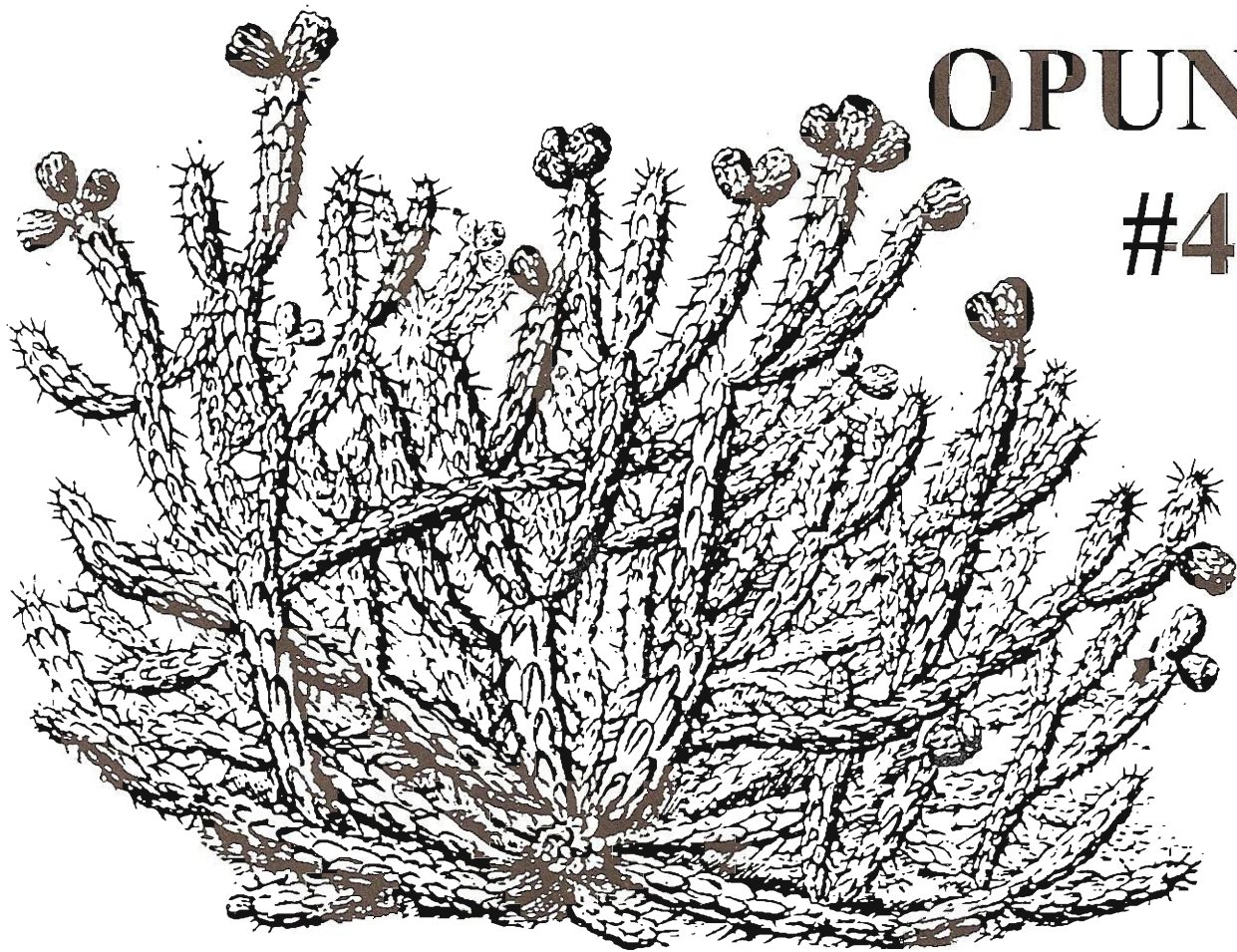
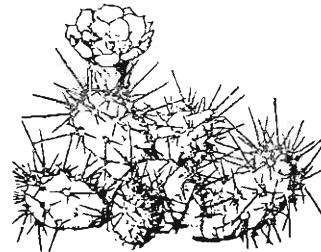


OPUNTIA

#41.1D



TO THE
EDITOR[Editor's
remarks
in square
brackets]

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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: The cover depicts *Opuntia whipplei*, by an unknown artist in the 1856 House of Representatives (USA) REPORTS OF EXPLORATIONS AND SURVEYS TO ASCERTAIN THE MOST PRACTICABLE AND ECONOMICAL ROUTE FOR A RAILROAD FROM THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN, Volume 4.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Phlox, Chester Cuthbert, Scott Crow, Jim Moseley, Bill Bowers, Harry Andruschak, Lois Klassen

WORLD WIDE PARTY #6: Don't forget to raise a glass and toast your friends in the Papernet on June 21 at 21h00.

