

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

Issue #20
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Response to Issue #19

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Yes, you're very observant. This is not the double issue on hobby history. I was astonished --- and delighted --- at the enormous response that I received to the last issue. There was enough, along with my comments, to fill an issue, and that's exactly what's happened. About half of it is devoted to the new rating system, and some might ask: Why so much? This rating system may well be used in Diplomacy World, so I think its worth the attention to get it right. However, letters-to-the-editor issues are not about to become regular fare around here; this is very much of a one-shot issue. But I do very much appreciate your letters about what appears in the zine, but usually I'll reply in a letter rather in the zine.

Beck in #10/11, page 3, I said that John Beshera's original article had first been promised to John Boardman. That was an error, resulting from a misunderstanding on my part of something John told me over the phone.

The hobby history issue will definately be the next issue. I am seeking original articles for this. If you've got something, please get it in by April 1. I've got plenty of reprint material, but I'd like to leaven it with some new stuff.

Last issue I mentioned Sharp's book, The Game of Diplomacy. I have now heard from Avalon Hill, and they tell me that they have no objection to my agenting the book in the U.S. Step 2 is now to make the arrangements with the British publishers. I'll keep you all posted.

As of this writing, Diplomacy World has not yet arrived. Fred Davis has told me that it will contain a reprint from Bushwacker, entitled "The Tunisian Pronunciation," and credited to Fred Davis. There's only one little flaw: I wrote it. Jerry Jones managed to miss this fact, despite the fact that my name clearly appeared on the same line as the title in the article, and also appeared, along with my address, at the end of the article. I'm amazed that he could have typed the thing without seeing those. To make matters worse, he called Fred to tell him that he was using the piece only after the issue had already been sent to the printer, which seems like an odd time to get someone's permission to reprint their work. The result was that it was too late to correct. I do not know, of course, whether this was Jerry's error or Conrad's, but please be assured, it wasn't Fred's. I am not particularly upset by this --- its not the first article of mine to be reprinted in DW without my name on it. But it does show that procedures could use a little tightening at DW.

Publishers are urged to note the short letter from Kendter on page 11, concerning the Need-a-Game list. Lee tells me over the phone that he will exercise personal discretion over whose names go on the list, and that one pubber in particular will not have his openings (if any; I don't get the zine) listed.

Starting things off will be Steve McLendon, publisher of Dragon and the Lamb (Box 57066 Webster Texas 77598, subs 12/\$4.00). D&L has undergone a major upgrading, going to a reduced format and center staple, much like DIPLOMACY DIGEST. Some day in The Zine Column here I'll do a history of the zine, from its humble beginnings to its very impressive present. In it you find letters, puzzles, one-line quotes, my analysis of 1978FD (now in 1905) and of course plenty of games. Openings exist in regular and Youngstown Diplomacy:

Steve McLendon 12 Feb 1979:

Now let's press on to discuss the rating. An old trick I learned when I first came to work for NASA was to never say, "We are considering...." but instead, "We are doing....". If you announce things as in the former you don't get near as much feedback or flak or criticism as when you do the latter. For some reason people don't get stirred up enough to send in their comments unless they think the curtain is about to come down. So I'm sure that Dragons Teeth will not be final until it appears in Diplomacy World.

((Well, you sure fooled me! D&L #29 announced a bunch of rule revisions; I had thought that the rules printed in #28 were final. Incidentally, people should not take it for certain that Dragon's Teeth will be in DW))

Let me start by commenting on our 15-center criteria. This is really Bob's rule. He is very adamant in his feeling that a win is 18 centers, and anything too short of that is suspect. But I have talked Bob into lowering that criteria to 14 centers (and believe me that was a job!). I don't believe you can show me very many cases where a player has a "forced" win with 13 centers. Yeah, there may be a few, but I bet you can count them on your right hand (as opposed to the left which may have an extra digit).

Your argument about a player "convincing the other players that he is entitled to a win" through his diplomatic efforts is indeed valid. And we do give the

player credit for the win. BUT the other players, who could stop a win, but didn't (either through failure to reach accord with the others or whatever), demonstrate poor diplomatic play, and should be scored accordingly. When I say "poor diplomatic play", I mean that in the sense of "surrendering" instead of putting up at least some semblance of a fight. If a guy wins, he wins (relatively speaking). But please, you other players in the game, at least demonstrate to us that you didn't just throw up your hands and hand it to him on a silver platter by simply surrendering. I believe Bob plans to elaborate on this further in his next issue of St. George (it's about time he started taking some of the heat for all this!).

