FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

NOVEMBER 1958
Vol. 10, No. 5

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FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, Vol. 10, No. 5. Published monthly by KING-SIZE PUBLICATIONS, INC., 320 Fifth Ave., N. Y. 1, N. Y. Subscription 12 issues $3.75, single copies 35¢. Foreign postage extra. Reentered as second-class matter at the post office, New York, N. Y. The characters in this magazine are entirely fictitious and have no relation to any persons living or dead. Copyright, 1953, by KING-SIZE PUBLICATIONS, INC. All rights reserved. Nov., 1958

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

a matter of traces

by . . . Frank Herbert

There will undoubtedly be a time when Tomorrow's bureaucrats will wish to question such dangerous survivals . . .

Herday, Domen 18, 7102 (*N.C.*)
Wershteen City, Aspidiske VII

THE Special Subcommittee on Intergalactic Culture (*see page* 33) met, pursuant to call, at 1600 in the committee room, 8122 Senate Office Building, Wershteen City, Senator Jorj C. Zolam, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Also present: Senator Arden G. Pingle of Proxistu I; Mergis W. Ledder, counsel to the subcommittee; Jorj X. McKie, saboteur extraordinary to the committee.

Senator Zolam: The subcommittee will be in order. Our first witness will be the Hon. Glibbis Hablar, Secretary of Fusion.

We are glad to see you, Mr. Secretary. We believe that you have some of the best cultural fusion experts in the universe working in your Department, and we are in the habit of leaning heavily upon them for our records of factual data.

As you know, our subcommittee is working under Senate Resolution 1443 of the 803d Congress, First Session, to make a full and complete investigation of complaints received from economy groups that the His-

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Though Frank Herbert started free-lancing only a few years ago, he has been a working writer for almost twenty years, as an editor with several Washington State newspapers and later with the Santa Rosa (Calif.) Press-Democrat. *His stories have appeared in* Collier's, Esquire, *and various SF magazines.*

torical Preservation Teams of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs are excessively wasteful of their funds.

Now, Mr. Secretary, I understand that you are prepared to present a sample of the work being done by your Historical Preservation Teams.

Secretary Hablar: Yes, Senator. I have here a tri-di record of an interview with one of the early pioneers to Gomeisa III, also a transcription of the interview, and some explanatory matter necessary for a complete understanding of this exhibit.

Senator Zolam: Do you wish to project the tri-di at this time?

Secretary Hablar: Unfortunately, Senator, I am unable to do that. My projector has been officially sabotaged—presumably to save the time of the committee. I am embarrassed by my inability to . . .

Senator Zolam: Committee Saboteur McKie will enter an official explanation for the record.

Saboteur McKie: The Secretary may make the official excuse that his tri-di recording was faulty.

Secretary Hablar: Thank you, Mr. McKie. Your courtesy is deeply appreciated. May I add to my official excuse that the faulty recording is attributable to antiquated equipment which our appropriation for the last biennium was insufficient to renew or replace?

Senator Zolam: That request will be considered later by the full committee. Now, Mr. Secretary, you do have a written transcription of this interview?

Secretary Hablar: Yes, Senator.

Senator Zolam: What is the significance of this particular interview?

Secretary Hablar: The interview was recorded at Lauh Village on Gomeisa III. We consider this interview to be one of the best we've ever recorded. It is particularly interesting from the standpoint of the cultural tracings revealed in the vernacular used by the elderly gentleman interviewed.

Senator Zolam: Who did your men interview?

Secretary Hablar: His name is Hilmot Gustin. Students of intergalactic familial relationships recognize the name Gustin, or Gusten, or Gousting, or Gaustern—as stemming from the cultural milieu of Procyon out of the Mars Migration.

Senator Zolam: Will you identify this Gustin for the record, please?

Secretary Hablar: His parents took him to Gomeisa III in the pioneer days when he was nine-years-old. That was the year 6873, New Calendar, making him 238-years-old now. Gustin's family was in the second migratory wave that arrived three standard years after the first settlement. He is now retired, living with a niece.

Senator Zolam: Do you have a likeness of Gustin?