WORLD CON STUFF: To support Toronto's bid to host the 2003 World Science Fiction Convention, send C\$20.03 or US\$15 to: Toronto in '03, Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1A2.

FROM: Lloyd Penney

1999-02-20

1706 - 24 Eva Road

Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

New methodologies may arise, especially in the printed word, but in the entire market for printed material, new methods do not replace the old ones, but provide more choice for the advertiser. I now work at a printing plant in Mississauga, and while you can buy just about anything online, printed ads are still much more popular. Even though we have the most modern computers and printing methods, such as encad, impress, and ripping, there's still demand for metal type letterpress, and we have that too. There has been some overkill with fonts, but a wise designer will be able to choose one or two that will set a style while providing reading body copy. Too many are more prideful of the hardware and software they own, and less mindful of what they can do with it. A short time ago there was a combination SF and typography

convention called Typocon; I would like to hear what happened at that con.

[Typocon is news to me, and sounds fascinating. Can anyone supply a report on what was said and done? Not long ago I toured one of Calgary's largest printing plants and watched digital pre-press documents download from the USA directly to a printing press computer. It then peeled out a printing plate a few seconds later. All the printer had to do was take the plate, walk a few steps to the press, attach it to the rollers, and throw the switch. But immediately adjacent to the \$65,000 Linotype-Hell printing server was a 75-year-old flatbed press, used daily to produce high-quality letterpress and embossed stationery that the computerized operation couldn't even come close to matching.]

Old-time radio still has its fans, and stores that sell books on tape keep this interest going. Radio itself is no help; too format bound. We're talking with a friend who would like to try to stage radio plays at SF cons. We think they'd be successful. Some years ago, an audio room at a one-day con proved it.

[Calgary SF conventions occasionally had audio rooms but they were not too successful, partly because the sound system was just a ghetto blaster, and partly because the tapes were just amateur productions like "Cattlestar Galactica". There are lots of narrated SF books on tape in the stores, but purpose-written SF plays by

professionals don't have any market outside CBC Radio Two. Commercial radio, of course, was written off decades ago as any source of quality.]

The Toronto in 2003 WorldCon bid continues, and is approaching 1100 pre-supporting members.

FROM: Ned Brooks 1999-03-26
4817 Dean Lane
Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720

I have never seen much correlation between a writer's ability to hold my interest and the extent of his involvement in fandom. I suspect that some rather mediocre writers traded on their mannishness to stay afloat. The great writers who started out in fandom probably would have been great even if they hadn't.

Not all apas require a fee. SLANAPA rotates the duty of Official Editor through the roster, so that the cost of mailing is distributed. Though of course not precisely, as some mailings are larger than others.

[The NEW MOON DIRECTORY, price US\$6, lists hundreds of apas. From Eric L. Watts, 1161 Research Drive NE, Marietta, Georgia 30066-5539.]

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

CRIFANAC #12 (The Usual from Ken Forman, 7215 Nordic Lights Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada 89119) SF fanzine, with news and commentary on conventions, fanhistory, and fan travel funds. Fan funds originated in the 1950s and bring an SF fan from point A to point B, say across the Atlantic or Australia to USA. The winners have historically been fanzine fans, but in recent years a few other types of fans have won, stirring up a bit of controversy.

THE E-MAIL INTERVIEW WITH GUY BLEUS (US\$1 plus a piece of mail art from Joel S. Cohen, Ragged Edge Press, 102 Fulton Street, New York City, New York 10038) An interesting chapbook of e-mail interviews with mail art archivist Guy Bleus of Belgium. The text is somewhat disconnected due to the long-range interview format, but it takes one into a section of the Papernet world that some feel might be pre-empted by the Internet. Neo mail artists probably won't get much from this chapbook but if you're reasonably familiar with the world of mail art, then it would be worthwhile to get a copy.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK #83 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) SF clubzine with news and notes, reviews, and letters.