((I am unsure of the status of this change from less-than-15 to less-than-14, since In Dragon and the Lamb #37, Sergeant still uses the 15 number, and that was written at the same time as Steve's letter. As for these arguments above, they will be discussed later when I reprint the aforementioned Sergeant editorial))

Due to our decision not to rate standbys in Dragons Teeth, the -5 point penalty has been dropped. Bob thought this was a little too harsh (I don't). But now the negative points for elimination will apply to the player, not the country. If a player drops his position in 1901, he has eliminated himself from the game and his score will be -8 (since he was first eliminated), regardless of how his country finishes the game.

By the way, I have convinced Bob that we will come up with a rating system for standbys. But it will be a rating system exclusively for standbys and will be entirely separate from D.T.

((This is the big change mentioned in D&L #29. Dragon's teeth will be the first ratings system ever to ignore Standbys. And this new one will be the first to rate only standbys. However, I predict that this will not come to pass. Creating the

all-standby system will present almost the same problems, the same issues that you would have in a combined system. If these problems can be resolved, then the temptation will be strong to just fold the standby rating into the main system. If they can't be solved, then there will be no second rating system.

In my opinion, a partial solution would be to create a new hobby tradition. When a standby submits his orders, he must state at that time whether he wishes to be rated for the position. This decision must be made then, before he sees how it will all turn out. Some limits must be made on how strong the position can be and the player still be allowed to ask to be rated. And individual ratingsmasters would still be free to apply corrections for proportion-of-game-played, and whatever. There would still be the problem of those games which took place before the new tradition, and probably other complications, but I think that this is a promising approach.}}

don't really understand your objections to the way we handle resignations. It's my feeling that any time a player removes himself from a game, either by dropping or resigning, the game is altered. But I do realize that sometimes players do have legitimate reasons for resigning. I have resigned from a couple of games myself during my 5 years in the hobby. But I absolutely refuse to give players a loophole to avoid a bad showing in a game and, thus, the bad rating score that goes with it, by simply tendering their resignation. If that were the case, the minute a player got stabbed all he need do is "resign" and he is off scott free. No way! I think our two criteria cover the "resign because I'm in trouble" player rather nicely.

((Yes, any time a player leaves the game, the game is altered. But the manner of leaving greatly affects the impact. A dropout affects not only the NMRing season, but also the season after, as there is doubt as to the identity of the player for the country. The resignation does neither, and that is why those who are going to leave should be encouraged to go the resignation route, even if costs them an extra 15¢ plus the time it takes to write the orders. But you discourage that. You say to the person who has 2 or 3 centers: As far as your rating is concerned, it doesn't matter in the slightest whether or not you send in those final orders, you are going to get burned. And make no mistake about it, the penalty for resigning with two or three centers is very steep. You lose those center points AND you are treated as having been eliminated right then and there.

Now, it's true, resignation is a "loophole" to use to avoid a poor showing. However, the 2 and 3 center positions only constitute a small proportional of all hopeless positions. I am in a game, for example, in which there is a hopeless 13 center position. It is hopeless because I have 15 and I am almost certainly going to win. Further, I suspect that such loophole behavior is pretty uncommon. And finally, there's a way to get around your penalty. He could either resign while he was still at 5, or he could wait till he fell to 1 center. Of course, he might not be able to rig that. But still, a resignation with 2 centers is treated harshly, a resignation or dropout with only 1 isn't. That doesn't make sense to me.

Finally, consider the matter of hobby tradition. I know of no such resignation penalty in any other rating system. Or reason by analogy from the deposits used. Many GMs use a deposit system, and they seize the deposit if you dropout. But not, normally, if you resign. Do you know of a single GM who seizes the deposit even in case of resignation with small positions? Would you do it in D&L?)

'm sure there are some cases where this may not seem fair. But I think those cases will be far in the minority. But please keep in mind, Mark, that there is no way we can be privvy to "behind the scenes" happenings in every game in every zine. All we have is what is in black and white in the game reports in everything. But we do leave our doors open so that players can indeed come to us and present their case. This is far more than other ratingsmasters have done. I realize that a flat set of rules and criteria cannot cover every isolated case and do justice to all. But at least we have a basis from which to proceed.

((True, you're not privy. But in a sence, you're acting like you are. When you decree that 3 center resination shall be treated as dropouts, then aren't you acting as if you're privy to some secret knowledge that it wasn't a bona fide resignation? I'm not sure what this "present their case" is referring to. In the rules in D&L #28, reference was made to certain situations were "player protest" would be considered, but this wasn't one of them.

With regard to the protesting player having to "prove his case"--what standard of proof? Well, either the protesting player has evidence to back up his claim or he doesn't. And it doesn't have to be of the type that would stand up under a Supreme Court Justice. If a player has evidence that seems to support what he says, we will give him the benefit of the doubt.

How do we define "local" games? We don't, since we have no way of knowing where the players are from. The BNC is the one who classifys it as a local game. And he generally goes by the "same state" criteria.

