

Here we go again...

I thought I might begin this first issue with a ringing declaration of principles, with an outline of the ways in which *MLR* will differ from such previous attempts at doing a 'national' Canadian fanzine as Robert Runte's *New Canadian Fanfiction* or Garth Spencer's *Maple Leaf Rag* (of which *MLR* is the direct descendant). But that seems a bit presumptuous, and besides, the differences will be readily apparent to those of you who care about them.

So instead I will simply describe what this

zine is - and what it isn't - and what I hope to accomplish through it.

MLR is primarily a newsletter. I hope to make brevity its stock in trade, both for the sake of clarity and to keep the zine from being a terminal drain on my budget. With any luck, every two months subscribers will receive from four to six pages of news gathered from fanzine sources throughout Canada. This reporting will, I hope, fulfill two functions. First, it should disseminate information likely to be considered important

by active fans across the country. Second, it should, by demonstrating the similarities and differences between us, help Canadian fans feel a greater kinship with one another.

Unlike some previous 'national' fanzines, *MLR* will deal only in factual reports. I undertake no crusades here. Crusading, as Garth Spencer could no doubt tell you, accomplishes little besides wearing you out before your time.

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NUMBER 1

August/September 1987

Lawsuits in the Video Room?

Many a fan's first reaction to fandom runs along the lines of "how can anything this much fun possibly be legal?" Some Western Canadian convention organisers have set out to find just how legal one aspect of con-going actually is.

A trio of western cons is funding a legal investigation into the ramifications of the copyright laws as they apply to the videos of sf movies shown at conventions across the country. Representatives of NonCon (Edmonton), V-con (Vancouver) and Key-Con (Winnipeg) have hired a lawyer who is "interested" in the fuzzy area where copyright meets fandom.

The investigation was prompted, says NonCon Ten chair Jane Starr, when rumours began to surface of a "copyright person" living in Calgary who also happens to be a fan. "Nobody knows his name," says Starr, but the rumours say the mysterious person, who may be an employee of a video or film company, "is likely to prosecute violators" of the copyright law.

Calgary's Convention has made its own accommodation with the question: the con has been paying royalties for its video room for the past two years, and declined to take part in funding the legal inquiry, according to KeyCon 5/Convention 8 chair *see "Videos" on page 2*

Winnipeg set to host Convention Eight

Convention is headed west once again. As is fitting, though, for a country in which communication is so often difficult, the peripatetic con is carrying its usual share of confused misunderstanding.

The annual Canadian sf convention will next be held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, over the Victoria Day weekend of 1988. The convention was awarded to the Winnipeg bid at the Convention business meeting during Ad Astra 7/Convention 7, held in Toronto this past June.

Linda Ross-Mansfield, chair of Keycon 5/Convention 8, says the first progress report for the convention wasn't mailed until mid-August. "We were on tenterhooks," she says, "waiting for information from Toronto, because nothing has shown up." She says the mailing was held up in hope that the Convention 7 committee would forward to Winnipeg the massive mailing list/database compiled for Convention 7's first mailing. Ross-Mansfield also echoed the concern that has been voiced in some Western Canadian quarters over the silence surrounding the supposed revival of CUFF, the Canadian Unity Fan Fund (about which see the story elsewhere in this issue).

Michael Wallis, chair of Ad Astra/Convention 7, says he handed the information to a subordinate to be mailed some time ago. "Either it's lost in the mail, or I have



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to talk to (the subordinate)," he says.

One problem Ross-Mansfield hopes to be able to deal with in the coming year is the ongoing question of the design for the Casper award, handed out at each Convention. Until now, each Convention committee has designed its own award. Ross-Mansfield would like to see a standard design chosen, to be mounted on a base which could vary according to the whim of individual host committees. "We want to keep the cost of the award reasonable," she says, "so that we can encourage smaller cons to join in and host a Convention."

