

Federal March

When the Galactic Federation announced its new ‘national’ anthem (the so-called ‘Federal March’), Terrans collectively had a good laugh. The melody had been fairly obviously lifted whole from a piece of classical Terran music from their planet’s Dawn of Space era, presumably because the ‘composer’ thought that nobody would notice except Terrans, and then only the ones who were musiciologists. Alas for the composer, the music in question had been recently used in a popular children’s show, as is traditional for Terran classical music. This effectively meant that every Terran adult between the ages of thirty and one hundred and twenty now immediately associates the Galactic Federation with the “Ultra-Loonie Uncle Robot” show. Which is, by the way, a hysterical program. Especially if you’re a scholar of Terran popular culture. The Uncle Robot people ripped off **everybody**.

One small problem, however. Turns out that the music in question was never actually put in the public domain! The company that bought the company that commissioned the music had some fairly fierce political and legal clout, and while that particular entity is long gone the rights to the music were maintained through three planetary invasions,

two revolutions, a mini-ice age, four world wars, and any number of civil disturbances over the last two thousand years. In fact, the rights were still actively protected today. The current owner is a fellow from Greater Lubbock named Sam H. Ford, and while he had no problem letting Uncle Robot use the music -- his kids **loved** that show -- letting the Feds have the song for free stuck in his craw. Especially since they didn't even *ask*.

So he has acquired lawyers. *Special* lawyers. Lawyers utterly without fear.

The Galactic Federation is not amused, particularly since Mr. Ford is a valued member of a Terran nation-state that is currently enjoying its latest turn at dominating Terran politics. And everybody knows how Terrans are. Great species, strong members of the Federation, look at all those battlewagons they contribute to the common defence, but -- well, you **know** how primates can be. They'd like to settle this quickly, and so they're sending a discreet set of problem solvers to Mr. Ford, in the hopes that they can negotiate a way around this situation that doesn't involve the Federation paying through the nose-equivalent until the stars run out of hydrogen to fuse. And, indeed, Mr. Ford might very well be amenable to negotiations. Or at least be amenable to doing some

horse trading -- not literal horse trading, of course. No, the negotiation team isn't going to get off that easily. If the Feds want the Federal March, they're going to have to earn it.

Oh, and the negotiation team also has to bring the composer along. He's a bit of a whiner about it, but the team's instructions were clear. The Federation doesn't expect this situation to start any sort of star war or anything, but it probably wouldn't hurt if Mr. Ford got a chance to yell at the entity that caused this mess in the first place.

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