

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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I have (I think) several subbers who do not play Diplomacy postally, and they may be a little mystified about this issue. Sometimes players leave a game before their positions are ended, and one of the games unresolvable problems has been how to deal with what comes next. This issue deals with one aspect of this, the replacement player. Should he be used? How should he be selected, how should he be rated? I have also included some material on the "Beyerlein Ploy", which, altho not technically part of the topic, affects rather strongly what type of position the replacement player plays assumes. Anyhow, this is a fairly narrow topic --- is it too specialized? If any of you have comments or rebuttals to material which appears here, speak up, and if there is enuf, I'll collect some comments and print them here.

A number of people, including John Kador, Frank Cunliffe, Tom Sherwood, John Sokol, Ron Kelly, and John Michalski, have written within the last couple of weeks saying that they've enjoyed the zine in general, or a particular article. I'm very appreciative; its one of the true rewards of publishing. And speaking of publishing, the Jan issue won't appear until February. I will be out of the country Dec 29-Jan 20, and out of touch then too. And now, on with the show.....

## The Zine Column #7

### More on Trades vs Mutual Subs

First a bit of news on this matter. I have heard quite a bit favorable to ms. Steve McLendon tells me he thinks that they are a great idea, and has only 5 trades. Konrad Baumeister (Eggnog) has stopped taking new trades, and cancelled quite a few of his original ones, sending the publisher a cheque for a sub. His reason is the prime one that I mentioned earlier. Konrad has been churning the Eggnog at a fearsome rate (seven issues in Oct-Dec), and finds he is penalized when trading with infrequent pubbers. In the recent Brutus Bulletin, Michalski is converting one of his last trades, with Randolph Smyth, to an ms.

One of the points I made in my article was that trading boosts the cost of a zine to subscribers. Randolph Smyth, publisher of the superb Fol Si Fie, has challenged me strongly on this point, presenting a totally different modif of how publishers operate. I had assumed that the pubber seeks either to break even, or to keep his losses at some acceptable level. When costs go up, he eventually raises his prices to bring himself back to the old level. Thus if he had 30 subs and 30 trades, and costs went up 2¢ per copy, he'd actually have to raise sub rates 4¢ to bring himself back to his old level. Not so says Randolph in #105: "I'm sure that I'm making some money on the zine". His pricing has nothing to do with costs: "I charge what the market will bear". If he adds a dozen trades, he just accepts a lower profit. Randolph does have a point here: Such a pubber does not pass on the costs of trading to his

I'd like to kick things off with a series of views on whether players should be replaced, and if so, how, when they NMR. Starting things off is Rod Walker, writing in his Erewhon #70, 22 June 1972.

### SURPRISE! GUESS WHO'S PLAYING YOUR FORMER ALLY?

One of the important innovations of Postal Diplomacy, which greatly improved the hobby, was the replacement player. The number of players who resign or just drop out is very often as many as 4 or 5 of the original 7. The causes of the "quit" rate are numerous, and almost as many solutions have been proposed. Some suggest a rapid fire deadline system as a means of keeping interest up. Others advocate a high game fee so that players who are irresponsible won't invest in the game in the first place. As the current extraordinary dropout rate in Graustark ((which employs both of those features)) testifies, neither of those is really a solution. In fact, there doesn't appear to be a solution. We are therefore stuck with the replacement system if we don't wish to have 3 or 4 countries in civil disorder by midgame.

Unfortunately, the replacement system is much abused. Many GMs who do not have extensive lists of stand-by players have had to use any replacement who comes along. The result has been that unscrupulous players have taken advantage of the situation to obtain "automatic allies" -- players who are in fact "ringers", puppets of the player himself. The most outstanding current interest of this is that of Jerry White, who has had his fiancée, now his wife, volunteer for many of the games in which he is playing. Those of you who don't know should take notice that Despina Manganas is in fact Mrs. White.

Another flagrant abuser of the replacement system is John Beshera. It is well known that John has declared that he will refuse to join a postal game unless the GM will guarantee in advance that no replacement will be used whom John classifies as an "enemy". Beshera has also written that "John Boardman is the only Gamesmaster I can trust in this regard". ((Incidentally, I haven't the slightest idea whether what Rod has to say about Jerry White or John Beshera is true or not. It does, however, show one of the problems of replacing players: Bad feelings can result if another player in the game does not perceive the selection process as picking a random player)). Anyway, it would appear that most GMs have more scruples than to allow Chairman Beshera to dictate who may and may not be used as replacements...As a side note, Walt Buchanan has raised the question as to whether Beshera's postal "victories" are not at all connected with ringers, both as original players and replacement players (see Tales of the Barad-Durchester #1) and we're seeing how much evidence there might be for this.