In the second progress report, due out in November, Ross-Mansfield will invite interested parties to submit design proposals for the Casper. Designs should be "simple to make and low in cost," she says.

Ross-Mansfield says planning for the next Convention will take into account a *see "Convention" on page 2*

Fund-amental trouble

Once upon a time some Canadian fans decided that they'd like to bring a friend from one part of the country to a convention in another. So they raised some money, called it the Canadian Unity Fan Fund (CUFF) and everyone had a good time at the convention. Then the idea lapsed.

Until Convention 6 at Vancouver's V-Con, when some of the attendees decided to revive the moribund fund for the next Convention, to take place alongside Ad Astra 7 in Toronto in June of '87. Promises were made, nominating ballots printed...and then silence descended over the whole project. Ad Astra/Convention came and went, with no word. Some people began to ask dark questions about the fan fund that had seemingly gone missing.

Of course, it had done no such thing. But a much more Canadian thing happened to CUFF in 1987: due to an underwhelming lack of interest, no single person received enough nominations to qualify for the fund.

"Part of that was due to the way I worded the nomination form," says Michael Wallis, who tried to administer CUFF last year. "I wanted someone known in both regions of the country" to win. The nomination form required that a candidate be nominated by three people from her region (in 86-87 the West) and two in the region to be visited. "We got a lot of responses from people who had the proper number of nominations from the West," says Wallis, "but none of them had the nominations from the East."

As for the lack of news about the lack of a candidate: this is more the result of Canadian fandom's ongoing communications problem than it is the fault of any conspiracy. The information has always been there for anyone who bothered to call Wallis; nobody did.

CUFF is now split between two administrators: Mike Glicksohn in the East, and Fran Skene in the West. Wallis estimates that the fund will hold about \$600 if the defunct Rain relaxation donates its leftover funds. He hopes that "next year we'll see a real race."

MLR

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MLR Number 1

Encouraging a healthy skepticism

by Howard Springsteen

On July 27, the Ontario Skeptics held their second General Meeting, in Hart House on the University of Toronto campus. The OS is the newly-formed Ontario affiliate of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP). CSICOP was formed 11 years ago by Paul Kurtz, professor of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, who brought it into being because he thought there was a need to counter the spread of irrational beliefs and to provide the public with a more balanced treatment of claims of the paranormal by presenting the dissenting scientific viewpoint.

It claims among its members such notables as James Randi, Martin Gardner, Isaac Asimov, L. Sprague de Camp, and Carl Sagan. Since its formation, it has spawned a number of affiliate organisations around the world, including the Ontario Skeptics, formed a few months ago.

The meeting on July 27 began with remarks by the Chairman, magician Henry Gordon, who mentioned that the organisation is currently forming subcommittees to deal with various aspects of the paranormal. Richard Wakefield then gave a dissertation on Scientific Creationism. As he explained, this is a campaign of selective deception, attempting to support a literal interpretation of the Bible. It uses appeal to doctrine, the Bible being the source of its tenets, and it is a closed belief system, since its tenets are not subject to modification. Evidence which does not support its beliefs is either ignored or distorted to fit.

Mr. Wakefield also spoke about a recent article which appeared in many Ontario newspapers. An astronomy professor at the University of Toronto is developing a physics curriculum for the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Ministry advised him to remove a reference to the age of the sun, and to substitute "change" or "develop" for the word "evolve" with reference to the evolution of stars and other objects in the universe. They said that this was to avoid anticipated complaints from creationists.

After Mr. Wakefield's talk, magicians Henry Gordon and Gordon Precious demonstrated a number of "psychic" powers, including telekinesis and mindreading. Mr. Gordon spoke about having encountered Uri Geller on a television talk-show, and blocking Geller's attempt to move a compass needle "telepathically" by carrying a more powerful hidden magnet than the one Geller was using.