Secretary Hablar: Only on the wire, Senator. However, he is described in one of the team reports as . . . excuse me a moment, I believe I have the report right here. Yes . . . as " . . . a crotchety old

citizen who looks and acts about half his age. He is about two meters tall, narrow face, long grey hair worn in the ancient twin-braid style, watery blue eyes, a sharp chin and enormous ears and nose."

Senator Zolam: A very vivid description.

Secretary Hablar: Thank you, Senator. Some of our people take an artistic pride in their work.

Senator Zolam: That's quite apparent, Mr. Secretary. Now, are you prepared to submit the transcribed interview at this time?

Secretary Hablar: Yes, Senator. Do you want me to read it?

Senator Zolam: That will not be necessary. Submit it to the robosec here, and the interview will be printed at this point in the record.

INTERVIEW WITH HILMOT GUSTIN, PIONEER SETTLER ON GOMEISA III, TAKEN BY HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL TRACES IN THE GOMEISA PLANETS BY THE BUREAU OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

HEARINGS

before the

SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERGALACTIC CULTURE

of the

COMMITTEE ON GALACTIC FUSION, DISPERSION, MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

INTERGALACTIC SENATE

803d CONGRESS

First Session

pursuant to

S. Res. 1443

A resolution to investigate the activities of the Historical Preservation Teams of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs

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Part 1

Intergalactic Department of Fusion, Bureau of Cultural Affairs
Domen 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26: 7102 (New Calendar)

Printed for the use of the Committee on Galactic Fusion, Dispersion, Migration and Settlement

TEAM 579 OF THE BUREAU OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF FUSION.

Interviewer Simsu Yaggata: Here we are in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Presby Kilkau in the village of Lauh, Gomeisa III. We are here to interview Hilmot Gustin, the gentleman seated across from me beside his niece, Mrs. Kilkau. Mr. Gustin is one of the few surviving pioneers to Gomeisa III, and he has kindly agreed to tell us some of the things he experienced first hand in those early days. I want to thank you, Mrs. Kilkau, for your hospitality in inviting me here today.

Mrs. Kilkau: It is we who are honored, Mr. Yaggata.

Gustin: I still think this is a lot of frip-frap, Bessie. I was supposed to go bilker fishing today.

Mrs. Kilkau: But, Uncle Gus.

Gustin: How about you, Mr. Yaggata? Wouldn't you rather go fishing?

Yaggata: I'm sorry, sir. Our schedule doesn't permit me the time.

Gustin: Too bad. The bilker are biting like a flock of hungry fangbirds.

Yaggata: I wonder if we could begin by having you tell us when you first came to Gomeisa III?

Gustin: That was in '64.

Yaggata: That would be 6864?

Gustin: Yes. I was just a wicky boy then. My pap moved us from Procyon IV in the second wave.

Yaggata: I understand you come from a long line of pioneers, sir.

Gustin: My folks never did stay put after Mars. We spent five generations on Mars—then, just like boomer seeds: spang! all over creation!

Yaggata: You came out in the Mars Migration?

Gustin: That was my grandfather went to Procyon IV. My pap was born enroute. I was born on Procyon.

Yaggata: And what motivated your father to migrate here to Gomeisa III?

Gustin: He heard it was green. Procyon's nothing but one big sandstorm.

Yaggata: And what did he say when he found the vegetation was purple?

Gustin: He said anything was better than yellow dust.

Yaggata: And this is a very beautiful planet.

Gustin: One of the prettiest in the whole universe!

Yaggata: Now, sir, we're interested in the details of your life as it was in those early days. How did you find conditions when you arrived?

Gustin: Rougher than a chigger's . . . Are you recording now, Mr. Yaggata?

Yaggata: Yes, I am.

Gustin: We found it pretty rough.

Yaggata: How soon after arrival did you take up your own claim?

Gustin: Ten or fifteen days we

waited in the bracks with all the other chums. Then we came directly to Lauh. There were two other families in the district: the Pijuns and the Kilkaus. Bessie's husband is a grandson of old Effus Kilkau.

Yaggata: What did it look like around here in those days?

Gustin: Nothing but fritch brush and wally bugs, an occasional tiger snake and some duka-dukas, and, of course, those danged fangbirds. [1]

Yaggata: Most of the universe is familiar with the terrible fangbirds, sir. We can all be thankful they've been exterminated.