The most important problem with replacements is, however, one perpetrated by the GMs themselves. It generally takes this form: A player drops or is dropping from a game in which the GM either has no list of standbys or has no s/b players on his list. The GM has asked for a replacement. Voila! In the next season, somebody submits orders. There is no advance warning to the other players; he is just there moving pieces suddenly. This of course leaves the gate wide open for people like Beshera to bring in a flunky, but more than that, this procedure violates the basic concept of the game.

The name of the game is "Diplomacy" after all. How much diplomacy goes on before this "surprise" player makes his moves? None usually. In almost all instances he has written no one, and none of the other players (except possibly one) even knows he's coming into the game. ((Actually, I accepted such an open invitation once, although I didn't know any of the players, the position looked very interesting. I wrote most of the players. Unfortunately I didn't get the position!)) He moves blindly, and in some cases, capriciously. Allowing him thus to move, with no diplomacy, is unfair to the players and to the game as a whole, and in a sense violates the rules of the game.

It may be argued that this player, in viewing the previous seasons, can know what's going on, and hence is not moving blindly. This argument holds no water at

all. Read the game commentaries for 1970BL, in Kadath (GMed by Walker)) or for 1971 BC, in Hoosier Archives. Note the number of times Rick Brooks ((analysts for both games)), who is a very perceptive player, has tried to second guess the next season and failed. As every experienced Diplomacy player knows, the events of one season are a very poor guide to the events of the next. Why is this? Because between seasons there is diplomacy. Players negotiate, bargain, argue, and persuade -- and change their minds. The purpose of that Diplomacy is not only to confirm the existing alliance structure, but to change it. Allowing a "surprise" player to move without Diplomacy, or at least the possibility of it, negates the latter purpose of the diplomacy period, and, in my opinion, screws the game. It certainly screws the other players, which is not what they paid their money for.

A sophisticated version of this shell game may be found in Hoosier Archives. Here there are standby players, but each season they submit orders for all the powers. If a player misses, the standby orders are used. This prevents missed moves, but at the expense of damaging the game in another way. Again, these players move blindly. ((The point that Rod is missing here is that, tho the replacement player moves blindly, he at least has a reasonable chance of doing what the original player would have done. If he NMRs, then there is no chance of the "right" orders being used (except for the odd chance that the moves would have been all units hold)). How can you negotiate with such a player ((you cannot, nor should you be able to. There's no reason to expect that he'll be entering the game at all)). Any meaningful negotiation regarding his French orders, for instance, will give him useful information for his German orders. You are prevented FROM negotiating with him because you don't know what country he "might become. Hence, if his standby orders are used, they are the product of guesswork and no diplomacy. ((But is that worse than an NMR?)) Much as I respect Walt Buchanan's work in this hobby in other ways, this is a real disservice to the players. Far better it is for units to stand in civil disorder than to be moved by one who has not negotiated and could not be negotiated with.

Players are well advised to stay away from games conducted in either of the ways discussed above. If you find that your GM is operating in this way, the only recourse you have is to protest. I suggest that you do so very loudly and very insistently. There are many GMs who are convinced that just any old moves are better than none. Alas, it aint necessarily so.

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For a different point of view, consider the following exchange from 1901 and all that #44, March 21, 1975, Mick Bullock, editor:

Terry Knowles: I realize that it's not my place to argue your policies with you, but your policy about dropouts is ridiculous. Especially when you don't even have to go looking for them - when he comes to you. And especially when the dropout occurs so early in the game, too. Surely you must have noticed in several of the victory and endgame statements, certainly those for GOLF((1973HF, as if anyone cared)), how the players said that the large number of dropouts (i.e. the large number of civil disorder countries) ruined the game.

I'm not asking you to submit the thing to a referendum; nor to change your rules. But if a player offers to take a cd position ((shades of Walker's article above!)), before it's gone into cd, and this can only improve the game - I think it would be a good idea to take me up on it - I can't see any reason why not.

Mick Bullock: Policy ridiculous? Fiddlestickulous. Standbys are ridiculous, thought most people probably never stopped to think about it. My philosophy on the subject is simply this: that 7 people start out to play a game, and one (or some) of that 7 is going to be the eventual winner, by fair means or foul - and if that includes frightening the opposition away well and good ((But, while it includes that skill, it eliminates an important skill, viz, the ability to shine up to/pull the wool over the eyes of newcomers)). Sure dropouts and cd spoil the game (hence the deposit system to try to ease the situation) but who the hell ever proved standbys improve things?

I'll quote you my favorite example, BDC 3, in which one player was eliminated

mid-game, and then came back as a standby, defeated his previous conquerers and shared in a victory((I don't think that this would be allowed in any US zine)). I'll quote you "Bellicus 2": France, with 17 centers, is up for grabs, ((got that, Konrad)) for someoutsider to step in and claim a win. I'll quote you BDC 36 in Fifth Column in which Tony Hickie has just done exactly that for Russia. In all three cases, of course I don't really think the losing countries deserved to win - but they sure as hell have more claim than some bloody stranger. Sure, there are some exceptions, and the standby doesn't often win; but is it any different if he's 2nd or 3rd or 4th?