((This refers to some questions I posed to him in a letter. OK, the player has evidence, but suppose the GM also has evidence (this, say, in a case where the player is trying to get a game to be considered unratable by one of Steve's many criteria). There are three common standards:

1. Preponderance of Evidence. Whoever had the strongest case, regardless of how close the issue is.
2. Clear and convincing. A tougher burden!
3. Beyond a reasonable doubt. A familiar one, as it is used in the US in criminal cases.

The question here is really one of benefit of the doubt. Thus, if the player has the preponderance of evidence, but it doesn't rise to the level of "clear and convincing", does the GM (the guy with the lesser evidence) get a "benefit of the doubt", and thus its ratable, or does the player, with the stronger case, prevail?

As for local, I'm not so sure that the BNC has been using the "same state" criterion. But what I was asking was, what about the game which does n't start as local, but later becomes so. I am in a game with 3 of five players from the DC area, tho it began with 1 in 7. Would the game become unratable if it came down to just us three?

In closing, let me say that I do appreciate your comments, and I know that you are trying to help us come up with a good and fair rating system. Lively discussion between different parties helps in that end. But I think you could be a little more tactful in your discussions. Such words as "schizophrenic", "arrogant", etc. are irritating at best. And I think you could offer rebuttal just as effectively without such phraseology. When I first read your comments in DD I must admit that it did rub me the wrong way, but I realize that that is just your way of expressing things. I don't think Bob has quit foaming at the mouth, though.

((I really must apologise for "arrogant"; I don't know what possessed me. What I meant was something on the lines of "somewhat presumptuous". However, I'll stand my ground on "schizophrenic", in the popular sense of "split personality", for that is exactly what Dragon's teeth is and has. There are places where Bob's views came thru, other places where Steve's prevailed, and still others with compromises. This means that things are not always philosophically consistant. There really are two personalities with in Dragon's Teeth. Note Steve's comments below on this point.

And it is true, tact has never been my strong point, as those who know me well know. I do not intend to offend with this language. I have an unfortunate tendency to use strong language when my feelings are strong, without regard to the fact that such language may indeed be counterproductive.))

yeah, one more thing. I need to clarify one point. When we said the winner gets 34 points + 1 point/center, he gets that 1 point/center up to a maximum of 3 points. Thus, the maximum number of points for a win is 52 no matter if he wins with 18 or all 34 centers. I forgot to explain that when I outlined D.T. couple of issues ago.

Jerry Jones suggested that we simply award 52 points for a win and let it go at that on the basis that a win is a win. I did not object to doing that, but Bob most strenuously did. Bob argued that if a player was conceded a win with 12 centers that would be, in essence, "giving" him 6 points that he did not earn and, if we were going to do that, then we might as well award a total 34 points to both players in a 2-way draw; 11.3 points to each player in a 3-way draw; and so forth. I tend to agree with Bob's philosophy, but I'm not hardnosed about it.

".....6 points that he did not earn"???? I disagree; those six points were earned. Success on the diplomacy board is almost always a combination of brute force and persuasive skill. If you can persuade the others to let you "have" those centers by voting you the victor, how does that differ from actually taking them in a war? In one way you "earn" them by brute force, and in the other you "earn" them by diplomacy. To my way of thinking, these are equivalent, and should be rewarded equivalently. I would agree with Jerry's automatic 52 point proposal.

Coming up with this rating system Bob and I have had to compromise with each other on quite a few points. I have gone along with some of his pet peeves, he has accepted some of mine. But we have been able to work together and reach an accord. Betcha didn't know we had such differences, didja?

It comes as no surprise at all to me that with over a thousand people in the lobby, quite a few are going to criticize our way of rating players. Fortunately received letters indicate that there are more players who generally approve of our philosophy than there are who are ready to butcher us.

"I can't please everyone", so the old saying goes. And it was never more appropriate than when discussing a rating system. But we will give it our best shot. Thank you, Mark, for sharing your views with us. Much of the criticism we have gotten is just that--criticism. No suggestions to make it better, they just point out what they think is wrong. Period. No constructive criticism at all.

((And I too generally think that you've done a good job. The problem is, since I am the only pubber I know of who has presented comprehensive criticisms, those who don't like it write me. And those who do like it will natchurally write you or Bob!))

Next, we have Bob Sergeant's editorial in Saint George and the Dragon #37 (Feb 11, 1979) (3242 Lupine Drive Indianapolis, In 46224). StGeo is a dream to play in: Always on time, reproduction flawless, GMing superaccurate. He has recently had a series of "How to win with....", featuring multiple game winners with their prescriptions for victory, and just opened a section of a variant for 19 players. At present there are openings only in the nine player Holocaust game, two sections of which are being played in McLendon's sine. Subs are 10/\$2.50.