MAXIMUMROCKNROLL #191

(US\$3 from Box 460760, San Francisco, California 94146-0760) The final issue of this punkzine, which did not long survive the recent death of its founder. Thick, with a hundred or more pages. Hard to tell how many pages, since they are un-numbered. This does not matter much for a small zine but makes it difficult for big ones. Not just a trivial complaint from readers that editors can safely ignore. Page numbers are also there to assist the editors. In this issue, the editors got one extensive interview back-to-front in two widely-separated sections of the issue. It used to be that a dying magazine would put on a brave face by merging with another title, but MRR follows the modern trend of converting to a Website. With a quaver in their voices, the editorial collective trot out the usual assertions about how the Web is the wave of the future, but it is quite obvious that MRR will simply protract the mortal agonies on its Website until it fossilizes a year or two from now. If WIRED, Microsoft, and Amazon.com can't turn a profit on the Web despite billions invested, it seems unlikely that an undercapitalized editorial collective can survive. PUNK PLANET seems the most logical successor to MRR. But getting back to this issue, there are numerous opinion columns, music and punkzine reviews, and band interviews. The interviews are intelligent, not the usual "What's your favourite colour?" questions one sees in so many zines. Solid reading interspersed between all the record label display ads.

FLIPside #117 (US\$6 from Box 60790, Pasadena, California 91116) Slick cover punkzine with colour photos inside (cries of "Sellout!" from MRR) and the usual music and zine reviews. The strong point is the numerous band reviews, which, even if of bands no one in Canada is likely to hear live (save The Real McKenzies), are well written enough to be of interest. The high point was the account of Nudist Priest, a one-off group that did Judas Priest covers while performing in the nude. Also interesting to read of The Real McKenzies, who do punk guitar versions of Scottish songs while performing in kilts.

FROM COVER TO COVER V14#3 (US\$3 from Rudy Viol, 15550 Paulding Blvd., Brook Park, Ohio 44142) Newsletter of a mail art club called Art Cover Exchange, whose members send each other decorated envelopes ('covers' in philatelic lingo) in a monthly exchange. February, for example, had Valentine's Day as its theme, and ACE members sent each other mail art ranging from bland heart-shaped stickers on covers to a beautiful lace decorated cover. There is a sub-group that trades artistamps, and there are various contests for cover designs and activities. Also the usual club news and personalities.

HOLD MY HAND #1 (The Usual from Ryan Dueck, 166 Harvest Oak Rise NE, Calgary, Alberta T3K 4T9) Christian punkzine, not necessarily the oxymoron it may seem.

SAUCER SMEAR V46#3 (US\$2 from James Moseley, Box 1709, Key West, Florida 33041) Humourous newszine of UFOology. SAUCER SMEAR makes ANSIBLE look like EXTRAPOLATION. The lead-off item is about UFO-naut Peter Gersten, who intends to sue each of the 50 American states for failing to protect him under Article 4, Section 4, of the U.S. Constitution, which requires governments to act against threat of invasion. I laughed at first, then began to worry when I realized the Canadian Constitution probably has similar outlets for litigious lunatics. Elsewhere, lots of did-not-did-too letter writing concerning forged MJ-12 'documents' that makes the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion look like an accredited citation in EXTRAPOLATION. Someone wonders if UFOs have Y2K compliant computers, just in case they might start crashing out of the sky when the clock ticks over. A review of a book analyzing UFO abduction reports. The book was published out of the University of Saskatchewan of all places, and looks at abduction claims as part of modern myth making.

SQUIDMAIL #11 (\$3 from Joel Jackson, 2331 - 22A Street NW, Calgary, Alberta T2M 3X6) Slick cover zine with photocopy collage contents, ranging from the evils of goatees to punk parties at Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta. Interesting but needs more solid content rather than looking like something put together by two students from the Alberta College of Art.

HUMANITY IS MY DEATH #5 (\$1 from Sarra, 698 Meadowview Drive, Sherwood Park, Alberta T8M 1G1) Christian anarchist punkzine of an enthusiastic teenager. My Father's zinedom has many mansions.

KNARLEY KNEWS #74 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) SF genzine, with worries about where the fannish neos will come from, an endless bicycle tour around Australia, reviews, and lots of letters.

MUUNA TAKEENA #5 (The Usual from Timo Palonen, Hepokuja 6 B 26, FIN-01200 Vantaa, Suomi Finland) Reviewzine with strong emphasis on European zines not normally heard of on the North American side of the Atlantic. In English, with a Suomalais supplement.