Still quoting from Fifth Column, BDC finished recently, in which Norman Nathan and Steve Wyatt had a good game-winning alliance going; but Norman's partner dropped out, and the standby, for sheer devilment, stabbed Norman ((as of course the original partner could have done. But with a replacemnt, Norman at least had a chance to reform the alliance; with no replacement he would have had naary a chance))and.... ..the game fizzled out in a three way draw. As Norman said "....it was no longer the same game" ((it ceased being the same game when his partner dropped, not when he was replaced))

You quote from GOLF, how about this from BDC 39 (Fifth Column yet again):".... yet another game partially spoiled by missed moves and dropouts...." - and this in a game which used standbys ((huh? Using standbys doesn't prevent missed moves and dropouts, its just a way of dealing with them when they do occur)). Is there anyone else out there, except Andy and the wavering Pete Birks, who has seen the light? ((The discussion then continued in #45))

Richard Scott: I agree that the present use of standbys leaves a lot to be desired, as much, in fact, as the civil disorder method in my opinion. By the way, thanks for all the publicity lastish! Just looking at the Fifth Column games that you mentioned: BDC 39 had two dropouts from fairly minor positions both of which were continued with standbys without really altering the course of the game. (((But they did. My contention is that all standby takeovers alter the course of the game even tho they apparently maintain the status quo. See later on if I aren't getting through)))((triple parens are Mick Bullock's)) The thing that did alter the course of the game was the missed moves and not only those that came before (((immediately before?)) a dropout and this, to my mind, is the standby system working well.

BDC 30 - well, to my mind Craig acted irresponsibly and this did upset the result. But how would it have ended if cd had been declaired when England dropped? I would suspect that both the two remaining countries would have picked up centers equally quickly and I'm not at all sure that Norman would have got a win out of that - I guess a two way draw. (((I'm not really concerned with whether this move would have failed, and that move succeeded etc., the thing is that without standbys the game, any game, would have ended naturally, i.e."as God intended"! Not bad for an atheist, eh?)))

BDC 36, rhis must be classified as an unusual case, dropping out with 14 units! With one dropout already, declaring cd would have made just as much a farce out of the game as the stand by did. (((I still maintain that an original player with 1 unit has more dammed right than a standby to take all the laurels.))) Tony Hickie did offer a draw to all the surviving countires, but the motion was defeated by the other standby who was playing for second place! (first two places taken by standbys).

These are three different examples and I think tha t the only thing that it proves is that we have not found a solution to the drop-out problem as yet. I'm not sure that there is one mind. I think that a standby should be appointed but he should attempt to continue along the lines of the previous player for several reasons. (((So the other play ers can say: 'nyaah, you can't stab me even tho the last chap was possi bly going to'! Surely placing that restriction on the standby alters the game just as much as Craig's action did?))) Both methods have their drawbacks, but civil disorder has more I think (((I disagree!)))'

Tony Ball: I must say that I now agree with you on the question of standbys, tho at one time I held the opposite view. However, I would ask that you make one exception to your general ruleing. This is the case where a player drops out in Spring

(or Autumn) 1901. I'm thinking of GOLF where Germany never made a move. The game there was between six players, and a standby in the German position could have improved the game without altering any alliance patterns and without having more than 7 players. Would you care to change your ruling for similar cases should they occur again?

Mick Bullock: I don't know about Autumn, but as far as a Spring miss I don't need to change my ruling, as the system that you suggest is supposedly the one I adhere to now. The trouble with GOLF, of LICHEN ((no, I'm not going to keep looking these up)) was that I allowed my heart to overrule my head. As I said before, I couldn't really believe that my most creditworthy subber was doing a bunk, leaving me with all that lovely cash. But he did and I'm afraid that GOLF suffered. Now I have two provisos: One, that if all fees are in 3 weeks before SO1 - if not, I find a new player; two, even if fees have been paid, if SO1 moves are missed then I'll delay the gamestart, find a new player (no charge I suppose)etc.

((Britian is not the only place where such odd goings on occur. Consider the following statement, which appeared in STAB #100, 26 May 1973, by Conrad von Metzke, concerning 1969CH))

Point of explanation: Under the original house rules in this game, as used by previous GMS Key and Just, no replacements were used unless a specific resignation was tendered. Thus, a player could theoretically miss every move in the game and still officially hold down the position. (In the old zine Wild 'N' Wolly, which used a similar HR, there was a game in which a player missed moves for six full game years and then suddenly reappeared. Another game in the same 'zine was the proud possessor of a player who missed every move after 1901 and still survived the game.

