

THE DIPLOMACY CHRONICLE #1

Welcome to the August 1, 1980 issue of The Diplomacy Chronicle, a Diplomacy organ 'zine intending to foster and multiply contacts among North American Diplomacy ombudsmen and to carry their deliberations on ombudsman- and ethics-related issues. The editor of this 'zine will be François Guerrier, Box 32, Station A, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 0T9 (the CDO Ombudsman) until further notice.

Introduction and Background:

As you can see, I am in reality proposing a debating body, with the purpose of encouraging coordination and discussion among North American ombudsmen. This is not the first time that a person thinks of organizing a debating body for ethics-related issues: in the days of IDA's apogee, John Leader (then IDA Ombudsman) carried several discussions within the JudCom (Judicial Committee) on various issues; he continued this tradition when he created the CDO Ombudsman's Advisory Committee in 1978, while he was CDO Ombudsman. However, these committees only discussed "local" matters as they did not carry deliberations among ombudsmen per se; my project is the "logical extension" to these committees. Nor is this the first time that an ombudsman thinks of coordinating and cooperating (or otherwise maintaining contact) with his peers; indeed, John Leader did just that (in addition to making jurisdictional arrangements) with various IDA Ombudsmen (such as John Baker, Henry Kelley, and Fred Davis) through personal letters. However, doing this (through personal correspondence) is becoming increasingly difficult due to the proliferation of advisory opinions and organizations (in 1979, there were only the IDA and CDO Ombudsmanships; now, there are (or soon will be) the DPA, the NADF Ombudsmanship, the PDF Ombudsmanship, and the CDO Ombudsmanship--and this boom may not be at an end yet...!). I therefore believe that a debating body is in order and will solve the 4-way coordination problems. Of course, this reason alone would not be sufficient justification for creating such an ombudsmen's body; it merely reinforces the reasons given above and below.

Also, contacts with various hobby personalities have convinced me that a substantial number of hobby notables would like to see an ombudsmen's body of some sort, with a given set of goals (see below).

I therefore suggest that all North American Ombudsmen (and DPA) band together and form a debating/deliberative body, and that this body be known as the North American Ombudsmen's Commission (NAOC).

Goals of the NAOC:

I--and others--feel that the NAOC could eventually perform several useful functions in the hobby. A sketchy list (which is neither exclusive nor all-inclusive) follows:

(1) the NAOC could be the forum par excellence for determining each ombudsman's jurisdiction. The jurisdiction of each ombudsman would be discussed and agreed to, and then published throughout the hobby for everyone's information. The jurisdictions would be freely agreed to by every ombudsman and would have the strength of a constitutional jurisdiction. Each ombudsman would agree to act as back-up for his peers when necessary, and would agree not to "poach on the others' territory" (i.e. he would automatically refer cases not coming under his jurisdiction to the proper jurisdiction.). The jurisdictions could be re-discussed whenever one or more ombudsmen so wanted, or upon the admission of a new ombudsman to this commission.

Now, it could be argued that each ombudsman could do this on his own, through his personal correspondence, or that the jurisdictions could be settled constitutionally by the organizations each ombudsman belongs to.

I believe my suggestion is superior to both alternatives. The first alternative was practical in the past, when there were only 2 advisory opinions; now, there are four, which complicates the situation greatly. Each ombudsman could settle his jurisdiction through personal correspondence, but only at the risk of forgetting to inform all ombudsmen, thus possibly creating confusion. Discussing and publishing the jurisdictions (in these pages first; and then in other zines for dissemination throughout the hobby) would resolve this potential problem.

The second alternative is also viable, but is nevertheless disadvantageous (when compared with my proposal). I believe that ombudsmen should be able to work out jurisdictional arrangements they feel comfortable with (among themselves), without having to worry about constitutional hassles. My suggestion appears to be superior here as well.

The only problem seems to be informing the hobby about the jurisdictions we would agree to. No problem: I suggest that we publish our agreements in our respective zines, and ask other publishers to do the same; alternatively, we could publish a column on the subject in Diplomacy World.

(2) This organ zine could be the ideal forum for coordinating and discussing our common concerns with the DPA, which is a players' union. I believe it would be a good idea to join forces with DPA, as our primary concern (I hope) is basically the same; that is, protect the players against GMing errors and abuses, when it has been determined there is error or abuse.

(3) The NAOC could be the ideal forum for printing past, present, and future arbitrations, statements, and advisory opinions made by North American advisory counsels (i.e. ombudsmen and the DPA). Thus, every advisory opinion would be fully aware of how his peers tackle particular problems, which would undeniably give him more perspective in his rulings.

There's more to it than just that. We are all human; therefore, it is inevitable that some day one of us will make an error. Thus, NAOC will be helpful in that we will all learn from the other guy's mistakes.

(4) Finally, this body could act as a forum for discussing pancontinental problems and ethical issues in general. There are plenty of issues we could discuss.

Doing this will be very advantageous: discussing issues will add to everyone's perspective, and can only help improve the services ombudsmen (and DPA) give the hobby. Further, NAOC could help shape hobby views; that is, if we disagree on a particular matter, then this will provoke hobby-wide discussion; if we agree, then this will make GMs and players alike think and "shape up". The discussions of this body could eventually become a powerful source of precedent, set by ombudsmen and the DPA, and not by the GMs (for once.).