PRAIRIE JAM #11 (\$1 from Edmonton Small Press Association, 201 - 10326 - 82 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 1Z8) Compilation of writing and comics by various local authors. A good short story on Ragnarok, the Viking myth about the final battle to end all battles.

VANAMONDE #298 to #302 (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Weekly 2-page apazine, ranging from WW2 postage stamp forgeries to convention reports.

WARP #46 (The Usual from Montreal SF and Fantasy Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montreal, Quebec H2W 2P4) Clubzine of media SF fans, with detailed reports of conventions in the Toronto and Montreal areas, and much to-do about the forthcoming Star Wars movie. A bit over the top in some places, with breathless reports about seeing film stars ("I just about died!") and gross exaggeration ("[Star Wars] is widely expected to be not only the most monumental event of all time in the SF/F field, but indeed in all of pop culture."). Indeed. But an enthusiastic bunch of fans who still have that sense of wonder that SF is supposed to be about.

TEN FOOT RULE #4 (US\$1 from Shawn Granton, 170 Beaver Street, Ansonia, Connecticut 06401) Well-drawn comics, a point that has to be mentioned these days, given the standard of underground comics and even the chicken scratches that pass for pro strips in newspapers. Matched by good humour and wit, with strips about the troubles of zine distros, May-December marriages (all those young trophy wives who married rich old men aren't too happy about Viagra), and why factory workers are not the salt of the earth they are made out to be.

THYME #125 (The Usual from Alan Stewart, Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 8005, Australia) Newszine of Australian Sfdom, author interview, book news, and letters.

RUTHIE #4 (The Usual from J. Mastre, 28 - 101A - 601 - 17 Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta T2S 0E3) Feminist zine, with articles on self-employed women, Mohammed's wife, a continuing series on sexually-transmitted diseases, and rationalizing weight problems.

SYMMETRY COMPILATION #1 (\$1 from Lana Leitch, 320 Templeside Circle NE, Calgary, Alberta T1Y 3L9) Fiction, comics, and essays influenced by the punk music scene but ranging further afield than that.

WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE #53 (The Usual from Jean Weber, Box 640, Airlie Beach, Queensland 4802, Australia) Perzine with lots of book reviews. Jean and Eric have just moved to their new condo in tropical Queensland, with a view of the sailboat races on the ocean and flocks of rainbow lorikeets visiting their balcony. An account is given of moving house, and the discovery that the contractor who built the condos never installed the laundry room drains, which Jean discovered the first time she used her washing machine and got flooded out.

FOR THE CLERISY V6#33 (The Usual from Brant Kresovich, Box 404, Getzville, New York 14068-0404) This time around with a comparison of gender differences, a consideration of Stanley Kubrick's life work in the movies, zine reviews, and letters of comment.

FILE 770 #129 (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016) Newszine of SF fandom, with scene reports, obituaries (someone suggested more birth announcements to balance out the depressing flow of deaths), convention reports, and letters,

THE GEIS LETTER #60 (US\$1 from Richard Geis, Box 11408, Portland, Oregon 97211-0408) Conspiracy zine, with reports of U.S. Marines urban warfare training as a prelude to Y2K, censorship, the American Social Security system, and reviews. After you read this overly-serious doomsaying, take SAUCER SMEAR as an antidote.

THE ABYSSINIAN PRINCE #215 (US\$1 from Jim Burgess, 664 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02908-4327) For Diplomacy game players; Harry Andruschak sent this to me with a note that he is about to be wiped out in the game he is currently in. Part apazine, part genzine, but introducing a new term to me; subzine or szine. Much is incomprehensible to non-players, but some sections of mundane commentary.

FABLES OF IRISH FANDOM #4 (US\$5 from Ken Cheslin, 29 Kestrel Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 2PH, England) Stories of Irish fandom in the 1950s, mostly true and always humorous. You don't need special knowledge of fandom to enjoy.

In *OPUNTIA* #37, I printed a speculative essay wondering why the telegraph never developed an e-mail system, and comparing the Internet with the worldwide telegraph cable system. Several of my readers subsequently advised me of Tom Standage's book on a similar topic [1]. The book turned out to be a good read. Standage covers the origin and development of optical and electrical telegraphs, and compares the social effects of the latter with what we now see on the Internet. Well recommended as a gift for any computer nerd who thinks that chat groups, cybersex, and globalized communication were born *de novo* from the Internet.