((Its my zine, so I get to make the concluding comments. As most of you know, I am on record (DIPLOMACY DIGEST #12, and Claw and Fang #95) as firmly favoring the use of standbys, and would not play in a game whose GM did not use them. However, my reason for this position is a matter of personal preference: Standbys produce a better game (which is to me more important than the mere name of the winner, or the "fairness" of having a non-standby win) by my notions of what makes a good game. However, there are players and GMS whose values are different, and they have their rights as well. After all, should they settle for anything less than what they think produces the "best" game? Thus, I would have not the slightest objection to a GM running his games without standbys PROVIDED that this fact were clearly set forth in the HRs and preferably in the game announcement notice, since it is against the norm.))

((This brings me to one of the main reasons that I had for reprinting the material from 1901 and all that: The new Canadian Gamemaster's code of Ethics. This document bans the non-use of standbys (when they are available). It thus does not allow the publisher to both comply with the code of ethics, and also satisfy the needs of those players who happen to feel that the best game results from no standbys. Were I a Canadian publisher, I could not accept this intrusion into what is the right of the GM to run the kind of games that he thinks his readers are interested in. Such no-standby games are not irregular, as has been established by long tradition, nor (in my opinion) should they be. This is not a matter of ethics, but rather a matter of style, of a different vision of what constitutes a game, and who should be entitled to be called a winner. I have three Canadian publishers as subscribers (Leeder, Smyth and Cuerrier), and I hope that they will consider amending the Code along these lines. :: To what extent should players be able to capitalize on another player's NMR?? Two views are expressed below, the first being an excerpt from Doug Beyerlein's "Tactics: Diplomacy's forgotten child", Hoosier Archives #62, 11 March 1972.

...The above four tactics are rather common knowledge among good players. However, the following tactic is so subtle that I am not sure if any other player knows of it. It is conditional moves based on no moves received from an opposing player by the gamesmaster. And it works as follows: an opposing country, A, has a retreat or build which must be made before the next spring or fall season. The GM, to keep the game moving on schuduld, asks that the players send in conditional orders based

on where player A makes his retreat or build, and makes the retreat or build and the following Spring or Fall season's orders due on the same deadline date. Conditional orders may be based on no retreat (thus annihilation of the retreating unit) or no build. Probably over 90% of these no retreat/build cases result from player A missing the deadline, and not only not sending in any retreat or build, but also not sending in any orders for the following season of movement. Therefore, player B, if fighting player A, when faced with this situation, sends in to the GM one or more sets of orders based on the actual retreat or build options, and a special set of orders for no retreat or no build. The special set of orders is all offensive to capitalize on player A's units standing in civil disorder. If even just used once in a game, it has the potential to destroy the opposition's position. This tactic sent me on to win 1968AN when George Grayson's Turkey missed a retreat and the following Fall 1908 moves as my Eng; and grabbed both War and Sev from Turkey based on my special set of orders. Perhaps the greatest success of the tactic is due to its subtlety and the fact that it is used only when an opposing player misses a critical retreat/build and following moves. Even then, a player may not know why his opposition was so successful during his ill-timed absence.

Altho I have enjoyed great success with this tactic, I think that it is unfair and too great an advantage for its user! GMs should eliminate this practice and can easily do so by allowing a completely separate deadline for Fall builds (Winter), Spring (Summer), and Fall (Autumn) retreats to physically separate them from Spring and Fall moves. This would eliminate conditional orders and any possible use of this tactic ((The above precipitated the following reply from Rod Walker in Erehwon #68, 17 April 1972))

#### THE BEYERLEIN PLOY

...One comment by Doug has raised a few eyebrows and generated a little comment, and will generate more. As you know, it is the practice of most GMs to take the retreat of one season together with the movement orders for the next, allowing the players to make the latter conditional on the former. This means that Fall moves may be made conditional upon summer retreats, right? A perceptive player can therefore submit a set of orders which includes contingency moves for "no retreat" --- the assumption being that if the other guy fails to retreat, he also fails to submit orders for the movement season, and you can therefore romp all over him.

Doug says that he has used this to his advantage. I must confess that, altho I have had the idea for some time, I have never had the occasion to take advantage of it. Not that I wouldn't. Doug wonders if this is an ethical procedure. Of course it is. I see nothing wrong with this double penalty for the player who fails to get his orders in on time--especially in any game which, as mine do, allow general Orders, postcard confirmation of receipt, and long distance calls ((Rod no longer allows the calls)). There is no excuse for "NMR" plus all units holding under these circumstances. I repeat, no excuse whatsoever.