Gustin: They haven't been exterminated! They're just waiting in some hidden valley for the day when . . .

Mrs. Kilkau: Now, Uncle Gus!

Gustin: Well, they are!

Yaggata: The duka-dukas — those are the little fuzzy dog-like creatures, aren't they?

Gustin: That's right. Their fuzz is stiff as wire and barbed. Scratch worse than a fritch thorn.

Yaggata: What was the first thing you did when you came here?

Gustin: We took sick with the toogies!

Yaggata: The toogies?

Gustin: The medics call it Fremont's boils after old Doc Fremont who was in the first wave. He's the one discovered they were caused by the micro-pollen of the fritch flowers.

Yaggata: I see. Did you build a house immediately?

Gustin: Well, sir, in between scratching the toogies we threw up a sod shelter with a shake roof, and piled fritch brush around for a compound to keep out the duka-dukas.

Yaggata: That must have been exciting—listening to the weird screams of the fangbirds, the whistling calls of the duka-dukas.

Gustin: We all had too much work to do, and no time to feel excited.

Yaggata: Most of the early pioneers have their names attached to some element of this planet, sir. Was your family so honored?

Gustin: Heh, heh! Gustin swamp! That's what we've got! I'll tell you, Mr. Yaggata, Bessie wanted me to make out like our family was a pack of heroes, but the truth is we weren't anything but dirt farmers, and with a swamp making up about two-thirds of our dirt.

Yaggata: But you certainly must've had some interesting experiences while carving a ranch out of that wilderness.

Gustin: It's a funny thing, mister, but what some folks call *interesting experiences* aren't anything but labor and misery to those who're having them.

Yaggata: Wasn't there anything to lighten the load? Something amusing, perhaps?

Gustin: Well, sir, there was the

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[1] Fangbirds, or pseudo-Pterodactylus, native to Gomeisa III. A flying reptile, now extinct, that grew to a wingspan of ten meters. Creature characterized by venomous fangs (formic acid) protruding from roof of nose hood.

time pap bought the rollit[2] and he. . .

Mrs. Kilkau: Oh, now, Uncle Gus! I'm sure Mr. Yaggata wouldn't be interested in a silly old commercial transaction like . . ."

Gustin: You see here, Bessie! I'm the one's being interviewed!

Mrs. Kilkau: Of course, Uncle Gus, but . . .

Gustin: And I think that story about the rollit has a real lesson for everyone!

Yaggata: It certainly wouldn't do any harm to hear the story, sir.

Gustin: You understand, mister, we weren't anything but lean chums[3] with the little kit[4]. Our power pack was busy all the time just producing bare essentials. So when old Effus Kilkau advertised that he had a draft animal for sale, pap was all for buying it.

Yaggata: Advertised? How was that done?

Gustin: On the checker net[5]. Old Effus advertised that he had one rollit for sale cheap, weight 2500 kilos, trained to plow.

Yaggata: Some of those who will use this record will not be familiar with the genus rollitus sphericus, Mr. Gustin. Would you mind setting the record clear?

Gustin: In due time, son. Don't light a short fuse. The point is, my pap didn't know a rollit from a bowling ball, either, and he was too darned proud to admit it.

Yaggata: Ha, ha, ha. Wouldn't anyone enlighten him?

Gustin: Well, old Effus suspected pap was ignorant about rollits, and Effus thought it'd be a good joke just to let him have it cold.

Yaggata: I see. How was the transaction completed?

Gustin: All done on the checker net, and confirmed at base where they credited Effus with the seventy galars.

Yaggata: Your father bought it sight unseen?

Gustin: Oh, certainly! There was no question of hanky-panky in those days. People had to help each other . . . and they had to be honest because their lives depended on it. It's only after we get civilized that we feel free to cheat. Besides, we lived so far apart in those days that we'd have lost more going to look at the beast than just having it shipped over.

Yaggata: That certainly makes sense, sir. But didn't your father kind of feel around to find out specifically what it was that he was buying?

