

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

Issue #92  
July 1985  
Ethics, again!

Mark L Berch  
492 Naylor Place  
Alexandria VA 22304

Subs: 10/\$4.50  
Europe: 2/E1  
Circulation: 98

The results of the 1985 Runestone Poll are now out. The most startling statistic is that 265 people voted! This is more than the best two previous years (1981 and 1984) combined, and is the highest total for any poll conducted on either side of the Atlantic. One reason is surely the higher visibility the poll got this year from the controversy touched off by Bruce's opponents. Oddly, the Great Poll Controversy of 1982 didn't seem to have that effect, as the number of voters took quite a drop that year. Another factor is surely the tremendous energy that Bruce brought to this project (or, as Bruce put it, "I ... probably made a first class pest of myself"). And it may be that some people were turned off by some of the cynical arguments made against Bruce in this.

In retrospect, it was very fortunate that Bruce decided (and announced) in advance that all those who voted would appear on the list of voters. Some people would simply not have believed 265 voters, and with Bruce unable to produce a list to substantiate the number, the hobby would have had another one of those intractable arguments which has bedeviled it recently. But as things stand, Pat Conlon will be available to verify any challenged results --- a service never before available in the past.

At any rate, I believe (predict) that this controversy has ended. Oh, I imagine those of his enemies who are still around next Spring will go thru the motions of another public boycott, but it won't mean anything. The main pragmatic argument was that it would be a flop because pubbers would not plug it and hobbyists would not vote. But at least 32 pubbers did plug it. The interesting thing is that even for zines that had a pubber hostile to Bruce, turnout was often good. A good example of this is Magus. Its pubber, Steve Langley has been very hostile to Bruce. He's said recently, "the very fact that it is you receiving the votes has ruined the poll in so far as its having any merit!" But 38 people voted for Magus, and these were surely almost entirely subbers, since the vast bulk of Magus' votes were in the 7-10 range.

The top finishers were 1. Voice of Doom 2. No Fixed Address 3. Europa Express 4. Snafu! 5. Excelsior 6. Sleepless Knights 7. Perelandriá 8. DIPLOMACY DIGEST 9. The Diplomat 10. Magus. The zines were scored in two ways. The first was the modified mean, very similar to last year. The other is new: Preference Matrix Score. Here, individual zines are compared. For example, 8 people preferred DD to Magus, 13 people preferred the reverse, and 4 listed us equal. That counted as a defeat for DD. This was repeated for all the zines on the main list (71 zines made the main list), and my wins minus my losses gave me a raw score. The preference and mean scores were then combined to give an overall score. The preference matrix has been used for many years in England, and was used, I think in this year's Freshman Zine Poll too. I think its a  
(turn to middle of page 12)

# LETTERS

Alright, lets get right to the letters. We'll begin with the undisputable truth, and then work downwards from there.

Jeff Breidenstein: "Of all the Diplomacy zines and newsletters that I get, yours is the one that I enjoy most."

Mark Coldiron: "((DD)) is my favorite zine (besides my own, that is)."

Terry Suitor: "I have basically enjoyed reading DD the past couple of years. My only complaint is having too much space and effort being put on the Kathy Byrne-Bruce Linsey feud. Quite frankly, I wish all the pubbers would stop printing anything about it for at least a year..." ((Preference noted; I'm sure many of my subbers feel the same way. Unlike a number of other zines, I have never had the full panapoly of Linsey/Byrne issues aired here. I have by and large stuck to the "Francine Letter" issue. I picked this one because it was the most incendiary, and serious, of Kathy's many charges. With her offering proof, it seemed ideal for a put-up-or-shut-up approach. I honestly expected Kathy to either produce the actual letter, and we could see for ourselves whether it was sick or not, or some face-saving way would be found to back off the entire charge. To my great surprise, neither occurred. As a result, the discussion, which I will not arbitrarily cut off, goes on, and I will continue to report it here. To be honest, tho, if I had known that this would still be going on in Summer 1985, when I wrote my original editorial in September 1984, I don't think I would have editorialized on the subject in DD in the first place. But I did, and I will bring you updates on this particular issue, until it ends.))

