does not have to circulate at Ontario newsagents. The ban, incidently, is not censorship because once the trial is over the information can be circulated. But as I said, I want to complete my set of WIRED, having all the other issues. Completists will understand.]

In regards to the Economy of Abundance and collectibles, while the problem would exist, I suspect it would be less severe than it looks at first glance. There is a category of collectibles that are rare because someone saw economic advantage in making them so, such as signed limited editions of books and prints. Others are desired to keep score, to say "I'm so rich I can have this", as much because of their inherent interest. The one-penny magenta stamp isn't valued because it's beautiful, or even because of its age, but simply because there is only one of it. Some things might be dealt with by being declared national or cultural treasures and held in museums or libraries where anyone could look at them. There's precedent for that even now; certain nations will not allow valued antiquities or works of art to leave the country.

About fannish cross-fertilization, I suspect there are people whose attitude is somewhere between "con programming should be only SF and my other diversions" and "if we have that stuff it will bring too many strangers in". There's some justification for the latter, if one thinks of fandom as a community; growth is reasonable and possibly even desirable, but growing too fast could vastly change the character of cons and fandom. Those who are in the community because they like what it offers understandably want to preserve it. My own feeling is that it's reasonable to include activities that appeal to a significant number of fans, so long as they don't push the SF content aside. That sounds like "Canadian content"; do we need an organization to make sure that at least 10% of panels relate to SF? Along those lines, I do not at all object to having masquerades at cons, but am annoyed by the common practice of running no other programming at the same time. Even the Guest of Honour speech seldom gets treated with that much respect. I deal with this, usually, by going for a late dinner and then seeking a party, assuming someone shares my feelings and is starting before the end of the masquerade.

FROM: Murray Moore
377 Manly Street
Midland, Ontario L4R 3E2

1994-11-26

WIRED 2.04 was pulled from the newsstands in southern Ontario, then put back with a green 2" diameter sticker on the cover with the announcement "Material in this issue is BANNED in Canada".

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Andrew Murdoch, John Thiel, Joseph Nicholas, Henry Welch, Gary Deindorfer, Brant Kresovich, David Thayer, Mike Glicksohn