It could have been called the tachygraph (fast writer), for that is what Claude Chappe, the Frenchman who invented the optical telegraph (far writer) in 1791, wanted to call it. A friend better schooled in the classics suggested the other term that has come down to us. Optical telegraphs used rotating arms in France or blinking shutters in England. They had the obvious problem of being unusable in poor weather or at night, and inventors everywhere were working on the next big thing. Standage remarks: "*The Admiralty, which had spent much of the eighteenth century fending off idiotic suggestions about the best way to determine longitude at sea, now found itself on the receiving end of dozens of equally well meant but often crackpot schemes*

suggesting ways in which the telegraphs could be made faster or cheaper, or both."

As with many scientific breakthroughs, the electric telegraph had many fathers. As is still often the case today, paternity was disputed and the barristers did well. Samuel Morse and Thomas Edison in the USA, and William Cooke and Charles Wheatstone in England, had the usual struggles that leading-edge innovators suffer. As is still often the case today, what telegraph innovators believed would happen with their communications network was different from reality. Over and over again, the belief was expressed that telegraphs would bring world peace, for with instantaneous communication, misunderstandings would never develop into war. See also under Internet, World Peace Established By.

Practical electrical telegraphy dates from 1837. After a few years gestation, the telegraph network exploded in the same manner as the Internet. In the USA, there was one 40-mile-long line in 1846. By 1848 there were 2,000 miles, and two years after that the figure was 33,000 miles. By the 1860s, underwater cables spanned the oceans.

A telegraph culture developed that has since been repeated in our time with the Internet. Businesses paid a premium price for the

information sped down the wires. Telegraph operators were the sysops of the day. Everyone realized the hazards of sending messages that could be read by clerks or delivery boys, so they all started using codes. Just as promptly, governments enacted laws restricting telegraphic codes to prevent spying, criminal action, and, worst of all, the ability of people to carry out their affairs without bureaucratic interference. The first on-line marriage took place in the 1840s. Many more romances followed over the wires, not surprising considering the large number of women telegraph operators. When the lines were quiet, operators up and down the lines would chat with each other.

The telegraph was to the Crimean War what television was to the Vietnam War. The blundering of incompetent British generals could no longer be hushed up with the luxury of time to prepare a cover story. The military reacted then as it does now, either trying to control the story or else restricting reporters and harassing them. "Shoot the messenger" is a policy that goes back millennia, but is still as popular as ever.

Information overload is no new thing. Newspaper editors complained at being sent stories about floods in some Asian place they never heard of, while the local farm market prices were buried in the flow. Information addicts are no new thing, for stock tickers can fairly be said to be the original push servers.

140 years ago, it was recognized that the easier it is to send information, the more trivial it becomes. In contemplating the possibility of a private telegraph in every home, a London author of 1858 [2] wrote: "*It certainly would be pleasant to be within five minutes of such a message as "Dine at the Club with me at seven"; or "Squattleborough Junctions at six premium; I've sold your hundred and paid in the cash to your account"; or "Little stranger arrived safe this morning at twelve, mama and baby doing well"; and one might occasionally be grateful for such a warning as "Kite and Pounce took out a writ against you this morning; look alive" or "Jawkins coming to call on you; make yourself scarce"*".

"But think, on the other hand, of being within five minutes of every noodle who wants to ask you a question; of every dun with 'a little account'; of every acquaintance who has a favour to beg, or a disagreeable thing to communicate. With the post one secures at least the three or four hours betwixt writing the letter and its delivery. When I leave my suburban retreat at Brompton, at nine a.m. for the City, I am insured against Mrs. P's anxieties and tribulations and consultings, on the subject of our little family, or our little bills, the servants' shortcomings, or the tradesmen's delinquencies, at least till my return to dinner. But with a House Telegraph, it would be a perpetual tete-a-tete. ...

Solitude would become impossible. The bliss of ignorance would be at an end. ... Every bore's finger would be always on one's button; every intruder's hand on one's knocker; every good-natured friend's lips at one's ear!"

References.

- 1) Standage, Tom (1998) *THE VICTORIAN INTERNET*, Walker Publ., ISBN 0-8027-1342-4.
- 2) Anonymous (1858) The house telegraph. *PUNCH* 35:244

LOOK! UP IN THE SKY! IT'S (INSERT NAME OF FAVOURITE SUPERHERO)

Review of *THE GREAT PULP HEROES* by Don Hutchison (Mosaic Press, 1998, ISBN 0-88962-585-9) Trade paperback, second edition. From the dime novels of the early 1900s eventually germinated the pulp magazines, of which the only survivors today are the SF and mystery digests. The garish covers created many an SF fan when the pulps were at the peak of their glory in the 1930s and 1940s, before dying out in the 1950s. The stories were first-and-only-draft escapism churned out by hack writers. Their quality left much to be desired, not always the writer's fault, but the stories had plots that moved at full throttle.