This next letter requires a bit of an introduction. I have corresponded with a number of Kathy's friends about various aspects of the Linsey-Byrne feud. When the subject turns to the "Francine Letter", I routinely suggest: Why don't you ask her, and she what she says. I have no real expectations for this approach, but I do it anyhow. But then, Lo and Behold, comes The Man With Gumption: Don Del Grande

**It's time for the news - the answer to the \$64 question - I asked Kathy where the famous "letter" was, like you asked me to. (I even noted the date and time - 7:07 PM EDT, 7/2) Kathy's answer: she gave you the answer a year ago February, and she won't repeat herself. Also, don't write to Kathy; you and Bruce have had your names brought by Kathy to the New York Postal Authorities.**

**After this, she told me to give you this direct quote from her: "Mark Berch is always right. Believe everything he says, and you too can get a lifetime subscription to DD just like Bruce Linsey. (Kathy further added:) She has no time for assholes, and that includes you and Linsey (and she refuses to elaborate on that)."**

**Remember - these are Kathy's words. You asked the question; she gave you the answer. And speaking of questions, where were you at ORIGINS?**

Feb 1984 is indeed when Bruce recollects writing the letter, which he claims was not "sick". But Kathy has never told me what happened to the letter, not then or later; I didn't even hear about it till summer. And how did Kathy remain on such good terms with Bruce for months afterwards --- even as late as early May, she sent him a cheery postcard from her vacation in the southwest! If a 27 year old man had written a "sick" letter to my pre-teen daughter, I'd have blown my stack. It would be my responsibility AS A PARENT to make sure that this didn't happen again. Kathy is a good parent, I'm sure, and so if she really did think the letter was sick, I'm sure she'd have "read the riot act" to him right then and there. But Kathy acted as if nothing had happened --- and those actions speak louder than her subsequent words. Also, if whatever happened to the letter had happened by Feb, how is it that Kathy offered in Sept, 7 months later, to give the proof to anyone who asked? Unless the offer were insincere when it was made, whatever happened couldn't have happened by Feb. And how is it that Kathy told me in 1984, she says, but in 1985, John Caruso says that its all personal business? How did it become personal business in the interim? Kathy's story overall is just flatly unbleivable.

....So, in this version, "asshole" Berch gets told this information, but friend Don Del Grande is not. If I were Kathy's friend, I'd be pretty insulted by that kind of treatment. And I'd be pretty ticked off about the heavy sarcasm in that quote. And I'd find giving me a flatly unbelievable story awfully hard to take. And I'll say this: If Bruce made a regular practice of treating his friends that way, he wouldn't have a single one left. Not One.

I was a little concerned about that reference to the Postal Authorities, so I called the main headquarters of the USPS here in Washington. I got the lady who deals with refused mail, and explained the situation. She said basically that there was no such procedure. If you don't want mail, you refuse it, but that's as far as things go. The only exception is if there are threats involved, but of course that does not arise in the case of unopened mail. I asked if perhaps they did things differently in New York. She laughed, and said no. It's possible, I suppose, that she didn't know what she was talking about, but that's unlikely, I think.....))

((Next up here is Chuff Afflerbach))

Konrad's article on forged letters gave me a strong sense of *deja vu*, as if I had read it before. Isn't it reprinted in Bruce Linsey's Supernova? That was my introduction to the world of Diplomacy, so I was well prepared for--shall we say paranoid about?--the inevitable forgeries I would receive. I took elaborate precautions to prevent my own letters from being imitated. One player always received his correspondence from me typewritten on company stationery, another got handwritten letters on a legal pad, the next were on plain paper but with a different typewriter, and so on through six separate variations. An unwitting forger would be caught in his own trap, I was sure.

I followed this pattern consistently through two whole calendar years, until those of us left were sufficiently familiar with each other's style to make a convincing forgery a virtual impossibility. I had also realized by then that the tactic of forging letters was so rare that my efforts were pointless. Only another novice would likely be duped by such a stunt; I couldn't imagine the experts I faced being taken in by any attempt at such trickery. I would probably take these same precautions at the start of any postal game, but I would not carry it on nearly as long--just enough to get to know the styles of the players involved (and make my own style apparent.) After that, such efforts would seem rather transparent.

