

# SCANSION

**JUNE 1960**

Published and edited by P.E. Burke. Box No. 1170, G.P.O., Sydney.

Contributors:-

- o JOHN BAXTER
- o DOUG NICHOLSON
- o P.E. BURKE
- o KEITH SMITH
- o HARRY ARNOLD
- o ROYCE WILLIAMS

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Editorial

First editorial task is to express very sincere thanks to the three people - John Baxter, Doug Nicholson, and Dave Cohen - who so kindly helped with the distribution of the first issue of this publication. Their help was very greatly appreciated.

Thanks too, to those who have expressed interest in "Scansion". The interest, whether it be amusement, agreement or disagreement, is eminently welcome, more particularly if you care to take the time and trouble to commit it to paper.

A little more now on the idea behind "Scansion" and its aims.

Firstly, the editor is under the quite strong impression that a very large percentage of the readers of imaginative/speculative fiction are people over 20 - in many cases in their 30's or 40's - and, in the main, not terribly interested in the inanities of the usual run of the mill fan magazine, but who, none the less, have some very good ideas and interesting points of view - if only they can be encouraged to express them - and it is to such people that "Scansion" looks for support.

"Scansion" therefore, will not publish letters as these generally tend to have so few grains of wisdom among the abundance of verbal chaff that they are almost invariably a waste of time and space. So, if you have a viewpoint to present in this publication, present it in article form. Objective article form.

Neither will fiction be published. This is properly the province of the professional magazines. Amateur fiction is generally just that - amateur! If you have a story send it to Gold, Campbell, or Carnell. Not to us. Professional success may not be a good criterion of literary merit but it is a reasonably good rule of thumb.

"Scansion" at the moment, is purely an experiment with a projected limited life-span. If it is to continue, it must have material, material of the highest possible quality. The first few issues will, naturally, contain material that is of a lower quality than the ultimate aimed for, mainly in order to get the magazine going, but as we progress, the quality of the material must be improved or else there is no point in publishing. "Scansion" does not aim to publish rubbish.

Editor.

SYDNEYSIDE.

News. Views. Comments.

The next meeting of THE TUESDAY NIGHT GROUP will be on 5th July.

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 The first meeting of THE TUESDAY NIGHT GROUP, attended by nine people, took place on the evening of May 3rd. An enjoyable time, reminiscent of the hey-day of the Sydney S.F. group, followed.

There seems to be a most regrettable upsurge of Town versus Gown feeling going on in Sydney at the present time. Part of the blame at least must be attached to the hysterical rot poured out by one of the afternoon newspapers and its Archon Basileus/Pontifex Maximus who has several times been given rather rough treatment by Sydney University students.

Anyone with an interest in poetry is recommended to visit the Poetry Society of New South Wales. 217a George Street, Sydney. Phone 27-3555.

Seems to me about time somebody took the trouble to collect and publish some of the better maunderings of Alexander McDonald, the well known Telegraph, radio, T.V. critic and columnist. Here is one potential subscriber to such a book.

The Ian Driscoll dynastic foundation stone has been laid. A girl, Tanya.

There was a young lady named Ransom,  
 Who was raped seven times in a hansom,  
 When she cried out for more,  
 Came a voice from the floor,  
 The name, madam, is Simpson, not Samson.

Anon.

Recommended book: - "ADVENTURES WITH THE MISSING LINK."  
 by Raymond A. Dart and Dennis Graig.

## IN DEFENCE OF "IDIOCY".

That's a very aggressive little publication you have there, Mr. Burke. Very pugnacious; very "Look here - I'm a force to be reckoned with". if you follow me. The obvious intent is to stir up a storm of interest with your first issue, and I can't say I blame you for your lack of subtlety in the manner with which you achieved this end. The iconoclasm of Scansion New Series One at least gives notice that you have entered the lists, and this in itself is some sort of warped victory. It took me four issues to attain recognition among the circle of people I wished to interest, although I fancy the giants of fandom are a trifle more critical than your reading public. Personal views on the fitting fate of Scansion aside, I wish you luck in your intellectual revival of Sydney science fiction activity - the cause is good, but the prognosis .... well, I don't like to discourage you, so I'll refrain from comment.