However, if a GM wished to prevent this sort of ploy, there is a very simple way to do so. It may result in occasional delays of the game, but they would be rather infrequent, especially if this rule were to be in force. The rule I suggest is as follows:

"If a player is submitting two seasons together (or other players in the same game are), the later may be dependent upon the earlier. That is, Fall orders may be made conditional upon the direction(s) of any summer retreats, winter upon Autumn, and (on rare occasions) Spring upon Winter. The player may specify "no retreat" or "no build" on the part of another player as one of the options on which he bases conditional orders. However, this is construed as refusal to retreat or build, as the case may be. If the retreat or build is not made because of failure to submit orders, the GM will print the retreats or adjustments only, and not the subsequent season which was called for. He will then set a new deadline for that season (calling for standby orders where appropriate).

This procedure prevents sneaky players from benefitting from what is in essence is a double failure to submit orders. It only comes into operation if player A, who has a retreat or build, fails to make it and player B has "no retreat" or "no build option which will change some of his subsequent season's orders. It thus automatically and invariably frustrates the intent of the Beyerlein Ploy. ((Rod is wrong when he states that the rule only comes into operation if both A and B do as indicated. The way its worded, there will be a season separation regardless of whether there are any conditional orders submitted at all. This point aside, Rod has suggested a sensible compromise. However, it all depends on whether the GM feels that protecting an NMRer from the full consequences of his/her act is worth the delay of the game caused thereby. In addition, such a rule will pretty much force the GM to require that when a player does not wish to make e.g. a build, he must write in and say so --- otherwise the failure will be treated as a game-stalling NMR))

.....  
The following exhortation is fairly common and typical, and I figured a sample belongs in an issue like this. It appeared in Liaisons Dangereuse #51, 1-15-75, and was direct by the GM Len Lakofka, to the 3 players who had just NMRed in 1974FN

An Open Letter to Mr. Wolf, Pieloch and Ryan --- and all players who may benefit.

Alas, not everyone can win the game of Diplomacy in which he is playing. Yet, since you have paid your gamefee you should continue playing. In addition, you owe the other players something! They want to enjoy the game as much as you do. Yet when you dropout and throw the play-balance to hell and back, you ruin the game for them. Part of the ego-trip in Diplomacy is winning by skill and craft. If your opponent (or worse, your ally) just ups and drops dead on you the game loses some of its fun and flavor. It should also be noted that if you plan to play in other diplomacy games, that your failure to finish other games will hurt you! If you are a quitter, why should someone else ally with you? Look at 1971DV in this magazine. Russia was handed a win on a silver platter when Brian Kelly could not get his act together and either move or at least resign. Brian ruined the game for Harry Drews because maybe Harry could have gotten a three way draw out of it. REMEMBER A DRAW IS NOT A LOSS. 2nd place is a loss, as is any position in which you do not win or draw. Even with a few pieces you can sometimes draw. At least you can befriend an ally or get revenge on an enemy. If you just quit, you thro your game-fee away, and you take some of the fun out of the game for someone else. Lets all get our moves in next time, OK?((Two of the three submitted moves the next season)).

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A side issue, and vexing problem produced by replacement players is the question of how -- or indeed, whether -- they should be rated. A discussion of this begins in Bruce Schlickbernd's Poictesme #23, Feb 1976.

Ron Kelly: As you may know, Rod Walker ((he's beginning to overrun this issue!)) is now charging a loss in a standby position against a person's record, if he plays a certain number of game years in a game. There is no consideration given to the quality of the position when the standby player took over the position. He is encouraging other people who operate ratings systems to similarly penalize players who take over standby positions. Obviously, a majority of standby positions are poor, and only infrequently reach the end game in a win or draw. Nevertheless, I have always considered them an enjoyable challenge. For instance, I once took over a one unit Italian position in 1903 and felt a certain amount of pride and accomplishment when I managed to avoid elimination until 1909. However, under Rod's rule, this will be counted as a loss for me. Ridiculous!

Since most standby positions are poor positons, and sure losers, and since the rating people are starting to penalize players who take over these positions, then obviously any player who, as had been my policy, volenteers to accept any standby position when it becomes available, is asking to have himself penalized in a majority of the cases, which is a rather silly position for one to put himself into. Therefore, please remove me from your standby list.

Bruce Schlickbernd: Thankyou for taking the time to send me this letter, Ron. As to Rod's system of rating standby players, I believe it is if a player plays any position for over half the length of the game. But don't quote that ((sorry about that!)). There is no perfect system for deciding whether a standby should be given credit for a particular game. Under Rod's system, if you have a turkey of a position, you don't want to last too long, which is actually quite contrary to the goals of the game. But then again, I don't think that standby positions should be a cheap way to get a line of "victories" behind your name. To tell the truth, I doubt if there is a satisfactory answer short of considering each position on an individual basis. One could throw out all standby positions, and make it easy on himself as a rater, I imagine. This is just a thought, but how about whe a player, taking over a position, states whether he wants that particular position rated come good or bad, and just to be sure, without opportunity to change his mind. That way, people won't turn down outright stinkers because of fear of lasting too long and getting stuck with credit for the hound, and if they try and fail, they are stuck. I still agree that if a player takesover when he has 13 or more centers already, he should not get dredit for a win (tho in individual cases, he may deserve a win --- there are always exceptions.)