A case in point is my first game as a standby, which happened at this same time in my Diplomatic career. I came in as Russia and secured an alliance with Germany against a solid Turkey-Italy team. Things were well into mid-game and rapidly developing into a stalemate, so I decided one of those cute tricks I had read about would break up the opposition. I wrote Turkey (who had not even bothered to write me) and thanked him for the offer of a deal but I just didn't think trading Sevastopol for Rumania was a wise move. The effect was immediate: I received a telegram denying authorship and urging an immediate collect phone call to discuss the document. An experienced Diplomat might have licked his chops at the prospect, but I panicked. He was calling my bluff, and I had no letter. What would I tell him? I couldn't possibly produce a convincing forgery because I had no letters from Italy either. So I clammed up. Even worse, I tried another trick. I wrote a postcard to Turkey, thanking him for the alliance, and wrote a postcard to Italy asking him for one. Then I mailed them both to Italy. That turn they both hit me with everything they had, not even bothering to guard against the other. They probably thought I was a complete imbecile, and I

probably was. Turkey resigned the next turn, no doubt in disgust, and his replacement offered me a deal. I agreed, and he took Sevastopol with Italy's support. After several turns of trench warfare we finally settled on a four-way draw.

As for the question of signing a blank check upon which orders magically appear, I agree that these aren't real orders at all. A GM who allows them (knowing in advance) should be prepared for the storm that will follow. I like your argument against this practice, but it is no more than sophisticated sophistry whereby you take a gut reaction and construct a case to justify it. Brux, it would seem, likes the subtleties of such tactics and seeks them out for the thought-provoking dilemmas they inspire. You, on the other hand prefer the black-and-white that makes possible the work of the archivist and patent lawyer. I, too, am of the latter type. I don't lie well, so I have learned to play my game as straight as I can and rely on the deviousness of others to work in my favor. The more honest I am, the more likely my opponents are to believe that one necessary lie when I have to tell it.

((The idea of using 6 different letter formats is not one that I'd heard before. Its a more covert, and therefore more useful version of putting a code word on the letter, with a different word for each of the other 6 players. Your method also has a potential effectiveness in a simple case of letter passing. If Germany passes your letter to France, France may well think that Germany is trying to pass a forgery, which would really backfire in Germany's face!

I do not agree that only a novice would be duped by a forgery. I think that any player without a distinctive writing style, who tends to write short letters, and who does not write in longhand is at some risk of a forgery if another player is willing to go to the effort. Getting the right postmark may be a barrier, since the "I'm visiting my wife's brother right now...." ploy is going to raise suspicions in some people right away. Even a handwritten letter can be forged well, if you can do the signature. You would need to cut up old letters for words, prepare a Xerox, and sign that. For greater authenticity, you would prepare a tracing, which would convert the Xerox into an original. I suspect doing a good tracing would require a fair amount of practice. The easiest person, to forge, tho probably the least useful, -is someone who has just been called to standby for a position. Its been my observation that most players do not write at all until they've actually got the position (and sometimes not even then....). You'll have no idea what his writing style is like, but, you hope, no one else will either. Anyone could be duped by that type of forgery, since there really is no reason to suspect a thing, unless he knows the person.

I don't think I'm really constructing an argument to justify a gut reaction, altho it may appear that way. I don't normally operate on the basis of "gut reactions" either in or out of the hobby. I'd like to think I prefer a pragmatic approach, and I try to look at what certain practices will lead to.))

Dan Stafford: The articles on forged letters was good, as was the one on the FOE 21 affair. I suppose I should tell you about my SLEAZIEST trick in a dip game. So here goes: It was a postal game, a 10-day deadline one being run by a midwestern GM. I was playing E with a F ally. I was finishing Russia while my ally dealt with Italy --- Germany being long gone. On a certain Winter move the French player had 2 builds coming with all his home centers open. With such a short deadline, we often didn't have time to exchange even one round of letters, so I assumed he would build F Mar and an army, so I wrote anti-F conditional orders in the event of a F Bre build just as a precaution. But for tactical reasons (which made no sense to anyone but him) the French player built A Mar, F Bre, triggering my anti-stab orders. His spring orders revealed, too late that he was still attacking Italy.