Of course, one of your first targets is the more flippant branch of fandom, with particular reference to the "jargon" of that field's inhabitants. It has become fashionable of late, among the Sydney sf crowd at least, to indulge in this type of mud-slinging, mainly, it would seem, in an effort to distract attention from the considerably grubby vestments of those throwing abuse. Not, mind you, that I find criticism, even severe destructive criticism, a bad thing, but I feel that such comment should be based, at least partly, on current fact and some knowledge of the issues involved. In this case, however, the information on which the remarks are founded is out-of-date, not wholly accurate and at times downright incorrect.

What do you know about fandom, Mr. Burke? Have you read any fanzines lately? I doubt it. Quantum, perhaps, and maybe Extant and Etherline. Where in these publications is the "puerile, irritating and infantile" jargon you despise so much? A close reading of current issues of these magazines fails to reveal anything but readable English, even if it is sometimes grammatically dubious, and I can assure you the same is true of all overseas publications, with the possible exception of New Zealand fandom's more uninhibited efforts. Fannish jargon, if it ever existed (which I am inclined to doubt) is now so esoteric, apparently, that even the fans don't know about it!

Actually, the 'jargon' of which you speak so harshly is nothing more than a handful of fannish 'technical' terms for which there are no English equivalents. My 'zine Quantum is, I feel, a fair example of current fanpubbing (Oh, I beg your pardon - that's short for fan publishing - dig?) - let's take my current issue - No.7 - and see what "odd, half incomprehensible" fannish terms we can find. First, there's 'fanzine' - self-explanatory, I hope. "Serconfan" - well, there, I admit, is a slightly more involved word. It stands for Serious Constructive Fan, and is a useful contraction used to describe that strange dedicated character who drifts from fanzine to fanzine and organization to organization, writing about sf, talking about sf, reading about sf, but seldom seeming to enjoy or see any future for sf. BNF - the initials of Big Name Fan - again self-explanatory, I think. And, so far as I can see, that's the lot.

Of course, there are in use other phrases and words which may tend to confuse the neophyte, but one picks them up with a minimum of pain. Chief among these are the nicknames and impedimenta of certain well known BNF's - strange hieroglyphs like Vinç for Vincent Clark, WAW for Walter A. Willis, BoCh for Bob Shaw and the decapitalised damon knight. One doesn't have to use these pseudonyms if not inclined to, but they do add a little colour to one's conversation, and are handy contractions. Of course they are probably pointless, but are they any less valid than Theotokopuli's 'El Greco'? Allow us our little jokes, Mr. Burke - the fan is, by nature, a happy soul.

Which brings us to the vital question "What is a fan?" Briefly, I feel one of these strange creatures (of which I am a fair example) is a person who is interested in amateur journalism and publishing, has a taste for the bizarre in art, humour and literature and a flair for writing, drawing or some other field. I know the terms of reference are narrow indeed, but when one considers the membership of the average sf group, it is surprising how many persons of the type I describe can be found. The reason is obvious. Science Fiction draws a particular type of person to its following - imaginative, above average in intelligence, broad-minded. Those who do not possess all the above qualities (if they are qualities) will sooner or later be driven away from sf by a story they dislike, a general slackening of interest or just plain bafflement. The others remain and, because of the propensity of the sf reader to discuss his often-rather-far-out ideas, usually gravitate into clubs or groups of some sort, where they can talk, debate, argue or harangue, as the mood takes them, in the company of others with the same affliction.

Discussion of the sort usually found in the smoke-filled air of an sf club room is esoteric, hanging to the bounds of fact with only a thin thread of logic, and it's inevitable that this constant assault on the accepted ideas which everybody has firmly established in his mind must in time have a drastic effect on the entire thinking process of the keen reader and talker. This alteration does not apply only to the accepted views on scientific matters - it extends to the whole stock of facts (????) which we build up during our education and formative years, and tends to make one re-examine his ideas on more than one subject. With many people, of course, this reappraisal may make no more than an inner realignment, a sort of mental stock taking and spring clean, but there are others to whom the effect extends far deeper, and whose whole outlook is subtly altered towards the imaginative. When this happens, a fan is born.

