

TAFF UK: The Bad News

The following is self-explanatory. I would have preferred to be able to send it out some time ago, but was prevented by a DNQ promise. No one had anticipated that Martin Tudor, who should really be making the first announcement, would return from his TAFF trip to a nightmare of complications in his life and work, leaving him swamped. His official statement (still not seen here) is reportedly now being mailed. For public print, his phrasing should doubtless take precedence; but the statement below, between the horizontal lines, is also appearing since the editors of the US fanzine *Apparatchik* felt compelled to break the story at the beginning of November. Therefore this text was drafted, to make sure that *Apparatchik*'s coverage was factually accurate.

Dave Langford, 4 Nov 96

TAFF: Rumours and Facts

As has been the subject of extensive recent gossip in fandom (especially UK fandom), the TransAtlantic Fan Fund in Europe has suffered a major financial setback. The European fund has not been passed on to the 1996 TAFF winner and current UK administrator, Martin Tudor.

Thanks to general fannish goodwill, it was assumed that pass-on delays following Tudor's victory in early May were the result of simple disorganization on the part of former administrator Abigail Frost. Frost has additionally failed to publish the usual detailed voting figures and list of European voters, which are still not known. In late June, after repeated urgent enquiries, Frost responded indirectly by informing a non-involved person that no money was available; that person passed the news to Tudor.

The missing sum is assumed to be some £2,600, based on the amount known to be held by Frost at the end of 1994 (in her first and last TAFF newsletter she gave the then balance as £1,933.06), plus subsequent identifiable donations, estimated income from voting fees, etc. Expenses in the same period are thought to have been minimal. Frost has not directly responded to any TAFF-related letters or phone calls to her answering machine since the announcement of Tudor's win, nor made her usual appearances at London pub meetings since early June.

TAFF traditionally has no secrets, except of course for individual voters' choices in the balloting. But it was felt that Martin Tudor's 1996 US trip—made possible only by personal loans, anonymous contributions, the Mexican Hat, American TAFF funds and other donations—would be ruined by endless argument and recrimination if all of the above, and its implications, were publicly discussed at that time. The matter was therefore kept confidential until Tudor had returned and recovered from his travels.

Unfortunately, despite Tudor's determination to release the full facts immediately on return to England, this announcement was delayed for several weeks by unavoidable personal crises—including illness. All those involved would like to apologize to fandom for the unintended and most regrettable delay.

The position remains unclear in several areas, including the possibility of TAFF's representatives taking legal action. What is certain is that the European TAFF fund is desperately short of cash, and that Martin Tudor's difficulties in performing (and performing well) as the 1996 TAFF delegate were an order of magnitude worse than those faced by virtually any previous winner.

The above was issued on behalf of TAFF, with the approval of Dan Steffan and Martin Tudor, by various past administrators: Avedon Carol, Rob Hansen, Dave Langford (who drafted the text and accepts responsibility for infelicities), Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Greg Pickersgill and Pam Wells.

This release is cautiously phrased: some wished it stronger, but there are libel laws, and the (doubtless remote) possibility of legal action has made us acutely conscious of them. It can do no harm to mention that the 'non-involved person'—who is the only source for Abigail Frost's actual admission that the money no longer exists—is John Clute, whom I regard as utterly reliable.

The mere mention of going to court has given some people serious jitters about expensive litigation. What was being considered as a very last resort is the British small-claims system, whose costs are moderate and fixed. It is still not thought to be a desirable option. Free advice has been offered by a sympathetic lawyer who is also a long-time UK fan.

Abigail Frost is reportedly alive, well and busy with other activities, none of them connected to fandom.

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[Reformat of 1996 document in a later word processor with old fax/email contact details redacted]