I'm probably slitting my own throat in the way of getting standbys by printing that, but nobody else seems to be willing to face the question. By the way, I took over two standby positions wherein the game was going to end next year no matter what I did, and I was rated for both in the Broodingnag list. I got second and third, but for one game year when the win couldn't be stopped? Not that it is that important, but it is an illustration of the problem.

((This discussion continued in Poictesme #24 (April 1976) ))

Robert Correll: I think that Ron Kelly is correct in his remarks about rating a standby player after playing a number of game years. Certainly the problem of standby players picking up good positions and thus getting credit for something not of their own work is a problem to the raters. However, I do think that standby players perform an important service in the hobby, and some benefits should accrue to them. I admit to being one of those people who follow the ratings at least to the extent of measuring myself against other well known players. I do not have the time to play in a great number of games or to go looking for additional good standby positions in order to improve my rating. I think that a lot more people than readily admit it are careful to play the ratings to their advantage. I guess that's also part of Diplomacy. I wouldn't want to see out raters ((?)) discourage these people from entering games. To do this could seriously hurt the ability of some marginal lines to get standby players.

I have always been amazed to find the large variances between the standings of well known players from rating system to rating system. I guess this is due to the variation in the rules that each ratingsmaster follows. More discussion on this issue might be interesting.

Bruce Schlickoernd: As I said, some people use standby positions to chase after good ratings: Ron Kelly has recently appeared on Valinor's (Michael Muchnick) Standby list... ((He concludes with comments on the differences between different ratings systems, but with no mention of how they handle standby players))

Here's a somewhat different view of matters, from SerenDip #47, 2 Aug 1978. The GM and puolisher at the time was John McCallum.

Brenton Ver Ploeg: After a hiatus of some time, all my games seem to be starting again. It must be the summertime. Do you hold a player to account in the BRON listing if he resigns for cause? The GMs cause? I am so disenchanted with some of the games' regularity, I might drop out of two. What I want to know is this: If the game continues, and a player takes over my country and gets eliminated with it, does that still reflect on me? At present, I am doing well in the games I am considering dropping, but the quality of GMing is so poor, and the regularity almost non-existent, that I think I should be allowed to get the hell out without harming myself in the ratings -- which are the only things keeping me in these monsters.



John McCallum: These games, if rated at all, will be rated exactly like other games: credits, if any, going to the final player of the country, debits to the original player. I realize that sometimes this is unfair.. In the Fredonia game, 1964B, John Koning was the initial player for Italy. One has seldom seen an Italy in such fine shape, militarily and diplomatically, as his Italy was when he resigned and turned it over to a replacement after a couple of years of play. ((That's game years. He resigned a 5 center Italy in W03, in a three way tie for third. McCallum was playing Turkey)) The replacement frittered away his chances, when he bothered to play at all. Shouldn't the replacement, not Koning be charged with the losses? The difficulty is that a rating list maker cannot be possibly aware completely of everything going on in all games. Usually, his information is second hand, and it may be third hand if he has no trade with the zine concerned. So he needs a rule that he can apply automatically, without close study of each individual case, and mine ((i.e. my rule)) is as indicated above. Of course, if the games are so badly run that they should not be rated at all, and if I am aware of these facts, it will not be rated in BROB or SerenDip...For this to happen, the facts of the matter will have to be well publicized and generally accepted. Irregularity of publication has never been regarded as sufficient reason for disallowing a game. If it were, the Ratings lists would include Boardman's games, Reinsel's games, and no others.

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Whilst typing up this issue, what should arrive but Dolchstoss# 68 (November 1978) (Richard Sharp, 27 Elm Close, Amersham, Bucks.), with Sharp's "The Standby Headache" The first half of the article I'll skip, as its mainly a summary of the pro- and anti-standby positions. The use of neutral orders, quite common in the U.S. is nowhere mentioned. He does state that "...The policy used in Dolchstoss...permits the use of standbys in Spring 1901 only, and makes it a condition of their entering the game that they must contact all the other players before they order." Note that in Dolchstoss, as in many British zines, W01 moves are included with FO1, so that a FO1 NMR is pretty devastating. He then goes on to discuss dropouts after SO1, and it is here that the article is picked up.....