Old standards of humour, conversation and entertainment no longer seem satisfactory, but others are not readily available. Usually, this results in the transformation of a keen club member into a morose and rather peculiar 'nut', or his complete defection from the group, often followed by a triumphal reappearance and reams of badly duplicated twaddle in the shape of His First Fanzine. Fannish activity - fanac for short - is no more than a sort of do-it-yourself entertainment, in which the audience tailors the show to suit itself. Of course, this particular motivation does not remain always the most important one in a fan's hobby

activities. Perhaps he will be intrigued by the publishing side of the matter, and try to produce a fanzine in which the impeccably photolithed pages, exactly trimmed and stapled, to some extent make up for the dubious quality of the material published thereon. Again, he may find correspondence with other fans of far more interest and so abandon his pubbling career. Or maybe the collecting bug will take him and he'll spend time, money and sweat on accumulating the largest single run of some unreadable tattered pulp, or drool adoringly over a magazine that seems to have been printed by astigmatic typesetters on low-quality blotting paper, and illustrated by an idiot with dangerous sexual inclinations.

So, next time the urge hits you, Mr. Burke, stay that slime-sliding hand awhile before you once again desecrate the fair face of fandom. Ponder whether even the most incomprehensible and idiotic piece of fanpubbing is any worse than the abysmally illogical alcoholic ramblings of Mr. Royce Williams and his mythopaeic mumbling, and whether the poverty-ridden aspect of Scansion is any less unappealing than the monsters on Quantum's covers. There is a lot to be said for that old fantasy book in which somebody orders "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

John Martin Baxter.  
29, Gordon Road,  
Bowral. N.S.W.

#### ON RENEWING ACQUAINTANCE WITH BUCK ROGERS.

The other day I was fortunate enough to prevail on a gentleman, whom I know only slightly, to lend me some of the Buck Rogers comics that he has collected and had bound. Rogers was my introduction to science-fiction, and over the years I have repaid the neglected Philip Francis Nowlan by defending his creation against the gratuitous sneers of stuffed-shirts and comic-haters.

Though this strip did not attempt the subtleties of the sophisticated humorous comics "Barnaby" or "Bogo", it was an outstanding adventure strip, and is worth considering in detail as science-fiction. Nowlan, and Dick Calkins, who drew the strip, presented more "human" people than many highly regarded SF stories of the thirties, the childishness of some of their petty motivations providing, in fact, a pleasant relief from the pure stainless heroes of the world-wrecking space-operas -- a class of science-fiction into which most of the Rogers Saga fits in perfect comfort.

The character usually most inadequately presented in works of this kind is the hero -- and this applied to Rogers -- but he still emerges as much more a person than Kimball Kinnison of the "Lens" epics, or John Star of "The Legion of Space". We need not speak of Hawk Carse or Captain Future. Besides characterization, the "future science" and the plotting of the strip were fair average quality by the standards of

magazine science-fiction of the time -- and I am allowing a spread of some years, because I am not too sure when the strip first appeared; somewhere about 1935, I think, although I cannot recall a mention of it in SF magazine letter columns before about 1938 -- due mainly, I think, to the fans looking down their noses at this "juvenile picture-story".

Of course your attitude to something like this depends on what you treat it as, and my attitude to it today is in terms of two values. I find I can still be entertained by following the efforts of Buck and Wilma to bring Kane and Ardala to justice while fighting off interference from Mongols, Martians, Asterites and others, and recently thoroughly enjoyed a sequence I had not read when, aged ten to fourteen, I read most of the saga. But doing this requires suspending a lot of the normal critical habits of reading -- just as finding enjoyment in contemporary magazine science-fiction does.

The other standard I apply is, looking back to the time Rogers' adventures were appearing, a judgment of their influence on the people who read them. This influence was complex. It varied from creating the attitude that all science fiction belonged in the comics and was something you should grow out of at about the age when you can face pages of unillustrated text, to stimulating a lasting interest in and affection for science-fiction. This was the influence it had on me, and on a number of other science-fiction enthusiasts I have corresponded with and spoken to.