The hobby can only gain from all this.

Before going on, I'd like to stress what the NAOC should not do (in my opinion). The NAOC should not become an advisory opinion itself, or be given the power to overrule an ombudsman--it is up to the individual ombudsmen (and/or DPA) to give advisory opinions and to designate an instance of appeal for their rulings and counsels (if they indeed want one). Indeed, this body's purpose is to discuss matters, not to decide on solutions. I hardly expect matters to come to a vote (except on procedural matters, and/or the admission of new members, etc.) ever; NAOC should be concerned solely with coordinating ombudsmen (and DPA) and discussing pancontinental ethical matters.

The Issues at hand:

(1) Membership: I believe that restricting ourselves to actual ombudsmen (as members) is too restrictive, as we would end up with 3 debaters only.

As I said above, the DPA has concerns similar to ours; further, (as I understand it) the DPA will be devoted to giving players counsels and advisory opinions, as well as recommendations to the GMs and publishers. This is very similar to the job of ombudsman. Since it is so similar in nature to our functions, I'd suggest that we accept a or some DPA representatives as members; the number or representatives itself is not as important as the principle, though I'd personally suggest the 2 chief advisors (Eric Verheiden and Jerry Jones) as well as one other representative.

Another interesting possibility would be allowing former ombudsmen to participate, as I'm sure their experience will be useful. However, we should be careful not to stack NAOC with too many members, so that our deliberations may remain uncomplicated and simple.

Another issue could be the status of each member, if we decide to allow all these people in. One possibility is to treat everyone equally; another is to allow the former ombudsmen to present their views only, with the actual ombudsmen and DPA representatives carrying the final discussions. Any ideas?

(2) Circulations: of course, many of our deliberations will lose a lot of impact if they remain a secret. I'd suggest that we have our important discussions (or a final version), along with a summary of our activities, reprinted in Diplomacy World, or reprinted in several zines. Any suggestions?

(3) Constitution: while I don't think a constitution is all so-fired necessary, I can see why others would think it can be helpful, especially when defining our membership and basic procedures. Any suggestions?

(4) Of course, everything in this issue is open for discussion.

Concluding Notes:

It might be argued that there are better forums for doing all of this; I'd like to dispel any such notions by examining the main alternatives:

(1) the NADF Steering Committee: this would be a viable alternative, but without all the advantages NAOC could offer; firstly, the SC will discuss general hobby matters--I'd like our discussions to get the spotlight, which NAOC could do, but not NADF-SC (so easily, at least). Secondly, the SC consists of all hobby custodians in general--NAOC will be a special forum for ombudsmen; this is particularly advantageous given that it isn't quite sure whether the SC will offer seats to all ombudsmen (as ombudsmen)--which is the case for NAOC. Finally, if the GPA and the PDRC can have their own body (even if their discussions will presumably overlap with those of NADF-SC), then so can NAOC....!

(2) the GPA: this clearly won't do, as GPA is a player's organization; while GPA's nature is quite similar to that of an ombudsmanship, it does not quite cover all of an ombudsman's activities. Further, GPA would still not provide a specialized forum for ombudsmen and would not "place the spotlight" on ombudsman-related matters.

(3) the CDO-OAC: here, the problem would lie in the nature of the two structures. The OAC tends to legislate ethics-related matters (e.g. the Code of Ethics) while we'd only discuss them; the OAC hears appeals--the NAOC won't; finally, the OAC is the appendage to one ombudsman (the CDO Ombudsman)--NAOC is a forum for ombudsmen and by ombudsmen.

(4) individual zines could carry the discussions; quite true, but here again there is a problem of forum and "subject-matter specialization". Further, there could be technical problems, such as limited circulation, and not-all-ombudsmen subscribing, etc. Further, any discussion in an "ordinary" zine is not likely to have the same impact than a discussion in a specialized zine like this one.

I believe the NAOC will be the better forum. Also, note that we wouldn't monopolize the discussion of all ethics-related matters--the above can conduct their own discussions if they like (...for the better...!). But NAOC will spe-

cifically encourage such discussions.

It might be argued that we had better wait for the selection of a NADF Ombudsman before going ahead with this project; I don't think so, as a lot of useful work can be done in the meantime--and besides, this won't really get going before the NADF Ombudsman is selected. We can always re-discuss any particular matter he may not like at the time of his inclusion, just like every ombudsman in the future.

Copies of this will be sent to all actual and former ombudsmen (that are still active in this hobby), as well as the two chief DPA organizers: Eric Verheiden, Jerry Jones, Elmer Hinton, John Leeder, Rod Walker, Fred Davis, and Mark Berch. If I have forgotten anyone, please supply me with his name and current address.

Of course, I propose myself as Chairman, for no other reason that it was my idea and that I am the senior ombudsman in office in North America.

I hope that all or most of you will respond as soon as possible. Which reminds me to set a tentative deadline for reactions and comments: September 15, 1980, if you can, please. The sooner the better.

One last thing: association with NAOC would be purely voluntary and non-binding.

Thanks,
François Guerrier,
Box 32, Station A,
Ottawa, Ont. K1N 0T9.

François Guerrier,
Box 32, Station A,
Ottawa, Ont.
K1N 0T9.