Some quite ingenious ideas have been suggested to strengthen countries in anarchy ((c.d.)) and the same ideas crop up again with each new generation of reformers, proving that the problem is a real one. It has been suggested, for example, that units in anarchy should support one another automatically, or that they should move toward the nearest home center by the shortest available route. But these rules, apart from being inherently ambiguous, would unquestionably cause a game to be classified as a variant. (Tho there's not much logic about this sometimes - in the past, some zines have operated a rule stating that unordered units may not receive support. This is a direct and utterly undesirable violation of the rules of the game, yet those games were regarded as being "regular".)

I don't worry too much about this sort of dropout; occurring in the later stages. There is an argument, for which I have some sympathy, that says that a player who so discourages his neighbor as to cause him to drop out of the game deserves to profit from this. It's true of course that the players normally do not drop out of the game until they start going irretrievably backwards; this situation is usually the result of the large next door neighbor's activities, and said neighbor will be best placed to pick up the spoils. I do not think myself that there is any justification at all for using standbys later than Fall 1901. Among other arguments, it is infuriating when a weak player is replaced by a strong standby, catching you with all your units on the wrong front.

Enough waffle, Sharp - come to the point. I have wondering whether the real solution doesn't lie in taking away the stigma from dropping out. This may seem at first sight to be counterproductive, in that it could actually increase the number of dropouts, but I think there may be something to be said for it. What would be needed would be the adoption of a new rule - The Surrender Rule.

Under this rule, a player whose position was so hopeless that he had lost interest in the game would be able to "surrender"; he would communicate this to the GM,

and would not incur any penalty (loss of deposit, blacklisting) for so doing, provided that the GM agreed that the surrender was justified. The surrender would have to be made to the country or countries responsible for the lost suggestion, which would admittedly require subjective judgement by the GM. For instance, suppose that Germany has been holding a defensive position against Russia; now England makes that position untenable by stabbing Germany in the back. England, not Russia, is responsible for the collapse ((This is questionable, a matter of emphasis. Were it not for Russia's pressure, Germany would probably not be as vulnerable to the English stab, so that Russia really caused the problem in the first place.)). So England benefits: the German units stand as usual so far as Russia is concerned, unsupported by each other, but if an English unit attacks a space occupied by a German one, the German one supports it in! ((I have typed this exactly as it appears in the zine, but it makes no sense. A unit cannot support an attack into a space that it itself occupies, nor cannot it support an attack against any of its own units.)) The GM would of course print the surrender notice (Germany surrenders to England), and would become effective from the season after this was printed.

Heresy? Well, hang about. The rule would have some useful effects. For a start, it would increase the number of outright wins as against draws, since it would now be possible for countries to risk attacking allies in 2-2 stalemate positions, which is almost never possible ((Huh? This assumes a dropout, a dubious assumption)). It would also accelerate the collapse of weakened countries, another factor tending to produce more outright wins. Most important, perhaps, it would ensure that no country profited from a dropout caused by someone else's hard work - we've all seen this happen when for instance England stabs Germany with minor assistance from Russia, only to find that Germany drops out and the Russian armies can mop up vacant centers which the English fleets cannot reach.

Oh, don't worry, I'm not going to introduce this rule. But it is meant to provoke discussion of the ways in which we might consider improving the present rules for the management of the dropout problem ((which is why its reprinted here)). There is nothing sacrosanct here, no tablets of stone that must be respected - we can make any rule we like. The problem can be summed up like this: (A) a dropout can often give a win to a specific country which may not be the most deserving one given the previous course of the game; (B) a standby may deny a win to a country which deserves it. And the solution.....?(("Deserves"? That's a very subjective type of judgement. Suppose the victim wants to surrender to the the country that he thinks "deserves" to win, only to find that the GM has very different standards. Lets not forget, for example, that Richard Sharp considers a person who makes a deal in 1901 with one of his neighbors to draw the game 17-17, and intends to keep that deal, a "cheat". Values differ, and I wonder at the wisdom of allowing the GM's values to affect the game while it is going on, making subjective evaluations that do affect the game.))  
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 ((Finishing things off is this small item from The Dragon and the Lamb #2(Feb 1977). It began with a parenthetical comment by the Editor, Steve McLendon:

/The following submitter requested to remain anonymous but rest assured, dearly beloved, that it is not mine/

The Adventure of the Wooden Blocks

(Transcribed from the casebooks of Ron Kelly, Consulting Diplomat)

Chapter One: Femme Fatal

I stood at the window and tried to count the snowflakes as they fell from the grey Washington sky. There wasn't much else to do on a Sunday. Yesterday's mail delivery had yielded only twelve zines and seventeed letters, and my responses were already sealed and ready to be posted that evening. I guess I should really get more involved with the hobby, but I'm too lazy.