The early strip was conscientious in its "science". Boners, though present, were not frequent, and much of the gadgetry was worked out with a care and consistency that would do credit to a Hal Clement. The story followed the convention that gave victory to the antagonist who was most scientifically advanced, though this was sometimes obscured by the secondary convention that the principal opponents must occasionally slug it out toe to toe. Years later, the comic grew very careless with its "future science" notions, many of which must have struck even very young readers as plain silly, but I suspect that the sequences that were so poor in this regard were "posthumous" as far as Cowlan, who died in 1940, was concerned, and the fact that apart from this they still carry a lot of the atmosphere of the earlier story suggests that Dick Calkins contributed more to the comic than is generally recognised.

Buck Rogers transferred the conventions and outlook of the better class of "adventure science fiction" of the thirties to the "comic strip" medium in a true representative manner. Its contemporary detractors saw quite imaginary superiority in the magazine science fiction of the time, and today's critics, in comparing it to later more sophisticated SF, expect too much of it. Its intellectual level was that of the magazines SF then being published and as an answer to generalized sneering at comics as such is still far superior to any treatment of a science fiction theme that we have yet had from Hollywood.

Doug. Nicholson,  
24 Warren Road,  
Double Bay.

## ON TOP OF A HILL.

or

## NIMPHOLEPSY

To be on top of a hill and gaze up at the clouds  
Rolling over and over like the hair o'er the face  
of a nymph in the wind.

Projecting my mind farther and deeper until  
At last the clouds caress me like the hand of a lover  
When passion wins out with reason.

Let the world drift by - for here am I  
In the centre, at the start perhaps but knowing ever  
That soon, so very soon there'll be an end.

Love, love and hate how strong these passions are  
How little do we know of them and how much of a star  
To love and not be loved,

What agony, what pain, what damn frustration!

So once again I'll lie on top of that hill  
And there in memory or in dream will drink  
From the hand of the woman I will love

The world goes on again and still I am there  
In the middle. Now turning this way and that  
Looking for what - I know not.

But come one day I shall grasp it perhaps  
And then I'll know.

The things of man on earth so unreal now  
The wind, the sun, rain and snow I know you all  
For we have met before.

But the woman I love have I not met  
Though I know her well and long

Searching. Searching for that something immortal  
- The pot of gold - The cup of life from which  
All man who lives must drink and finish.

And so I bury myself, beyond the reach of mortal man.

I know there is but one saviour for this drowning soul

The woman, a girl I love, desire

For all must love or perish

The touch of her hand more precious to me

Than gold or silver or jade

And yet - quite worthless to those who know her not.

Perhaps in time - but what is time

Save a creation of man that he may know

When to start and when to end his work, his play, his morrow,

Ever does he count and so do I each second

As it fleets afar, forever to be lost.

Was it well spent?

If not then sit and weep, or lie

On top of a hill and love, and then to sleep.

Keith E. Smith.  
8 Auld Avenue,  
Eastwood.

## LIFE - ACCIDENT OR INEVITABILITY.

Of all the questions that exercise the minds of the intelligent and reasonably informed the one of whether or not there is other intelligent life in the universe is probably the most wide spread and, in many ways the most perplexing and frustrating. The author has taken part in many conversations and arguments on this subject and is well aware of the many arguments pro and con - particularly con.

Yet, despite this, there is a very attractive line of reasoning that leads almost invariably to the conclusion that there is almost certainly other intelligent life in the universe.

To begin with, even if we can see that only 60 type suns are likely to have planets -- and this is a fairly liberal concession -- the number of such suns throughout the universe would be of a very large order indeed. To further concede that only a small percentage of such suns would have earth-type planets is reasonable enough, but leads inevitably to the question of just how earth-like does a planet have to be to produce life. (As distinct from intelligent life)

The range here may be very broad indeed and it will not be settled satisfactorily, in all probability, until man achieves space travel (if then) or, better yet, interstellar travel.

There is a theory -- quite a logical one really -- that earth, to begin with had a hydrogen-methane-ammonia atmosphere similar - except in density - to the atmosphere of the so called gas giants. Jupiter, Saturn, etc. Over a very long period -- still fairly indefinite -- this atmosphere has been extensively modified by a number of factors to its present stage, and is constantly being further modified by human activity.