Gustin: Oh, he probed around some. But pap was afraid of ap-

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[2]Rollit, genus Rollitus Sphericus, exterminated on Gomeisa III in the mutated mastitis epidemic of 6990. One herd may be seen in Galactic zoo, Aspidiske III, although this is the heavy planet adapted form. The original was an ovoid oviparous creature that grew to a size of some twenty meters diameter, moved by shifting balance.

[3]Lean chums—marginal pioneers, poor.

[4]Little kit—minimum pioneer equipment permitted by settlement authorities—clothing suited to local climate (2 changes each); one Hellerite power pack; hand tools fitted for local resources and sufficient to build shelter, work the land.

[5]Checker net—daily radio check-in network required during pioneer period on all planets.

pearing the sag[6]. I do remember he asked how the rollit was to feed. Old Effus just said that this rollit was trained to a whistle call, and could be turned loose to graze off the country. About then, somebody else chimed in on the net and said 70 galars was certainly cheap for a 2500-kilo rollit, and if pap didn't want the beast, then he'd take it. So pap closed the deal right then and there.

Yaggata: How did they deliver it?

Gustin: Well, the Kilkaus were some better off than we were. They had a freight platform null to 6000 kilos. They just put the rollit on that platform and flew it over.

Yaggata: What did your father say when he saw it?

Gustin: You mean about harness?

Yaggata: Yes.

Gustin: Well, sir, I don't think pap even thought about the harness problem. We'd had a ciget on Procyon, and pap'd made his own harness with good long traces so he could stay away from the stink of it. He just figured he'd have another set of harness to make.

Yaggata: Didn't he say *anything* about harness?

Gustin: No. He didn't have a chance to say anything. You see, the rollit was a little spooky from the flight. As soon as they let it down it rolled all over the landscape, and it made one pass and rolled right over me.

Yaggata: Galumpers! To someone who'd never seen a rollit before, I imagine that was quite frightening!

Gustin: It's a good thing Maw didn't see it. She'd have passed dead away. You know, a 2500-kilo rollit develops about 1500 kilos of forward thrust from a standing start, and once it gets moving it can really roll. They're deceptive, too. They look like a kind of giant amœba flowing over the landscape, and all of a sudden they're right on top of you—literally!

Yaggata: Weren't you frightened when it ran over you?

Gustin: Well, it knocked me down, there was a second of darkness and a kind of warm, firm pressure—then it was gone. You know, a rollit won't hurt you. In fact, they're really very friendly. There was a case of a fellow over in Mirmon County who was saved from a fangbird by his rollit. The rollit just sat on this fellow until the fangbird gave up.

Yaggata: I'll bet that was an experience!

Gustin: Sure was. You know, a rollit's ninety percent mobile fluid and pump muscles, and the rest a hide like flexible armor plate. An adult rollit's practically immune to physical attack—even from a fangbird—and there's nothing like being indestructible to make you a friend of everyone.

Yaggata: What was your reaction

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[6]Sag—a fool, stupid person, one easily gulled.

to being run down by that big animated ball of flesh?

Gustin: After the first shock, I wanted to try it again. I thought it was fun. But pap was so shaken by it, that he rushed me indoors. It took old Effus a half hour to convince pap that a rollit wouldn't hurt anyone, that it distributed its weight over such a large area that it was just like getting a good massage.

Yaggata: Ha, ha, ha. So there was your father with a rollit and no idea how to harness it.

Gustin: That's right. He didn't even think about it until after lunch. Old Effus was gone by then. The rollit was outside just rolling around, browsing off the fritch brush, clearing quite an area of it, at that. Good brush buckers, rollits are.

Yaggata: How did your father approach the problem?

Gustin: He just walked up to the rollit, clucked at it and whistled like old Effus had told him. He led the rollit over to the shed where we had our imperv plow. It was a three-gang plow with a two and a half foot bite.

Yaggata: How was it supposed to be towed?

Gustin: By a power pack rotor. But we only had the one pack, and we didn't want to go into three-ball for a rotor.

Yaggata: What did your father say?

Gustin: He said, "Well, let's figure out how to hook this beast to the front of that there . . ." And then it hit him. How do you put harness on a beast that rolls its whole body, and moves by shifting its center of gravity? That was a real stinker of a problem.