Pulp magazines fulfilled a bargain that too many literary magazines today refuse to acknowledge. It is the author's responsibility to interest the reader, not the reader's responsibility to keep reading despite lack of interest.

Much of pulp story wordage was written under house names. Some pulpsters contracted to write entire issues, using a variety of pseudonyms. The rate of pay could only provide a good standard of living in high volume. Pulp writers wrote hundreds of thousands a year but not wasting time revising or worrying about consistency. The pulp readers wanted thrills, spills, and chills from the first paragraph on, not Shakespeare.

This book is an overview of pulp magazines featuring heroes such as The Shadow, G-8 and His Battle Aces, and Doc Savage. This is not an exhaustive treatment of the pulps with checklists and bibliographies. The book is an introduction to the history of pulps. A chapter is devoted to each of the major heroes, while other chapters discuss themes such as lost worlds or groups of lesser-known heroes. No one cause killed the pulps. Some died of paper shortages during World War Two. Many failed to match changing tastes of the readership, and the usual suspects such as television are trotted out. Some died when magazine distributors were shut down. A few made a transition to comic books, movies, radio, or television.

CROSS WORDS

Review of Herbert Resnicow's mystery novel *THE SEVENTH CROSSWORD* (Ballantine, 1985) .

THE SEVENTH CROSSWORD is a rehash of Resnicow's first novel *MURDER ACROSS AND DOWN*. This time the six suspects are all assistant professors working on The Project, a secret experiment to encourage children to read by getting them to do daily crossword puzzles. The leader of The Project is Prof. Fabian Humboldt, a tyrant who monopolizes the time of his six juniors. They tolerate him because all are up for tenure. Humboldt can make or break them with a few words to the Tenure Committee, which he is on.

Humboldt abruptly departs to the next life sooner than he anticipated, courtesy of a sword hanging on his office wall (he collected them) that found its way into his chest via one of the untenured professors. But which one? Resnicow devotes one chapter to each suspect, throwing suspicion around like pepper, raising up feeble objections as to why the suspect couldn't have done it and just as many reasons why he/she could have. Two detectives, Sullivan and Macintosh are brought forward from the last novel, and work their way to a solution by having the suspects do crosswords. They use the Shakespearean principle that "the crossword's the thing, wherein we'll catch the conscience of the

King". The crossword is designed so that one difficult corner of it can only be done by the killer, who alone knew the name of the sword used to kill Humboldt. Unfortunately Resnicow doesn't play fair, as the motive of the killer turns out to be money from The Project for an unsuspected use of it. The killer learned that The Project would earn hundreds of thousands of dollars annually for Humboldt, while they would unknowingly settle for tenure at a mediocre university. This makes the novel a bit of a cheat, as the reader doesn't learn this until the denouement.

YOU LOAD SIXTEEN TONS, AND WHADDA YA GET?

Reviews of *ON WORKERS' AUTONOMY* (L2 from Unpopular Books, Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS, England), and *THE LIMITS OF LABOUR: CLASS FORMATION AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN CALGARY, 1883 - 1929* by David Bright (University of British Columbia Press, 1998, ISBN 0-7748-0696-6).

ON WORKERS' AUTONOMY is a 1996 translation of a 1977 essay from the now-defunct *Pour une Intervention Communiste*. While I don't agree with the contents, I do agree with the publisher that this essay is still relevant. Contrary to what complacent North Americans may think, Communism is not dead but merely re-building. Now before anyone thinks I am a rabid

anti-Communist, I hasten to add I have no ill will against them here in Canada. I can't be emotional over a group of people whose main activity is postering hoardings and electrical transformers, on a par with teenage graffiti taggers, save that the Communist posters are more literate and verbose. Elsewhere in the world, they are someone else's problem.

I cannot take seriously people who keep babbling about solidarity with workers. The socialists and some Communists have never understood or accepted that labour unions are not part of collectivist politics. Labour unions are corporations created on behalf of workers to get better pay and safer working conditions. Labour unions are part of the capitalist system; their only arguments with the bosses are over the division of the spoils and the right to safe work. Union workers are well aware that if taxes go up to pay for a socialist paradise, their paycheques will suffer most because they are the middle-class, who always pay the majority of taxes.