If you'd like more information about the Ontario Skeptics, you can write them at PO Box 686, Stn. C, Toronto, Ontario M6J 3S1. I also highly recommend "The Skeptical Enquirer", the official journal of CSICOP. It's published quarterly, and subscriptions are US\$23.50. You can write to them at Box 229, Buffalo, NY 14215-0229.

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Linda Rose-Mansfield.

"Calgary took the precedent-setting course of actually paying royalties," says Rose-Mansfield, "something I personally don't like. To pay out royalties if you don't have to just gives them a precedent to pick on everyone else."

Starr says the three concons are optimistic things will go their way. "Stuart Cooper, who's organising this, thinks we have a pretty good case," she says. The reason is the way cons are set up.

"Because cons are closed," says Rose-Mansfield, "they might fall under the 'home viewing' aspect of the law."

The results of this inquiry may be a while in coming, but the copyright question is one that concons have been dealing with - even if they deal with it by ignoring it - ever since the first bad 187th-generation camera-shot video made its way onto a program. It will be good to be able to worry about one less aspect of running a con. Next stop: the liquor laws.

Convention, cont. from page 1

number of special items. "We're looking for francophones of - in Manitoba. We're looking for francophone publishing outside Quebec. We're trying to draw attention to the fact that, a) there is of in languages other than English; and b) there are problems (for non-English of) in gaining recognition and being translated."

KeyCon 5 is promising "bilingual programming," in spite of the fact that French-language programming was a bust at Ad Astra, both with anglophones, who didn't attend it, and with francophones, who didn't want it and rightly felt that it shut them out of the mainstream of the con. Perhaps the KeyCon people are taking the word "bilingual" literally, and intend to provide simultaneous translation.

Guests for KeyCon 5 are: Gene Wolfe and Ottawa's Charles De Lint, ProGoHs; Fran Skene of Vancouver, FanGoH; and Torontonian Kevin Davies, Artist Guest. Attendance promises to be healthy: nearly nine months before the con, registration is already 170.

Winnipeg

The Winnipeg Worldcon Bid is coming along reasonably well, according to Linda Ross-Mansfield. Members of the bid committee are plugging Winnipeg at Naefic, and Linda and husband John Mansfield made a determined effort to get to Brighton for Worldcon. Promotion is a big part of any Worldcon bid, and Winnipeg has its buttons and stickers ready for distribution. Organisers have also talked to Molson's Brewery about promotional support - the connection is the proposed con's ghastly name, Con-solan A, which suggests Molson's popular "Canadian" brand of beer. Whatever help Molson's can give, though, will have to be confined pretty much to Manitoba, save for providing free plastic cups for parties. That can't do much for selling the bid in the U.S., where the question of who hosts the '94 Worldcon will be decided... the Manitoba tourism bureau may be of greater help; it might be able to pick up 50% of the bid's printing costs... Ross-Mansfield admits that money is a problem at a time when unsuccessful bids spend \$45,000 U.S... but she thinks that voters won't need to be bribed, that common sense and intelligent voting will swing things Winnipeg's way... Star Trek Winnipeg, the city's largest club with 100 or so members, is gearing up for its annual Open House, set for 15 September...the club is advertising the event heavily (STW promotes itself in the news media very well) and members are being encouraged to show up in costumes and "prepared to meet the public." STW has always been able to mobilise a high proportion of its membership for events like this...the club is also working at incorporating itself.

EDMONTON

Preparations for NonCon10 are going well as the conoom heads down the stretch (the con goes 9-12 October at the Edmonton Inn.) Chair Jane Starr says that hotel bills are somewhat higher than expected (NonCon is returning to the Edmonton Inn for the first time since NonCon 3 in 1980), but adds that pre-registration was higher in mid-August than it ever got for NonConNine... the dealers' room is completely sold out, and Starr reports that the art show is rapidly filling up in spite of having larger quarters. In fact, the whole con is blessed with larger quarters this year, meaning more room for programming and a larger con-suite... speaking of which, for once the bar will be located in the non-smoking part of the con-suite. Also a switch from the normal run of things, the non-smokers will get the larger amount of space this time... Starr has had more than her share of problems with conoom members dropping out or being forced to quit, but the newcomers to the conoom have reportedly done a super job. There are competing bids for NonCon 11: Howard Gibbons heads up an Edmonton bid, while Philipp Liesner is running a Calgary bid, with support from Eric Tillbrook and Pam McLean.