Well, we got that straightend out, both of us realizing that it was a misunderstanding, and we were ready to resume our alliance. But I could hardly stand to have my

fleets sailing back and forth so I decided to go ahead and move into French waters. The fall move saw me in Eng and NAT with builds coming. France had continued against Italy and had a build due to an annihilation. Then, a few days before the W/S deadline, the French player called me. He explained that he had moved sud denly, and the adjudication hadn't caught up with him yet. He was totally unaware that I had stabbed him for real! So when he asked me to give him all the unit locations I saw my big chance! I gave him his own and Austria's correctly, but fibbed a little on mine. I told him the positions of where they would have been had I done what I said. He then apparently submitted --- probably even called in his orders without confirming the information that I had given him.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the end of it. Someone suggested a separation of seasons so I didn't get to walk into a couple of French centers as I had hoped. All I got for my trouble was the French rebuild in Mar instead of, say, Bre. But that was something ((that was quite a bit!))

As you might have guessed, France was more than a little steamed. He complained that I had given him false information and the GM agreed to a replay of that Winter season. That announcement got me a little steamed, so I challenged the GM, requesting an Ombudsman. Your name was bandied about, but cooler heads prevailed. Finally, John Michalski ((not the GM; I assume he was the Ombudsman called)) ruled in my favor and the Winter builds were allowed to stand.

I was not able to convert the situation into a victory, however, as all the publicity, for which the GM must share some blame, helped forge an unbreakable alliance between F & A. The game ended in a 3-way draw. I consider my actions to have been completely legal and ethical, but F and A didn't see it that way at all. ((If I had been Austria, I'd have told France what an unethical stunt that was too. But if you had called me as an Ombudsman, I would have ruled exactly as Michalski did; its not even a close question. Players are entitled to lie to each other about whatever they please. Just ask Shep Rose.))

((Actually, I'm glad you told that story, because it reminded me of a ploy I pulled in my early days as a player, and I had totally forgotten about it until you wrote. In a sense, it was the mirror image of this situation. I don't remember the game or the details. My ally, or semi-ally, had made a fairly threatening move, but had written me afterwards, giving me a fairly plausible explanation of why he did it. But was it the truth? I could guard against the possible, and rather serious stab, but at a cost of bringing my main campaign to a complete halt. I agonized at length. Suddenly, an idea! I called the guy, said I had been traveling, been away longer than I expected, and needed the results because I'd be away for at least another week. I didn't have the GM's number, or he didn't answer the fone (I forget which). I figured that if his explanation were a lie, that he'd sieze the opportunity and lie to me about where his piece was. But if his explanation was accurate, he'd probably tell me the truth. He did indeed tell me the truth, and I decided to beleive him --- which turned out to be the right choice. I had been leaning toward a more aparnoid view before the call, so it probably did make a difference in the game. I know --- its not very sophisticated, but sometimes you have to go on a very little clue))

"Last Call" was something else: Many of the schemes you described there are what I consider to be the FTF equivalent of deception of the GM. I refer specifically to all the ones that call for submitting 2 sets of orders to the acting GM and "helping" him find the correct one. Those schemes are not "ethically questionable practices", but are unquestionably illegal and should result in a player's removal from a game or tournament. At first I thought you totally remiss for printing such an article, but after some further thought, I wish to commend you for printing it as now I will know what kind of tricks to be on the lookout for. ((See the next letter. I think most people who would do such a thing would be able to think of many if not most of these scams themselves. And those who would not will be on their guard)).

That was a pretty strong charge that Kathy Byrne "made up different versions

((of the Francine letter)) for different people." Do you have any proof of that? No? Perhaps it just seems like the most plausible explanation for the situation as you see it. So why is it that others are raked over the coals whenever they, we, use a similar argument.....? ((That is indeed exactly as I "see it", and I call things as I see them. I pointed to contradictions in my original editorial in #84, and since then, the contradictions have increased, especially with the statements of Larzelere and Martin which I referred to last issue. There's no way of proving it rigorously because all those who have called the letter "sick" (or have used similar language) have been careful to refrain from saying exactly what was "sick" (or whatever) about it. So I can only point to the contradictions in the generalized descriptions. I consider it not only the most plausible, but the only plausible explanation. If Kathy (or anyone else for that matter) would like to propose an alternative explanation, DD always provides for a right of reply. As for why people are raked over the coals, had you given a specific example of such raking, I'd be able to give you a specific response.))