In Canada, the union brass may pal around with the NDP but the ranks vote Tory, Liberal, or, in western Canada, Reform (a far-right party). I have worked in a highly unionized environment for two decades. I pay dues to CUPE Local 709 (foremen), my labourers and equipment operators are in CUPE Local 37, the office staff in CUPE Local 38, and the mechanics in the Teamsters.

The CUPE locals share the same office building, but negotiate contracts separately.

The only time we ever have any conversations about the unions is around contract renewal time or when the latest bout of privatization is underway. The talk is never about the proletariat or solidarity. It is about wage hikes or better benefits. The university professors and students talk jargon about worker solidarity, but their only contact with unions is through the executive. All union leaders made their way to the top because it beats shoveling 16 tons of coal a day or driving a grader.

So having advised you where I am coming from in reviewing this chapbook, I proceed on to the text at hand. Like most such literature, whether Communist, socialist, or anarchist, I have trouble getting through it. The problem is not so much the jargon, which I can figure out easily enough, but the fact that I keep losing the train of thought after each paragraph or so. The individual sentences make sense, but by the time I make it to the end of the paragraph, I've lost track of the argument. I don't think it is because I am stupid, for I have a B.Sc. from the University of Alberta. The writers of this stuff sometimes express their bafflement as to why workers will not unite behind them. I can answer that: if an educated person with a scientific background has trouble, then certainly the poorly-educated labourers will not get past the first page. Each week I read a dozen zines, a half-

dozen mass-market magazines, skim through dozens of technical periodicals to keep up with scientific advances, and read a couple of full-length books. Out of the 25 or so labourers and equipment operators working for me, about ten read a tabloid newspaper, most never read anything, and one or two are functionally illiterate (and not all immigrants either).

ON WORKERS' AUTONOMY does recognize the separation between party organizations and actual worker responses to conditions. The subject of this essay is the European worker, who may be more amenable to voting Communist than North American workers. Union workers in North America are mostly of the middle class. Homeowners with mortgages do not make revolutionaries. They will not support the disruption of riot and revolution, for fear of losing their hard-won houses either to burning by the mob or government confiscation. Nor does North America have class warfare like Europe, for most rich folk on this continent arrived from poorer beginnings. In downtown Calgary, every other petroleum executive is a farm boy whose main motive in getting rich was to never have to milk cows again.

The fatal flaw in the logic of this essay is found at the beginning of the chapter "Clarification of workers' autonomy": "*The struggle for workers' autonomy is the struggle of the proletariat to assert itself as a revolutionary class and to realize its political independence in the form of its dictatorship over the whole of society and in particular over capital.*" The average worker

knows that he does not want dictatorship over capital. He wants a bigger share of capital for less work, but not the responsibility of planning, supervision, and risk that goes into the creation of that capital. He does not want dictatorship, for he knows that implies a responsibility to take an active role, instead of watching television, and, worst of all, a responsibility to think. Thinking is harder work than shoveling 16 tons of coal. It is much easier to fall in with some silver-haired politician promising lower taxes and let him do the thinking.

Under the heading "The organization of revolutionaries" is: "*The movement for the emancipation of the proletariat initially creates the conditions for the growth of consciousness within its being. Through this process it passes from the arena of the class-in-itself (i.e. politically integrated into capital and which only has a sociological reality as an economic category) to the arena of the class-for-itself (i.e. struggling for the destruction of capital in a process that has a political phase of confrontation with the state).*"

To anyone who knows anything about the history of western Canada, this is laughable. Almost all revolutionary movements in Canada have originated or been strongest on the prairies, historically evolving from agricultural populism and resentment of colonialist attitudes by Ontario and Quebec. Yet the outbursts of revolutionary fervour are not directed against capitalism. Louis

Riel's two rebellions in 1869 and 1885 were motivated by language and culture. The Social Credit party, which held power for decades in the western provinces, advocated monetary reform that would bring control of capitalism to the people, but not attack capitalism itself. Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, the greatest populist orator Canada has produced, was a Tory devoted to attacking the stockbrokers and bankers on Bay Street (Canada's equivalent of Wall Street, in Toronto). The Reform party, founded by Preston Manning (son of a Socred premier), is barely under control by the party leadership. Manning spends much time and energy, not always successfully, trying to restrain its right-wing membership from drifting into outright lunacy. But the revolutionaries in Reform are not engaged in class warfare against capitalism, they are engaged in class warfare to get a bigger piece of it.