So, I continued to debate with myself, as to whether or not to put some shoes on and go out to buy a bag of "Chips Ahoy" cookies (my supply was running low). Before I could decide, tho, a taxi pulled up to the curb below me and stopped. A woman,

heavily bundled against the cold, got out, paid the driver, and then looked nervously in all directions before entering my apartment building. I knew, before I heard her footsteps ascending the steps, that she was coming to see me, the world's first consulting Diplomat. It's a sense one develops after long experience in the hobby ---one learns to recognize the fear, the paranoia, the trembling hands and averted eyes of the victim of too many stabs. Such are my clients. I take their lost positions, and, sometimes, save them, in exchange for a share in the Calhamer points they earn. Its a living.

Then her footsteps stopped and I heard a timid tap at the door.

"Come in," I said, little realizing the magnitude of the adventure that was to follow.

-To be continued-

((Sadly, it never was. If any of you would like to give Chapter 2 a try, and aren't afraid of getting turned down, be my guest!))

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(from page 1) subbers. I just wonder how typical he is. I had assumed that costs for the typical pubbers are a factor in pricing (they're the major factor here). I had also assumed that all the costs were lumped in a big pile for "zine costs" with-out regard to which costs were allocated to subbers and which to trades, and this cost, as compared to income was what counts. In other words, when a pubber says to himself: Hm, I lost about \$50 on the zine this year, he's talking about the whole zine. He's not talking just about subbers, with the trades coming out of a different pocket. If anyone is interested in a further elaboration, check out FSF #105 and #106.

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The Zine Column #8

#### The Future of Diplomacy World and Hoosier Archives

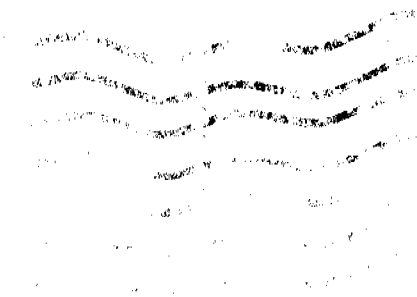
Most of you have probably heard by now the news of DW folding, which appeared first in Runestone #228 and a few days later in Brutus Bulletin #27, both courtesy of David Crockett. As it turns out, this is a bit premature. DW will be taken over by Elmer Hinton, Jr. 20 Almont Street, Nashua, New Hampshire 03060. It will remain a quarterly, with the price rising to 4/\$5. Trades, at least for the time being, will be continued, altho some overseas trades may be cut, because of their extreme cost (They are sent, I believe, first class, 62¢ per ounce). Conrad will have no formal role, except as a writer if that's mutually agreeable. Publication of the next issue has been set for about Jan 20. The material for this issue, much of it already typed has been sent to Elmer, including, I trust, my magnum opus on Turkey. I would like to make a few observations:

1. John Michalski does not get all the scoops. Nonetheless, that's where Conrad's two letters appeared.

2. Conrad's reason for giving up the zine is primarily financial. This is a shame, as in my opinion there is no person in North America more qualified than Conrad to edit DW. This brings me, alas, to the subject of trades. DW has over 150. If you add in the extra postage charge for the overseas zines, this comes to well over \$200 per issue, which was too much for DW's finances, once the subsidy from AH and Walt's special publishing deal vanish, as they have. \$1.25 isn't as bad as \$1.50, but at \$1.00 DW would have more subscribers. It is my firm opinion that without the trades, most pubbers would subscribe at \$1.00, and the loss would be more than offset by the extra subbers that the lower price would draw in. Of course, these trades make the news column easier to do, and created Hoosier Archives, in part. But I do not think that this is worth the disruption of editorship and the high prices. A cancellation of the trades would allow Elmer to cut subrates by at least 25¢, and I plan to urge Elmer that he do exactly that.

3. I had the occasion to speak to a publisher on the phone the other evening, and he said that he and another pubber had been bemoaning the declining quality of articles in DW. I asked whether either of these two, both experienced players, had ever submitted an article to DW. There was a slightly embarrassed pause. They are not

Mark L. Berch  
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IF 18 appears by your name  
Your sub is up. Incidentally,  
I will accept British or  
French currency.

*Jerry - I got the  
election results. But: Hunter  
now has a much bigger job, and  
it appears that Walker maybe  
vanishing again. Someone should  
contact him promptly to make  
sure that he wants the job. If not,  
Grab Lipton*

Jerry Jones (25)  
P.O. Box 8529  
San Marino, Calif 91108



GREAT GRAY OWL 15¢  
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION-USA

the only ones. Robert Lipton for years has been complaining about what dull articles appear in DW, yet its been quite a while since he sent an article there. There are others, too. The quality of articles there is the most important factor in DWs success, yet how many will try to put together a really superior article for submission? Part of this is Conrad and Rod's fault. Conrad, in my opinion, never made a concerted effort to draw in articles, and Rod's stylesheet would actually discourage submissions. But its your zine folkies, and it will only be as good as what you send in. I have some ideas on how to draw new writers in, and will present them to Elmer for his consideration. But for those of you who can write well, think about it.