Name Withheld on Request: Golly, my first anonymous letter! But I don't want to take chances. Turning in two sets of orders in a FTF game is I'm sure ethically questionable, but its legit to me, and I've done it. We play a very loose game (played, actually. I haven't seen the gang since I graduated). Poepple would do incredibly dishonest things. You couldn't touch another player's orders, but that was about all. Postal players shouldn't be so high and mighty. Who makes a big deal if someone sends in two sets of orders? I heard of a game where a guy sent in an early set of dated orders, and then much later, a set of undated orders. The GM was just a kid; if he had any HRs I'm sure it didn't cover that. Maybe he couldn't make up his mind, and he figured that if the GM decided on the "wrong" one, he'd try to talk the GM out of his choice, and if the GM picked the "right" set, then he'd just shut up. Is that so different than "helping" a guy reading the orders find the one you want him to find? The "confederate" idea never occurred to me, but then I played with a pretty similar group each week, and something like that could only be done once --- and then that guy would always be on his guard! In my junior year, we played a pretty weird game. We'd meet just after lunch every Sat (or sometimes Sunday). We started 7 games at the same time --- I got to play each country once. You'd play SO1 in the first game, then SO1 in the second game, then SO1 in the third game, etc. We'd only play one season per day (plus builds or retreats, etc, if needed). It would only take about 4 hours or so, but it was utterly exhausting, because you'd have to keep switching mental gears. Then a week later, you'd play the FO1 seasons. Of course, by then, no one could remember what alliances had been formed the week before, so it was almost like starting a new game --- and you know how busy that can be. Poepple would then not only lie about what they'd do in FO1, but they'd lie about whatever it was they had agreed to the week before in the pre-SO1 negotiations. Believe me, its a very intense way of playing Diplomacy. It took an entire semester to finish the games, and even then we had to speed them up a bit by playing a whole game year some afternoons. It eliminated the luck-of-the-country factor, but several of us overdosed on Diplomacy as a result. I did a double order trick more than once during that marathon, especially late in the day when people were getting tired and their guard would be down. Eventually, I got caught. I decided what the hell, could I get away with three sets of orders? No I didn't. Its a shame, because I had sworn to myself that if I could get away with that, I'd swear off the trick. But I didn't, and my pieces were nailed for that season. I never had the nerve to try it again. ((We've had something similar, a seven-player, 7-game tournament, done very rarely. But it has the same deadline structure as a regular game. There was quite a debate or controversy at the time as to whether this was a regular or variant game ( or rather, set of games). The tim BNC, which I think may have been Rod Walker, ruled that it was regular. But I digress. ((Next up is Melinda Holley))

- 1) Your statement on Page 21 "At that time, neither of them sent me a courtesy copy" is TOTALLY FALSE. It may have slipped your mind (certainly you should have stated it in DD #90/91) that last January you told me you had not received a copy of my Nov.

1984 mass mailing. I told you that I had sent you a copy when I did the mailing. I offered to send you a second copy if you wished. You did request this and I sent you you a second copy. To be accurate, you should have stated that you did not receive a copy of my mass mailing until you had informed me of such. It would also have been correct and proper to explain that I told you I had sent you an original mailing in November 1984. Since you and I had this conversation early this year and you didn't challenge my statement then, I find it hard to understand why you're challenging it now. Do you have some evidence to prove your assertion that I didn't send you a copy of my mailing last November? If you do, I'd like to see it. If you don't, I'd like to see a retraction.