Yaggata: I've seen the diagrams. They appear quite obvious. Didn't it occur to your father right away how it had to be done?

Gustin: Sometimes the obvious isn't so obvious until someone's showed it to you, mister. Remember, pap had never seen anything even remotely like a rollit before. His whole concept of draft animals was tied up in something like a ciget—a creature with a specific number of legs and a body that would accommodate some kind of harness. The rollit was a different breed of beast entirely.

Yaggata: Certanly, but . . .

Gustin: And what you've been used to seeing can tie your mind up in little knots so tight you can't see anything else.

Yaggata: Why didn't your father just call up a neighbor and ask how to hitch a rollit to a plow?

Gustin: Pap was too proud. He wasn't going to ask and look foolish, and he wasn't going to give up. For about a week it was a regular ten-ring scrag fight around our compound. We learned later that old Effus and half his clan were up in the hills with binoculars laughing themselves silly. They ran bets on what we'd try next.

Yaggata: What'd you try *first?*

Gustin: Just a plain loop harness. Pap made a loop big enough to pass

around the rollit. He clucked the beast into the loop, dropped the bight around near the top front—that is, around the end away from the plow. A rollit doesn't rightly have a front. Then he ordered the beast to pull. That rollit leaned into the line like it knew what it was doing. The plow moved forward about four feet, then the line was down where it slipped under the beast. Pap clucked it back into the harness and ordered it forward again. About three times that way and it was clear he'd never get his plowing done if he had to reharness every four feet.

Yaggata: Were your neighbors watching all this?

Gustin: Yes. By the second day the whole district was in on the joke. And we had a full flap in our compound and were really hupping it.

Yaggata: What'd he try next?

Gustin: A kind of web harness with rollers. It took us three days to make it. Meanwhile, we tried a vertical harness that went over the top and under the rollit. We greased the area that contacted the rollit, but the grease wouldn't last. As soon as it was gone, the harness would rub. Our rollit could rub through the toughest harness in about ten revolutions.

Yaggata: How'd the web harness work?

Gustin: It really wasn't a bad idea—better than what our neighbors were using right then if he'd perfected it.

Yaggata: What were your neighbors using?

Gustin: A kind of corral on wheels with rollers along the front to contact the front of the rollit. It had harness rings on the back. They opened one side to let the rollit in, hooked on the equipment, and the rollit pulled the whole rig.

Yaggata: I'm curious. Why didn't your father sneak over and watch his neighbors using their rollits?

Gustin: He tried. But they were all onto him. Our neighbors were just never using their beasts when pap came around. It was like a comic formal dance. They'd invite him in for a drink of chicker. Pap would remark about their plowing. He'd ask to look over their equipment, but there'd never be anything around that even remotely resembled rollit harness.

Yaggata: Uh . . . what was wrong with the web harness he tried?

Gustin: Pap hadn't made the web big enough to belly completely around the front of the rollit. And then the rollers kept fouling because he hadn't perfected a good sling system.

Yaggata: How did he finally solve the problem?

Gustin: He calmed down and started thinking straight. First, he put the plow out in the center of our compound. Then he stationed the rollit all around the plow, first one side then the other. And just like that—he had it.

Yaggata: I must be a little slow on obvious associations myself. Something has just occurred to me. Was your father the inventor of the standard rollitor?

Gustin: It was his idea.

Mrs. Kilkau: Uncle Gus! You never told us your father was an inventor! I never realized . . .

Gustin: He wasn't an inventor. He was just a darned good practical pioneer. As far as thinking up the original rollitor is concerned, that'd be obvious to anyone who'd given it a second's thought. What do you think the Gomeisa Historical Society has been trying to . . .

Mrs. Kilkau: Do you mean that musty old junk out in the number two warehouse?

Gustin: That *musty old junk* includes your mother's first swamp cream tritchet![7] And right spang in the middle of that *musty old junk* is the first rollitor!

Yaggata: Do you mean you have the original rollitor right here?

Gustin: Right out back in the warehouse.

Yaggata: Why . . . that thing's priceless! Could we go out and see it now?

Gustin: Don't see why not.