I have been letting Steve do the publishing of information about our new ratings since he was the originator of the idea of reviving ratings, has been spending the bulk of the time done organizing it, and is much better at organizing than I am. But in doing so I have been making Steve the butt of the criticism, which is not fair, since all the major decisions about what should and should not be done have been reached through compromise, since I'm afraid Steve and I don't agree on quite every issue.

However some things have come up which I feel I want to comment on.

First is Mark Berch's criticism on the way we are handling voted wins in which the winner has less than 15 centers. My feeling at first was to go with the tradition and regard these as a draw.

((Bob must have some other source of information that I'm not aware of. I have checked thru my files and found descriptions of "Stars and Bars", "Averaged C.P.C.R.L.", "O.D.D.", "Broddingnag", and "Rogues' Gallery". Of these, only the last treated these as a draw, and it had the fewer-than-14 criterion.))

Steve pointed out that the players definitely did not want a draw, or they would have held out for one. He suggested that we do as we are doing, giving the winner his points for winning but denying points for the rest of the players. Which is surely better than my suggestion not to rate the games at all. Steve's feeling, and mine, is that if players cannot stop a win, they can get points for surviving. But if they do not even try, they deserve nothing. And it is out contention that the players did not try sufficiently if they grant a win to 14 centers or less.

((I disagree with that sentence 100%. Totally. If I agreed with it, then of course your rating decision would make sense. I must point out that both Bob and Steve are far more experienced players than I, but they are, in my opinion, quite wrong. First off, there's the forced win. Steve seems to think that these are extremely rare, but there's no way of knowing if that's true. But even if rare, why penalize them? But more common will be something like this:

Player A has 14 centers, player B has, say, 1-4, and C & D the rest. A wants to win, C & D want to draw it, and B is in the middle. The winter builds have just been published, along with a call for a concession to A. Player A writes the following letter to B: "Dear Mr. B. I urge you to vote for the concession. If the game continues, there are one of two courses to follow. In the first, you agree to puppet for me in the manner I set out in my last letter. If that happens, I will win, for C & D cannot stop me alone. Your supply center total will be about what it is now; you will survive. Choice #2 is that you do not puppet, and throw in with them (there are no other choices). If that happens, I will wipe you out. However, since I will lack your help against C & D, since killing you will take time and some units, they will be able to form a stalemate line, leading to a three way draw. However, I will wipe you out, because I want to punish you for not cooperating, and also, to shorten the draw. What will you do? If choice #2, then we have nothing further to discuss. If #1, then please write C & D and tell them of your decision to puppet. They know the board situation, and will know that I have won. So ask them to vote for the concession, for two reasons. One, why play out the inevitable? Two, Why loose centers to me in a losing cause? Brutally Yours, Mr. A.))

Now, don't tell me that this sort of thing doesn't happen, because it does. In fact, its taken from a FTF game I was in that I remember all too well (I was C). This can be a cruel game, folks! If he goes for #2 there's no problem, the game will draw. But suppose he goes for #1, and the game is a voted win. A has fewer than 15 centers and A very clearly could have been stopped; he said so himself. And so Bob and Steve feel that B, C, and D should have their survivor points stripped away. Let's start with B. He had no chance of a draw. One way he survived and the other way he didn't. I do not see how he can be criticized for opting for survival on the board in that circumstance. OK, lets turn to C and D. Once B announces his decision, they are helpless to stop the victory. And we can hardly call this a diplomatic failure, on their part. After all, have you ever convinced someone to commit suicide when they could survive? In that actual case, when I was C I trotted out the old "Death before Dishonor" speech to B (A had made his pitch to B in front of all of us). B told me that that was a fine philosophy in real life but stunk on the gameboard. Anyhow, I see no reason to so harshly penalize C and D for bowing to the inevitable and agreeing to the vote.

And please, spare me the lines about how no rating system can cover every obscure circumstance. I'm sure that variations of the above have accounted for quite a few concession votes. My point is this: If players really have failed to produce a draw that they could have pulled off, then they are already being penalized: They are getting none of the draw points. I see no need to pile on an extra penalty, which can easily strike the undeserving.))

Mark wants to argue that there is nothing mystical about 15 centers that makes a win unstoppable, but we had to draw the line somewhere, and that's where. Any real discussion about 14, 15, 13, or 16 is hairsplitting.

((True, its the principle of the matter I'm discussing, not the number. The actual number just affects how many games will be impacted. If the games that I looked at before are representative, then the less-than-15 rule will impact about half of all voted wins.))