- 2) Regarding the Caruso Letter (or "CL" as you insist on calling it), as I have repeatedly told you...you've given me no evidence to change my mind. All you've given me is your unsupported word. If you've gotten no where in changing my mind, I submit that it's because you've given me no evidence to support your statement. Therefore, the fault (if there is such) for my not changing my mind is yours. You have to provide proof (more than your unsupported word). As I have repeatedly told you, I will print no retraction until I see some reason for doing so. Provide proof.
- 3) "I think Melinda knows that her entire point would disintegrate if her readers heard the other side..." My readers? Mark, I'm not Dear Abby. This may surprise you, but your denial is common knowledge. You're not revealing anything that the hobby in general doesn't already know. Certainly people in the hobby closely following this feud know it. Do you believe you exist in some vacuum?
- 4) Your jab about my ethics is pathetic. You, Mark Berch, are hardly someone to raise the banner of ethical behavior. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones...particular at someone who will throw them back. Your conduct in attempting to silence Robert Sacks at the DipCon '82 meeting as well as attempting to "pack the house" to prevent valid and normal discussion and comment regarding financial disbursements and rotation of DipCon sites is definitely not a sterling example of ethical behavior. I suggest you clean up your own act before attempting to label someone else as unethical.

(1. I retract my statement. You are entirely correct; you did tell me that you sent a courtesy copy; I should have worded it just as you suggested. I apologize for the error. All those whose sub lapsed with 90/91 will get this issue as a "grace issue" so that they can see the retraction.

2. I cannot give you any evidence or proof that I didn't tell Bruce Linsey (or anyone) about Caruso's letter (or anything). Its not possible to prove that sort of negative --- any more than you could prove that you sent me your mass mailing last Nov. Yet, in Jan, when you told me that you had sent me the copy, I, despite the fact that it never arrived, took your word for it without proof. I was expected to, and I did. Did I tell you, to quote from your above letter, "All you've given me is your unsupported word .... you've given me no evidence....you have to provide proof .... I will print no retraction until...." and all that rot? Look at it this way, Melinda. Both of us were a victim of an incorrect statement made by the other. But neither one of us could prove it. So we were in the same boat. But look at how it was handled. You got your letter, printed in full, in the very next DD, along with my retraction. Thats what I did. And you? Tho

you never had any proof that I told Bruce about the Caruso letter, you insist on evidence that I didn't, something which is outright impossible to produce. And that, Melinda, is the difference between our publishing ethics.

3. I find this hard to believe. How could my denial have become "common knowledge"? During the many months I tried to resolve this privately, I told no one (except Bruce, who was told to keep his mouth shut). I only went public in the June issues of F and DD, and have seen no refernce to this in any zine until those issues. Do you mean that you discussed my denial privately, thus spreading the word, but refused to do it publically?

4. You weren't at the DipCon '82 meeting, and you don't have any idea of what you are talking about. The events you refer to did not exist at that meeting. The idea of me attempting to prevent a discussion of "rotation of DipCon sites" is absurd ---- I was one of those, a minority to be sure, that wanted to change the system, so why would I want to prevent discussion of it? There was no attempt to "silence Robert Sacks". He spoke on exactly what he wanted, subject to the limitation that it had to pertain to DipCon. He did indeed "comment regarding financial disbursements" (altho he didn't make a big deal about it, and no one else picked up on his comments), and no attempt was made by me (or anyone else for that matter) to stop him. My recollection is that Sacks spoke more frequently than anyone other than the Chairman. This talk about "attempting to 'pack the house'" is something that only a person who didn't attend could make. There's no way that could even be attempted. It was a big, open room, and people were free to wander in and out. The meeting was run rather informally, and if someone wanted to make a motion, all they had to do is be patient and they would be recognized. Do you want to know what I was doing at the meeting? I had one ear cocked to follow the proceedings, but most of my attention was taken with scoring the first round results. I spoke three times. Twice to explain why certain charter amendments were being offered, and a third time to decline a nomination to the next year's DipCon Committee. That's it. I repeat: There was no attempt made to silence anyone, no attempt to pack the house, and no attempt to prevent discussion of any Dipcon related topic. The "conduct" you refer to did not exist.

Melinda, I have printed your letter in its entirety solely because I will lean over backward to give someone the right of response. But even that has limits. In the unlikely event that you wish to continue this discussion about events in the considerable past, I must insist that you provide some evidence that the actions you impute to me actually took place. Otherwise, put it in your own zine.))

And I'd like to state for the record that as soon as I got Melinda's letter, I wrote her back, explaining how I would respond. I did this in the hope, the vain hope, that she would reconsider what she had written and change it.

I got a short note from Terry Tallman to the effect that a response would be coming, but none has been received so far.