Ottawa

Elections will be held 13 September to select a committee to run Maplecon 10. Planning for the con is already under way, though the con's location is still under discussion. According to Michael McKenny, contributing editor to the OSFS clubzine *Ottawa Science Fiction Statement*, some people have complained about the Carlton University site. There have also, however, been complaints about the size of the last hotel Maplecon used... the con's technical people prefer Carlton, because they're accustomed to it and their technical operation is designed around it. McKenny has announced the formation of a fantasy fiction zine, to be called *Bardic Rites*. Now that *Fantasy Book* has suspended publication, McKenny says, there's not much of a paying market left for fantasy... McKenny's zine has somewhat restrictive requirements: he prefers Celtic high fantasy - though "any fantasy will be considered" - and insists on "traditional portrayal of morality and sex." Stories of up to 5,000 words will be considered; payment is 1/2 cent a word. The zine is to be published twice annually, with deadlines for submission of 1 May and 1 September. McKenny says he wants to give priority to Canadians, and will hold off advertising in the U.S. until he has built up a "stable" of Canadian writers. Writer Judith Merrill will address OSFS's monthly general meeting 28 October.

Ottawa U to hold sf conference this fall

The fanish and academic communities have never exactly been the best of friends. Fans often resent academic interest in what many are proud to call a literary ghetto. Many academics find fans' haphazard approach to science fiction to be irritating if not stupid.

All this aside, it is to be hoped that fans will be as interested as academics in the news that the University of Ottawa is holding a week-long sf conference this fall. Several Canadian writers have already agreed to take part, and Judith Merrill has been approached to give what amounts to the conference's inaugural address.

The conference is scheduled for the week of 30 November to 4 December. It is to feature both anglophone and francophone speakers, exhibitions, debates, films, a play and amateur writing and drawing contests. Among the confirmed speakers to date: Elizabeth Vonarburg, Charles de Lint, Esther Rochon, Robert O'Reardon and Jean-Louis Trudel. Merrill has been invited to speak on some aspect pertaining to women and sf: women as sf writers, the depiction of women in sf novels, or some similar topic.

The intention, according to the U of O, is for the University to eventually host a national bilingual congress. This year's conference is supposed to be the first step toward establishing something of a science fiction tradition at U of O. It is the hope of the organisers that the conference will appeal equally to students and to "members of the community." That should be assumed to mean members of the fanish community as well.

TORONTO

The Spaced Out Library (SOL) is hosting a series of lectures, discussions and readings under the general title "Futures Forum," as an ongoing part of Judith Merrill's Writer-in-Library residency. The programs, held every second Tuesday evening, have featured a number of challenging topics and several of the best Canadian sf writers... and have been virtually ignored by Toronto's fanish community. Yvonne and Lloyd Penney have announced a Star Trek convention for Toronto next summer. Toronto Trek Celebration 2 (TTC2 was a 1986 one-day party for members of the Star Trek Toronto club) will take place 12-14 August, 1988, at the Ramada Inn 400/401. The con is something of an anomaly as far as media cons are concerned: there will be no actors as guests. The Penneys have instead decided to run a literary convention, and have announced Diane Duane and Peter Morwood as ProOoHs. ProOoH will be Shirley Malawski, chair of the Star Trek Welcomitees... "I know some people were disappointed that we aren't going to have any actors," Lloyd says. "We've lost one person from the conoom. But we'll see what kind of response we get..." ST Toronto holds its club elections 19 September at a meeting in the SOL... the conoom for Ad Astra 8 (June '88) is already meeting monthly. The committee expects 1000 people to visit next year's con, which is changing hotels to accommodate them.