The other matter which is going to draw the most criticism, I feel, is our decision not to rate standbys at all. Some people feel that standbys should not be penalized in any way for what they do with a position, but should be rewarded for wins and draws. Others feel that we did not provide enough penalties to evaluate what a standby does. My feeling, and Steve's, is that the performance of a standby cannot be related to the performance of an original player. The latter has no handicaps except his particular country and his past relationships, if any, with the other players. A standby takes over a given position in a game, has some of the legacy of the preceding player in this game, in addition to his relations with the other players. I am sure that there is a system which can accomodate stanbys, but it would be so cumbersome as to occupy all of the raters time. I don't plan on making ratings a life's work. But I can't in good conscience pretend there is no difference in taking over a 5 center England in 1902 and taking over one in 1908, nor in taking over a 4 center Russia vs a 4 center Turkey. To truly evaluate a standby's performance, you need to know everything about the game, and that isn't possible.

((What about the player who takes over very early, e.g. Fall 1901. He may be little prejudiced by coming in as a standby. And the idea of playing the "entire" game without possibility of being rated might not be very appealing.))

To clear up one or two minor points Mark raised, a winner gets 3/4 points plus the number of centers he has UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 52 points. Centers over 18 are disregarded.

((That clears up one point, but there's still the matter of winners vetoing their own victories. If you have 15 centers, say, and all the others have voted for you to win, you're a fool to vote for it. Play it out and get the extra three points!))

And a country is considered eliminated when the player of record drops, no matter how many centers he has when he drops. This is because we are rating the performance of the players, not of countries. If a player drops when he is stabbed, rather than trying to hold on, he is penalized. We hope that this will reduce the number of drops. "

((I am not hopeful; I suspect that those who drop are uninterested in ratings, and are not good enough players to have generated good ratings in the first place. Incidentally, what about the player who drops out when a game is transferred? Perhaps he feels that the game has just gotten too stale, or claims that he was never notified, or was unwilling to play even one season with the new GM. Do these constitute extenuating circumstances in a dropout? I'm not sure.))

Coming up next is a letter from Fred Davis, Publisher of **DIPLOMAG** and **BUSHWACKER**, which I'm not too familiar with these days (1427 Clairidge Road Baltimore, Md 21207)
Fred Davis 16 February 1979:

I agree with your points of disagreement with the Dragon's Teeth rating system. To insist that other survivors will not receive any credit when the winner in a voted concession has less than 15 centers is arbitrary and stupid. I can remember in game 1972AK when we agreed to concede the game to France (John Boyer) when he had only 12 centers

centers. There were some very good reasons for doing so, which would not show up in the supply center chart. I, as England, finished second with 8 centers, and I heartily supported the decision. Only someone who was playing in that game, or the GM, knew the true inside story. There was an emotionally unstable fellow playing Russia who was writing vile and castigating letters about John and I, which made the continuance of the game unsuitable, so we agreed to an ending.

I also agree that a resignation should be treated differently from a dropout, and this should not be related to the number of centers owned. I could agree to treating a one-Center drop-out as not being inflicted with a penalty, simply because of the hopelessness of a 1-center position. But anyone who drops out should receive the 5 point penalty.

...Rather than making the points vary in relation to centers, perhaps there could be a flat 34 points awarded for a conceded (voted) victory, and a higher figure, say 40, for a Rulebook victory...

Correction. Konrad Baumeister is not trying to become Miller Number Custodian. Nobody is threatening Robt. Sacks in any way, shape or form. Robt. can go on issuing Miller Numbers for as long as he likes, to whomever he likes. What is happening in the variant hobby is that an entirely new classification, called the Variant Numbers, has been worked up, based on initial work done by Hartley Patterson in England, and Conrad von Metske, Rod Walker, Dick Vedder and myself in the states. The final work is being done by Der Garvey of Cork Ireland, who has computerized all of the data on some 550 variants. The new variant Numbers will have two parts. One part indicates the nature of the board on which the variant is played, such as Regular Board, Europe Extended, Global, Space, etc. The second indicates the type of rules used, such as regular, Special combat, Magic, etc. It is hoped that the announcement of the Variant Number reclassification of these variants will be in shape for publication within the next 45 days. The several Variant Bank Custodians will adopt these Variant Numbers for their internal use, in place of the old Miller Numbers. Then, there will probably be three Variant Number Custodians; one for N.A., one for the continent of Europe; and one for the British Isles, Australia, and the rest of the world. I believe the VNC's for the latter two posts have already been selected. No decision has yet been made, as of this writing, on the VNC for North America. Baumeister is one of several people under consideration for the post.

((Boy, that sure was one big correction. One thing that wasn't mentioned is why a new numbering system had to be created. Once its set up, there will be two competing numbering systems, and GMs will have to choose which, or both, to use. From time to time the variant hobby polarizes itself into pro- and anti-Sacks camps. It seems this is about to begin again, albeit in a different context than the last time. And now, for a change of pace, a letter from a non-publisher:))

Mitch Bailes, Feb 10, 1979:

Issue #18 was fairly interesting. The best part of the issue was the British material. It is striking that the ideas and principles of play that receive almost universal acceptance in the U.S. don't seem to be followed at all by the British. I'd like to see more British material whenever it fits in with the themes of your issues.