Just how much of this modification has been caused by geological activities and how much by the activities of various life forms (particularly plants) is a matter of conjecture, but it seems fairly certain that at different geological times the earth had quite substantially different atmospheres, altered quite suddenly and drastically from time to time by such things as sudden, violent and wide-spread outbreaks of volcanic activity.

Incidentally, it is interesting to speculate that Venus may well be an example of a planet going through a process of atmosphere modification. Despite the lack of evidence and the contradictions of opinion and so called findings, there is a possibility that here we have an atmosphere slowly being modified by geological action and the activity of very primitive life forms.

Life, once established, would seem to be a very hardy thing and capable of an almost infinite series of modifications and adaptations. The biologists truism that all life on earth could have originated with

one cell gives point to this. From one cell to the multiplicity of varyingly complex organisms that have existed throughout geological times to the present!

To suggest that there is a sort of 'Grand Plan' behind the evolutionary process would be ridiculous. However, it is not unreasonable to suggest that there is only a very limited number of correct answers to the problems of successful biological 'engineering'. This is well illustrated, for example, by the fact that in all the millions of years of evolution there is, seemingly, no improvement on, or getting away from, the Pentadactyle limb. This limb with its five digital extremity seems to be, in some form or another, a 'universal constant', at least, as far as Earth is concerned.

This example and numerous others, with which space does not permit me to deal, lend quite a strong suggestion of inevitability to the evolutionary process.

The tempting conclusion one tends to reach from this, is that alien life forms -- if any -- will be recognisably animal and, possibly, very little different from earth life forms. Species will probably be intelligent in varying degrees. There is no guarantee that dominant life forms will be humanoid, but it might be a good bet that they will, at least, be Primates.

If there is other intelligent life in the universe, as there could quite easily be, just how similar would it be to ours, and how similar the intelligence? Would extra-terrestrials be differently intelligent to us? -- so differently intelligent that we might fail completely to recognise their intelligence.

Here it is usual to ask "if there is other intelligent life in the universe, why have we not been contacted?" There are innumerable answers to this question and probably all equally valid or invalid. If it comes to that, why haven't we contacted them?

Currently there is a "listening" search being made by radio-telescope in the United States to see if it is possible to pick up anything resembling artificial signals amongst the torrent of solar noises, the two stars chosen for this search being Tau Ceti and E Eridani. Chances of success are probably remote, for, after all, how likely would it be for extra-terrestrials to pick up random earth broadcasts over a good many light years? Not very likely, even with extremely sensitive detectors. Much more sensitive detectors than we have available. One wonders though whether or not it might be wise for Australia -- or some other southern hemisphere nation -- to set up a similar watch on Centaurus.

Being optimistic, it is possible that in another year or two, the scientists will announce that they have picked up definite signals. What then, I wonder.

P.B. Burke,  
5 Daintrey Cres., Randwick.

## A GENEALOGY OF JAZZ

Much has been written of the origins of jazz - its evolution and the changes which the idiom is continually undergoing. Such eminent people as Lord Donegal, Gerald Lascelles, Kim Donython and Eric Childes have all at one time or another discussed the subject. Despite this fact, there still exists in the public's mind considerable confusion relative to the genealogy of jazz and it is with the hope of stimulating further remedial effort that this article is written.

Before we consider the history of jazz as such it is important that we should be aware of the sociologic, psychologic and economic pressures which induced its birth and which, as they have changed during the past fifty years, have had a profound effect on this particular form of man's expression.

The emancipation of the U.S. Negro took a great stride forward during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century. In its wake came new horizons and new responsibilities for the fledgeling citizen. As might be expected his ability to cope with his new status often was limited and the American Negro found himself at a loss to understand the white man's culture, something he was now forced to do. Being an emotional, highly intelligent and talented being, he turned, because of a lack of formal education, to music, rather than art, literature or the theatre, for expression of his feelings.

The first emanation of his newly found desire for expression was in the brass bands of the deep south. Negro marching bands played at weddings, funerals and processions; band members would meet together for rehearsals and here the deepseated sense of rhythm and tonal appreciation led to the creation of "scat groups". An exciting stimulating and satisfying form of music was evolved. The movement of this music into the bawdy houses, bars and gambling halls of the cities is well known. Names such as King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Sidney Bechet, Kid Ory and legion of others began to emerge. Jazz had been born, New Orleans was given as its birthplace. The time was 1912.