Here we go again...(cont. from page 1)

Besides, whatever desires I may have to 'reform' fandom, in Canada or elsewhere, are no business of what is meant to be a newsletter. I intend to publish one editorial item per issue, tucked away on the back page. The primary purpose of this publication is information.

I regret, also, that *AEAR* will not publish lengthy articles of the sort that grace the pages of *New Canadian Fandom*. For one thing, I do not have Robert Runie's fannish contacts. For another, I do not have his perseverance or zeal. Besides, other zines (*NCF*, *lorus*) are perfectly capable of filling this need.

For the same reason, *AEAR* will contain no writers' news, and only that international news which is not better covered in zines like *File 770*, *Locus* and *SFC*. With regard to the latter, I am not in the business of duplicating services. As for the former, it may be true that every second fan wants to be a writer. But that doesn't mean that fandom and writing are in any way interconnected. No doubt there is a need for a national newsletter for Canadian writers of speculative fiction. I have hopes that such a publication isn't far off. But this is not it, with all due respect to Garth's efforts in this area in the past.

AEAR exists because I have been given to understand that there is a need for a fannish news organ, and for no other reason. More so than most, this country is faced with a multitude of problems that make communication difficult. We are as a

people spread out in a thin band stretched across the breadth of a large continent. Seldom do fans from one part of this country have any contact with those of other regions. When we do, we are as like as not to spend our time sniffing warily around one another, convinced perhaps that fans from the opposite end of the country are somehow cut from different cloth - perhaps they have horns or something to set them apart. If a fanzine like *AEAR* can in any small way demonstrate that we are far more alike than we are different, then it will be worth doing.

Some detail notes for you: only about half of those of you who are reading this will still be receiving *AEAR* when Number Three makes its appearance around the end of December - unless you indicate in dramatic fashion your continued interest. Frankly, I will be more than satisfied with a mailing list of about 100. Garth mailed his zine to many more people and organizations, but I am taking a rather more harsh attitude.

I am of the belief that there are in this country no more than a hundred or so active fans. Hell, the mailing list for Convention 7, which contained the names of just about every Canadian who has attended a major Canadian con in the past three years, only had about 1500 names on it. Few of these people could be considered 'active' in any real sense, so 100 might even be an optimistic figure.

I am prepared to send *AEAR* free to any individual or club willing to trade zines with me - clubs especially. I am not, however, prepared to be so generous with more than a handful of individual fans. Nothing

personal, but I can't afford to do this thing as a hobby. On the other hand, my subscription rates are cheap - a mere C\$6 per year. At that, I'm offering *AEAR* at much less than cost, when you factor in my production methods.

One of the things that got in the way of *Adapted Last Page's* effectiveness was the stale-dating of news. This is always a problem when you rely on the mail for your information, so I have decided to obtain my information by telephone and modem. About once every eight weeks, I will call a group of selected correspondents across the country. I'm still looking for correspondents in places like Halifax and Victoria. If your locale isn't represented in this first issue of *AEAR*, it's not because I despise you in any way. It's simply that I don't know how to reach the right people in your area. Please let me know who you are. And if you have information you think other Canadian fans should know about, drop me a line. My mailing address, phone number and BBS info are all in the masthead on page two.

Also in the masthead is a deadline for next issue. Each issue's masthead will contain the deadline information for the following ish. Please do what you can to meet these deadlines: a newsletter's pointless if the news doesn't get to it in time.

A final word: I have 'contracted' with myself to do six of these, one year's worth of *AEAR*. If, at the end of that year, the readership hasn't responded with sufficient interest, then I'll simply quit. Canada may need an sf newsletter, but I don't need any extra aggravation.

It's all up to you, people.

MLR

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