((Will do. Actually, I got very little response to #18, perhaps because it was about the most specialized issue imaginable (the replacement player). I believe that if more Americans and Canadians received British issues, and vice versa, the cross-fertilization of ideas would benefit both. I wish I had more British subbers. In this regard, I'm afraid that I must withdraw my recommendation made earlier for Ethel the Frog, which has not appeared in many months.))

I enjoyed #19, altho for totally different reasons. I wouldn't want you to use that format for every issue, but it worked as a one-shot. It is refreshing to see that someone attempts to stay in contact with all the important figures in the hobby. It is clear that there is no unity within the hobby, so I'm glad that there is at least

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a zine to tell us what's going on. I recently subbed to Brutus Bulletin and Claw & Fang, and I have had a sub to Lies, Deceits, and Nefarious Schemes, but only your zine seemed to cover the issue of Diplomacy World from all sides.

((A one shot it was, altho with this issue I guess you'd call it a two-shot. For better or worse, this zine will not be becoming "a zine to tell us what's going on". This was a special case, a big story that I was very much involved in, and cared about very much. If another special case arose, I think I'd do the same. So I guess that another type of DIPLOMACY DIGEST has emerged: In addition to theme and potpourri issues, these're special issues, now embracing 14/15, 19, and 20. But again, DD is not going to be a news-zine. Articles are and will be the life blood here. The Zine Column has become a regular feature, tho I do not guarantee its appearance every issue. It will be my vehicle for commenting on what I see in other zines, for detailed zine reviews, etc.))

You do seem to overstate your opinion a couple of times in the issue. I agree with your opinion on mutual subs, but I feel that your dissection of Rowland's piece was a little strong. First of all, inserting numbers into his piece didn't work very well, and your points didn't always match the numbers.

((Rowland is a big boy, and he's used a much sharper tone in Warmonger than I used in #19. I'm not sure which numbers you feel don't match; they seem to match to me, but then my perspective is different than yours. On the basis of your comment, tho, I have gone to the break-it-up approach for this issue.))

Oh, by the way, I think that I can explain the 2¢ figure cited in the article. Ordinarily, if a publisher produces a double issue, it exceeds the 1 oz limit, and he must pay 28¢ postage. The cost of two ordinary issues 30¢-28¢=2¢. Of course, that doesn't apply to you because your issues are reduced by the printer. And speaking of reduction, I wish you would cut down on the zine of your DIPLOMACY DIGEST ((logo)), which in Issue #18 consumed about 1/3 of the first page.

((Sheesh, my one space-extravagance and he wants me to cut it back. I hope he doesn't notice the extra 1/2 line I insert between paragraphs. Seriously, tho, the logo, which takes just over 1/2 a page, is not out of line with what appears elsewhere. Most zines, in fact, use 1/3 or 1/2 page (depending on how the zine is folded) just for the addressing information, which here normally goes on an unnumbered page, and thus is not part of your 11 or 12 pages. And I cram more words per page than virtually any other US dipzine.))

Returning to your articles, I think your review of Dragon's Teeth gave too much objection to a couple of details and too little review of the rating system itself.

((I had space limitations to deal with here, as both other topics ranked higher. What I concentrated on I did not consider to be "details", but rather, the weak link s in an otherwise strong chain. Plus there's the matter of reader interest. How much of "and another thing which I like is" would you care to plow thru? And how useful would that be? And as it turned out, its just as well I didn't go into such matters as their handling of standbys, "cause it got changed.))

Your comment on editorial responsibility for reprints was interesting. I think that you do assume some responsibility but by naming the original source you cover yourself. Finally, let me say that in spite of the fact that I offered some criticism you're doing a good job. Keep it up. ((Thanx!!))

P.S....I think that you went a little overboard in your statement about Konrad Baumeister. It might be a good idea to warn him yourself, and have a few influential people suggest that he control his activities, but to state that he's fast becoming burnout material" is unfair to him. Making public statements like that will do no good and may make you some enemies, or so it seems to me. You can think whatever you want, but you don't have to publish it. I am surprised someone so interested in hobby unity would publish so divisive a statement. Keep taking strong stands on hobby

Doug Beyerlein is in the final stages of winding down his orphanzine EFGLIART, so I guess there's no real point in going into sub information.