Mrs. Kilkau: Oh, Uncle Gus! It's so dirty out there and . . .

Gustin: A little dirt never hurt anyone, Bessie! Uhhhgh! That knee where the fangbird got me is giving me more trouble this week. Too bad we don't have any rollits around nowadays. There's nothing like a rollit massage to pep up the circulation.

Yaggata: Have *you* had an encounter with a fangbird?

Gustin: Oh, sure. A couple of times.

Yaggata: Could you tell us about it?

Gustin: Later, son. Let's go look at the rollitor.

(Editor: A raw splice break has been left on the wire at this point and should be repaired.)

Yaggata: Here we are in a corner of warehouse number two. Those stacked boxes you see in the background are cases of swamp cream so important to the cosmetic industry—and the chief output of the Gustin-Kilkau Ranch.

Gustin: This here's a trench climber used for mining the raw copper we discovered in the fumerole region.

Yaggata: And this must be the original rollitor attached to this plow.

Gustin: That's right. It's a simple thing rightly enough: just four wooden rollers set in two 'V's', one set of rollers above the other, and the whole rig attached directly to the plow at the rear.

Yaggata: They're quite large rollers.

Gustin: We had a big rollit. You see this ratchet thing in here?

Yaggata: Yes.

Gustin: That adjusted the height

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[7]Swamp cream tritchet—the crude baffled incline first used to settle out the floating curds secreted by calophyllum gomeisum, the common swamp bush of Gomeisa III.

of the rollers and the distance between the two sets to fit the frontal curve of our rollit. The rollit just moved up against these rollers. One set of rollers rode high on the beast's frontal curve, and the other set of rollers rode low. The rollit kind of wedged in between them and pushed.

Yaggata: What are these wheels on the plow frame?

Gustin: They kept the plow riding level.

Yaggata: It's really such a simple device.

Gustin: Simple! We trained our rollit to plow all by itself!

Yaggata: What'd your neighbors think of that?

Gustin: I'll tell you they stopped laughing at pap! Inside of a forty-day, the old tow corrals were all discarded. They called the new rigs Gustin rollitors for awhile, but the name soon got shortened.

Mrs. Kilkau: I never realized! To think! Right here in our own warehouse! Why . . . the Historical Society . . .

Gustin: They can wait until I've passed on! I get a deal of satisfaction coming out here occasionally and just touching this *musty old junk*. It does you good to remember where you came from.

Mrs. Kilkau: But, Uncle Gus . . .

Gustin: And you came from dirt-farming pioneers, Bessie! Fine people! There wouldn't be any of this soft living you enjoy today if it weren't for them and this *musty old junk!*

Mrs. Kilkau: But I think it's selfish of you, keeping these *priceless* . . .

Gustin: Sure it's selfish! But that's a privilege of those who've done their jobs well, and lived long enough to look back awhile. If you'll consider a minute, gal, I'm the one who saw what swamp cream did for the complexion. I've got a right to be selfish!

Mrs. Kilkau: Yes, Uncle Gus. I've heard that story.

Yaggata: But *we* haven't heard it, Mr. Gustin. Would you care to . . .

Gustin: Yes, I'd care to . . . but some other time, son. Right now I'm a wicky tired, and I'd better get some rest.

Yaggata: Certainly, sir! Shall we set the time for . . .

Gustin: I'll call you son. Don't you call me. Uuuuugh! Damned fangbird wound! But I'll tell you one thing, son: I've changed my mind about this frip-frap of yours. It does us all good to see where we came from. If the people who see that record of yours have any brains, they'll think about where they came from. Do 'em good!

(Editor: Wire ends here. Attached note says Hilmot Gustin taken ill the following day. The second interview was delayed indefinitly.)

Senator Zolam: Do you have further records to introduce at this time, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary Hablar: I was hoping my Assistant Secretary for Cultural Affairs could make it here today. Unfortunately, he was called to an intercultural function with representatives of the Ring Planets.

Saboteur McKie: That was my doing, Mr. Secretary. The committee members are pressed for time today.

Secretary Hablar: I see.

Senator Zolam: There being no further business, the Special Subcommittee on Intergalactic Culture stands adjourned until 1600 tomorrow.