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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Mad Max: Beyond the Blunderdome

From: **Jenny Randles** <nufon@currantbun.com>
Date: Mon, 14 Jun 1999 16:45:43 +0100
Fwd Date: Tue, 15 Jun 1999 14:30:17 -0400
Subject: Re: Mad Max: Beyond the Blunderdome

Hi,

Thanks for all the messages that flooded in over the weekend. To be honest I had not even noticed that UFO UpDates was on the cc list of the original Robert Moore and I thought I was only talking to a few UK UFOlogists. I was quite surprised to see my 'spooF' went global. But no matter, it was an interesting exercise.

Let me qualify 'spooF'. This was not really trickery. Rather it was a deliberate exercise in taking an idea to its natural extreme. Many people in the UK have been furious over the Max Burns lecture saying BUFORA lost the plot by inviting him. There were demands for mass walk outs over the issue.

My response drew people onward and some, it appears, did not stop to think. As I correctly noted we all appear with people whom we don't necessarily agree with. We also all use these people to promote our conferences. Some of those speaking out most vociferously against Max Burns had themselves done much the same inviting as lecturer's people who offer ideas that they presumably have just as much mistrust about. I wanted them to see that.

Moreover, the knee jerk reaction to what was an ill-advised lecture in my view takes us to the terrible extreme of self censorship that some responders recognised without being aware that this was the very problem I wanted to illuminate.

For the record, I dont think it is either practical or desirable that we issue a proclamation to ban lecturers we personally dont like. I was perputrating a very British trait - irony - in a way that is easily misconstrued, so I apologise to those who did misconstrue it. Such a ban would not work, would provoke images of big brother and UFO censorship and suppress ideas we personally dont agree with. None of these things are what we need. But as my 'suggestion' made apparent they were the consequence of over-reacting to this lecture at which only 35 people showed up.

I did have a deeper intention though. My arguments about how we present ourselves to the world were valid. I feel we need to portray a more responsible image in that regard.

More fundamentally I think the concept of UFO conferences is outmoded. What are they after all? In the UK they comprise a few lecturers trotting around the country to this library or that local group giving similar lectures to a small group of mostly

already converted listeners. They have their advantages - eg in public education (which is why I always freely lecture to educational and library sources when requested). They can raise money for groups and I dont balk at that. But in terms of contributing to UFO progress they are limited.

Far more beneficial, in my view, was the MIT style symposium that has never been repeated - largely as it required a large donation to avoid the need to charge entrance fees to those taking part. In the absence of rich folk wanting to give us money (er like a certain Mr Rockefeller) this should not be perceived as an insurmountable barrier. I feel we should re-invent the UFO conference forthwith.

I would like to see (as well as - I am not talking about banning MUFON or BUFORA style conferences but adding to the mix) a global series of themed events. Chosing, as MIT did, a set topic, inviting participation months in advance from not just UFOlogists but researchers in related relevant fields (from physics to psychology or whatever suits the topic). Those invited are urged to do first hand research to try to answer one of, say, five questions set in advance by the organisers of the conference. They are invited to present their original findings at the event itself.

For example, if we set the topic 'car stop cases' we could define a series of questions up front. Such as: what is the statistical frequency by date, time, location, etc of car stop cases? What physical forces can cause a car engine to stall? what physical evidence should be sought in the wake of a car stop? etc etc. These questions then go out to UFOlogists and mechanics and physicists etc and they are encouraged to do real, new research around a chosen question and submit a summary of their work - the results of which they will offer up at the event. The event itself is then organised and - being a working conference not a public event (although the public need not be excluded) even the lecturers will be asked to contribute to the costs if running the conference.

I believe that a core of contributors (who knows how many - 20, 30, 50, 100?) will be willing to pay to attend such events if the costs are kept in check. They would do so to take part in a real conference that is organised in such a way as to further progress not just to offer up random lectures on topics we all know a lot about anyway.

If a dozen such conferences on various topics were held worldwide every year I believe we would make more progress in a couple of years of such events (and their published findings) than 50 years of random conferences that contribute very little to real research.

Its a simple step to take - creating working conferences aimed at doing ufology and involving outside participants with things to contribute on very specialised themes. It would be a true test of ufology's resolve to make actual progress rather than just talk shop to one another and go around and around in circles. I think once we started to do this instead of just concentrating on attracting star names to sell out conferences in Puddlewick Town Hall then science would soon begin to take us seriously instead of laugh at us.

This is not a spoof. Its what I really believe we should be doing as opposed to issuing proclamations that we wont invite so and so to our next conference. On this basis anyone willing to do real original research will have a contribution to make, regardless of who they are or what we think of them. That should be the only criterion.

Is there anyone out there who agrees with this idea enough to set in motion a wave of real UFO conferences for the 21st century?

Best wishes,

Jenny Randles

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