Doug Beyerlein Feb 10, 1979

The whole debate about trades versus mutual subs is rather pointless. A publisher should be able to do what he wants regardless of what others think. When the hobby was small it was easiest to just tell another publisher that rather than each subscribing to the others zine that they would trade zines. But those days are long gone and today it is almost impossible to keep track of the coming and going of publishers with whom you were trading. The mutual sub sounds like an excellent solution. Probably the real reason that some are against the mutual sub idea is that they are afraid that other publishers will not subscribe to their zines and they can't afford ~~to~~ the cost of a subscription to all of the zines that they would like to get. And in fact I know quite well that some ~~publishers~~ publishers have started zines just because of all of the trades they could get. This type of publisher rarely lasts more than 12 issues and is a curse to the hobby. Maybe the idea of mutual subs will help to eliminate this sort of behavior.

((When you say "A publisher should be able to do what he wants regardless of what toehrs think" I say AMEN! But for that to happen, publishers have to see the relative advantages of mutual subs, which is why I (and John Leeder) have tried to make an issue of it, to draw attention, and thereby inform. But beyond that, pubbers have to see that it is respectable to do this. Unfortunately, there is a lot of peer pressure to trade. As one publisher (who must remain anonymous because his letter was marked "not for publication") wrote me just this week: "Most of the oldtimers in the hobby consider it "unfannish" not to trade."))

Your past and future discussion of DW was interesting, although some of your information does not agree with mine. I talked with Jerry Jones on Thursday evening and he said that he had just heard from AH that they ~~would~~ will continue the subsidy. Also, I was a bit surprised by the DW circulation figures: gamestore sales looks high, US subs looks low, and overseas subs are definitely too high. ~~Even~~ The total looks okay, though. If anyone cares I can check out the actual figures as I have been keeping the mailing list for DW for the past year (mailing labels are computer printed), but of course Jerry also has access to all of these numbers.

I have to agree with you that Conrad ~~did~~ handled the transfer of DW in a very unprofessional manner. Interestingly enough, I wrote to a number of publishers about this and none reprinted my comments in their zines. I suspect that all of them ~~felt~~ feel sorry that Conrad could not continue with DW and didn't want to say anything negative. I agree, but only to a point. Conrad has to take responsibility for his actions and that doesn't mean apologizing after he has screwed something up. And of course this isn't the first time that Conrad has done something like this. The really unfortunate part of it all is that Conrad is so talented that he doesn't know when to say no to opportunity. This results in him getting over committed to too many activities. Ultimately something has to give. He gets to feeling guilty about not ~~subscribing~~ being able to handle everything. Things then go from bad to worse until someone else steps in to correct the situation. It wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for the fact that Conrad is in every other way such a lovable guy. I just hope that he starts learning from his ~~stupid~~ mistakes.

On this subject of getting over committed, I am really ~~worried~~ concerned about Jerry keeping LDNS while handling DW. As soon as I heard about this decision I wrote him advising against it. I hope that he takes my advise prior to burn-out.

The last item that I want to comment on regarding DW is the idea of a rating system. If I get a vote I vote for the Calhamer Point Count Listing. It is simple and produces a relatively short list of player scores. And I don't believe that it is realistically possible to keep any other rating system up to date for a long period of time.

On this topic of rating systems I recently read about the Dragon's Teeth Rating System in The Dragon and the Lamb #23. I agree with your comments. I also think that the system is too complicated to be kept up for any length of time. And finally I dislike the idea of a rating system only rating games that have finished in the past four years. We have records on all regular finished games back to the start of the hobby in 1963. Sure it is a lot of work to go back that far to rate games, but why shouldn't a long time player like myself receive credit for games played eight or ten years ago? A win then should certainly be worth as much as a win two years ago.

((On the subject of the work involved, I'll just quote from Doug's Washington Reports, #5 (15 April 1973), a zine devoted entirely to rating systems. This comes from John McCallum, the inventor of ODD, and in a sense the grandfather of ratingsmasters: "Any idiot can devise a Ratings List. The work involved comes in maintaining the things once they have been invented. With the present rate of game production ((its even higher now)) just maintaining your records will easily consume several hours every week. Not this week, and next week, but 50 weeks a year. Do you have that kind of time to spare?"))

I found #19 to be one of the most interesting issues that you have produced. And I think that the reason for that is because it is all you with no reprints. I am probably biased against reprints since one time or another I read most of them in their original form, but what it really comes down to is that you are a better writer than most in the hobby (however, your typing could stand a world of improvement). And if your ego can still expand without exploding, you and Jerry Jones are the two best people to happen ~~to~~ to the hobby in the past five years. Youk two (and Bob Hartwig in his own way with IDA) are the brightest hope for the continued growth and stature of the hobby. So lets see more and not less of your writing in the future!

((I am a lousy typist, a truly rotten speller, and an ineffective proofreader!))

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ble prospective new GMs.