This illustrates a basic fallacy of Communism. The idea that worker revolutionaries are always against capitalism is wrong. The class-for-itself does not struggle for the destruction of capitalism. It struggles for a greater share of capital, paid for by its labour.

They who write such as this, be they Communist, socialist, or anarchist, all write as if their organizations were important in daily life. They are not. The average worker knows nothing of them and does not care to learn. These squabbles are no more

significant than SF fan feuds over who should win the next travel fund race. It is a demonstration that literacy and common sense do not always go together.

More readable and much closer to my experience, not only geographical but from within the labour movement, is David Bright's *THE LIMITS OF LABOUR: CLASS FORMATION AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN CALGARY, 1883 - 1929*.

Calgary was founded by the Mounties in 1875, and for its first few years was a dusty frontier town. Both the railroad and the post office arrived in 1883, and with them began the industrialization of the city. In 1885, all of Alberta, then part of the Northwest Territories, had only 60 business firms, employing between them 215 workers. Everyone else was a homesteader, fur trader, or otherwise working on their own account. But the city boomed. There were enough tradesmen that short-lived labour unions were attempted in 1886 and 1887. The first union with staying power was Local 95 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, organized in 1892, and which also conducted the first strike that year as well. There were 37 unions in Calgary by 1915. The main surge of unionization was during the boom years of 1900 to 1913, when settlers began arriving en masse in Alberta, which had been separated out of the Northwest Territories as a province in 1905.

There was never any solidarity between Calgary unions, then or now. The early unions did not admit certain ethnic groups such as Germans or Irish, and many divided along religious lines (Moravians versus Catholics versus Lutherans versus Baptist versus Orthodox). Railroad workers saw no reason to associate with the musicians' union, and craft tradesmen looked down on industrial labourers. The attitude of Calgary unions before WW1 is illustrated by their complaint that the Salvation Army used non-union musicians in their band.

It is not surprising that the socialist parties got nowhere in Calgary before WW1. In addition to the fragmentation of the unions, most of their members strongly believed in upward social mobility. In a frontier society such as Calgary still exhibits to some degree, fortunes were made or lost overnight. Working for a boss was something you did while looking out for the main chance. Nor did workers approve of the union organizers, who were tarred, usually correctly, as foreigners, atheists, and unwilling to do hard physical labour. The fragmentation of Calgary unions was worsened by the boom-or-bust economy. In good times, everyone would be brothers in the cause, but as soon as prices and wages slumped it was every man for himself. From the 1913 recession to the militancy of 1919 to the Great Depression, internal feuding was the standard.

Calgary has always had a reputation as a small-c conservative, pro-business city, but this was not entirely true. Most of Canada's labour, socialist, and populist movements had at least one starting point in Cowtown. Calgary was only one of two cities to send Labour M.P.s to Ottawa in the 1920s. The other was Winnipeg, which had more reason to do so after the bloody General Strike of 1919 that paralyzed that city and left people dead in the streets. The ill-fated One Big Union originated in Calgary, a futile alliance that tried to break the dominance of the Trades & Labour Congress of central Canada. One Big Union was the Canadian version of the Wobblies, and no more successful than its American equivalent.

David Bright believes this fragmentation and inability to effectively organize workers was ultimately responsible for the success of the Social Credit party. The Socreds were monetary-reform populists who swept into power in Alberta in 1935 and stayed there until 1971.

The unions never recovered from that defeat, not to this day. The Tories knocked out the Socreds in 1971 and have held power continuously since. They are not so much hostile to unions as indifferent, for why bother to do anything to people who can't get their act together. Benjamin Franklin, remarked that those who do not hang together will therefore hang separately one by one.

Each year, the trade magazine MASTHEAD (\$3.95 from North Island Sound Ltd., 1606 Sedlescomb Drive, Unit 8, Mississauga, Ontario L4X 1M6) does an annual survey of Canadian mass-market magazines. They do not track zines, annuals, split-runs, or supplements. The March 1999 issue, Volume 12, #3, page 6, has the latest statistics. For 1998, there were 89 new titles and 54 deaths or suspended. Viewing the data back to 1990, this appears to be about average. If print media are dying, there is no sign of it in the mass-market magazine. Of the titles that died in 1998, 14% were less than 1 year old, 43% were 1 to 5 years, and 14% were 6 to 10 years old.