By about 1916 Jazz was in the "golden era" but with the closing down of Basin St., the red light area of New Orleans, jazz took a tumble, the groups split up and scattered all over America. The depression which hit the world in 1921 only made things worse - jazz men were two a penny, many of them down and out. It was at this time however that a new form began to creep into the idiom; Paul Whiteman, Frankie Traumbuer, the Dorsey Brothers all started big bands. At first they played in the traditional style but in New York, London and Paris and the other centres of the world a more sophisticated style was now in evidence. By 1930, Duke Ellington and Fred Waring were dispensing swing; the banjo, the guitar, the euphonium had disappeared from the line up. More brass, particularly the saxophone had replaced them.

However, the stage was being set for a revival of the traditional form. In Chicago, Eddie Condon was playing Dixie, Fats Waller had been to England where he was received with great acclaim, Louis Armstrong had reformed his band and all round America Dixieland Jazz was once again in vogue. It was however a happier jazz - the blues, whilst still played, were no longer the dominating influence on the scene. People were recovering from the effects of the depression and wanted light relief.

H. Arnold,  
c/- Editor.

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#### VIEW

The news, of course, is the appearance on our bookstalls of the U.S. edition of Mag. of Fantasy & Science Fiction. - And while it may not be everyone's meat, without a doubt it prints some of the most ponderable (and ponderous) stories published.

The May 1960 is Real Old Home Week - stories by Fritz Leiber, John Collier, Gordon R. Dickson, Arthur Porges and the unspeakable Jose Farmer, and features by Asimov and Damon Knight.

A Robert E. Mills (who he?) has taken over from Boucher and McComas and his policy seems to be Business As Usual only more so. While F & SF has always been noted for its non-observance of the usual SF editorial taboos, Boucher and McComas never carried the quest for controversy as far as Mills, who writes in the editorial (and I paraphrase) : nobody liked Farmer's recent story "The Alley Man" so this issue we're giving you a long novelette by him.

As for the "controversial variety" Mills seeks: Leiber pursues his fascination for drooling black dogs; and there is a story about a barroom and (oh dear!) a philosophical bar man. The American tourist gets a going over and a worried anthropophage is introduced. Dickson gives us a superordinary man straight out of Ayn Rand and the Ruum is resurrected (the ruum, you'll recall, was featured in an early F&SF series of animal oddities, which included the Hurkle and those things that came from the Voodvork Out). Asimov wrings the tear-ducts with the story of the Englishman who spent 15 years working out the value of pi to 707 places and -- but you can guess what happened.

The Farmer story is indeed vary jolly and should prove so unpopular that we will certainly see more of his stories in this magazine.

Also highly recommended "Life Among the Dang" in April '60 F&SF. This is undoubtedly the oddest story I've seen in a SF magazine (and I

trust the joke will never be repeated).

And for Our Intellectuals: "The Hip Raven" in Mad June '60.

Royce Williams,  
Robertson Road,  
Chester Hill.

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Just how good is your vocabulary? Try it out on the following words and then check your answer with a good dictionary. (No prizes)

|                 |                 |             |                    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Tergiversations | Apogean         | Physiocrats | Transmogrification |
| Sleazy          | Odalisk         | Teleavance  | Afflatus           |
| Supererogatory  | Symposiarchical | Diaconal    | Calefaction        |
| Senescence      | Modality        | Conscribed  | Picaresque         |
| Cessile         | Ineluctable     | Escharotic  | Provenciences      |
| Gelid           |                 |             |                    |

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JULY.

Scansion will have articles by :-

H. Ford.  
Fred Frederickson.  
Harry Arnold.  
Mike Baldwin.

etc.

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#### LATE NEWS

Rumor has it that Dave Cohen, well known book seller and collector, has abandoned his Thursday Night trading at the Bridge Club, for many years now, an institution in the S.F. scene in this city. The unexplained absence of Dave for the last few Thursdays seems to lend some credence to rumour. If rumour be true, this is a sad state of affairs, and Dave's helpful services will be missed by many.

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