Enjoyed your description of Europe, but again, that's a once-in-a-lifetime thing. Please don't get into the habit of filling the zine with last Thursday's dinner menu.

((Funny you should mention last Thursday. We started off with a sharp little curried Radish soup, accompanied with bread made with the leaves of...oh..sorry))

I agreed with just about all your comments on the rating system -- I hope Steve and Bob take them into account; I hadn't realized that we were "dependent" on so few up-to-date systems.

((While "dependent" was clearly the wrong word, Steve tells me that one of his prime motivations was the fact that he got more mail from his players on ratings than any other single topic.))

Lee Kendter, Sr. has answered my questions on his need-a-game list. Lee publishes Why Me? (4347 Benner Street, Phila., Pa 19135; subs 10/\$3.50). He has game openings, tho they will be in a subzine, if that matters to anyone. WM is a real family affair, with Lee Jr gming three games and doing some of the publishing duties, and son Bill gming two of the variants. WM is a very prompt zine to play in.

Lee Kendter, Sr February 10, 1979

I intend to cover openings in both regular and variant games. However, Jerry Jones said that Robert Sacks might be running a list for the variant games. If so, I'd like to contact him (Sacks) before including variants in my list.

I will not keep anyone's name on the list unless they tell me to. My feeling on this is that some of the people on the list might get all the people they want from being listed once.

The list will appear in D.W. I've already coordinated that with Jerry.

issues if you want, but don't follow other's paths by clashing over personalities. Maybe I'm overreacting, but if you want my opinion, be careful!

((I really blew it on that phrase; I meant to say "becoming burnout potential" And you're right, that belonged in a letter, not in the zine. Fortunately, Konrad did not take offense, as is seen in a snippet from Konrad's letter which follows. He publishes Eggnog (11416 Parkview Lane, Hales Corners, Wisc 53130; Subs 10/\$3.50) on a monthly basis. There are no openings, altho a demo game, with analysis by John Boyer is being organized at present. Konrad has been running a series on his favorite openings))

Konrad Baumeister February 10, 1979:

.....Don't worry about my burning out. People constantly tell me in other areas that I'm one of the most energetic people that they know. Surely I can handle this. I have a feeling that I won't get the orphan project, nor the Archives, which will suit me fine. On the other hand, there are areas where I'm desperately needed (truthfully---I can't always be modest), and where I will stick my fingers in the pie. And I don't like Dragon's Teeth at all, since it shortchanges standbys. In almost all of my games, I entered as as standby."

Next up is Randolph Smyth, publisher of Fol Si Fie (275 - 3rd Street S.E. #314 Medicine Hat, Alberta Canada T1A 0G4; Subs 10/\$3). There are openings in regular Diplomacy. FSF is a good source of news on the Canadian scene, and Randolph is one of the very few pubbers who are both top players, and who write on play-of-the-game matters for their own zine. His specialities seem to be alliances and stabbing, a somewhat complimentary combination.

Randolph Smyth February 14, 1979:

First of all, you've worded my position on subs vs trades on page 5 rather more harshly than I would have, altho it is factually correct. I'm not too sure on your definition of "fannish" (or conversely, "unfannish") but it makes me sound like a misanthropic down-in-the-mouth curmudgeon; similarly, that Issue X is "none of the subscriber's damn business." I know that I always sound that way in the zine (FSF) but that's only because I'm a semiprofessional grumbler, and nobody takes it too seriously. In any case, the impression that I don't care what my subscribers think ain't necessarily so. Really, tho, I thought I knew what "fannish" meant, and it didn't have anything to do with fiscal policies.

((What I had based my comments about Randolph on was this which appeared in #1057 "...what beef do the subscribers have? They have no business subscribing at all if they don't think that the price is right. What business is it of theirs what the publisher does with a few extra issues he may run off?" On the other hand, he has often solicited readers' reaction to what appears in the zine, and made it clear that their wishes would certainly be taken into consideration.

As for "fannish", I'm not certain that I know exactly what it means, but it tends to be of or relating to how they do things in science-fiction fandom, which I have very little knowledge of. My statement was based on Lipton's comments that his sub/trade decision was made exclusively on fannish grounds, so that it would be related to fiscal policies.))

Moving on, you asked for feedback on the subject matter of this issue. I wouldn't want to see the zine become a news-zine on a regular basis, but on this occasion it's a timely service: certainly I was exceedingly confused about the exact situation with Diplomacy World until now...I'd barely gotten used to the swith from W&T to Conrad and now---

...As far as I know Jerry Jones is still handling all American orphans, and I won't be getting involved with them unless he's unable to handle all his recent commitments. Per Capita, it would be tougher for me to get U.S. orphans rehoused since my contacts south of the border are limited --- I wouldn't know where to turn for relief

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