The New Novice Publication:

## **MASTERS OF DECEIT**

You would think that when it comes to a novice publication, biases arising from hobby conflicts would be set aside, so that the interests of novices would be kept paramount. Well, you'd be wrong.

Lets start right here, with what we all have in common: DIPLOMACY DIGEST. MoD mentions dozens of zines. A number of them are catagorized as having "interesting reading", and some have nice capsule descriptions. But not DD. In fact, with one exception, DD is not mentioned at all. Now, DD has its weaknesses; all zines do. But it cannot be denied that DD is especially adapted for the needs of a novice. I mean, the experienced postal player is hardly dying for a theme issue on, e.g., England. The old timer doesn't need the history that he lived thru, reprinted, etc. But for the novice, this is all fresh and new. DD is his or her window on the past. And this is seen in my track record as well. The overwhelming majority of my American subbers are either currently novices, or were when they started, and decided to stick with the zine. I have



gotten many unsolicited subs over the years from people who said they were novices, and felt that the description of DD in Pontevedria or Supernova made it look like the zine they needed. Close to 90% of my back issue sales go to novices.

I said there was one exception. That one I could have done without. On page 44 there appears, ".....look at Diplomacy Digest by Mark Berch. Mark comes in for a lot of criticism for only running reprints of old Dip articles. But the critics are generally not subbing to DD; Mark and his readers are getting what they want out of the zine." This picture of DD is utterly false. Every issue has a significant amount of non-reprint material. I run letters, commentary, original essays, editorials, hobby news, Con reports, etc. I've calculated that for 1984-85, not counting this issue, slightly under half of the zine's space has gone for reprints. But the picture that novices are presented is that of a zine "only running reprints!" I might also note that, except for some remarks which are clearly good-natured jokes, this is the ONLY reference to ANY zine being criticized in MOD. Only DIPLOMACY DIGEST got this treatment.

Nor was this the only place I was singled out. There's an essay by Ed Wrobel which, among other things takes some shots at unnamed people. In my opinion, such a practice does not belong in a novice publication. Anyhow,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a page is devoted to "Plutonian Mind-Rasslin' ". It is not described in complimentary terms ("Bgalistic nitpickery ..... irrelevant obstructionism" for example). The term "Mind-Rasslin", which I believe was first coined by Terry Tallman, is always used in reference to me and only me. In fact, its usual form is "Berchian Mind Rasslin' ". Thus, altho my name does not appear, this is a very thinly disguised dig at me. The term is not used in the hobby in a friendly manner, and the use of it here is no exception. I don't like it. And so far as I can see, no one else is the victim of this sort of unfriendly jabbing. Only Berch. And I think that stinks.

There are some special publications mentioned. Diplomacy Introductory Package, for example, got mentioned twice. Supernova, however, despite being a widely acclaimed Novice Publication, wasn't mentioned at all. Nor was the Lexicon of Diplomacy, which I put out. Both are of clear and obvious value to novices. But apparently it was more important that D.I.P. be mentioned twice than either of these get mentioned at all.

And how does this happen, you ask? Its put out by Bob Olsen. Bob has said (in print) that Bruce and I are "imposing a reign of terror on the hobby." He also referred to "Berch's track record of enthusiastic endorsement of every filthy tactic, every lie Linsey put forth." Given an attitude like that, is it surprising what landed up in MOD? Not to me.

I am sorry to be so negative. There are some very good pieces in here (for example, a remarkable essay on Russia by Melinda Holley). But I cannot plug a publication like this one. I have written to Bob, but I don't expect much to come of it. But YOU could make a difference. When you were a novice, were you helped by publications like Diplomacy Digest, Supernova, and the Lexicon of Diplomacy? You were? Well, now is your chance to repay that help. If you'd like future novices to get the kind of help that you got when you joined the hobby, write Bob and tell him. The address is Bob Olsen, 6818 Winterberry Circle, Wichita KS 67226. In all the years I've been doing this zine, I've near turned to my readers to express their opinions in this way. But this is important. We're talking about novices here. Take a few minutes and write.

Addendum: I have just heard from Pete Gaughan, who wrote the thing about DD quoted above. Gaughan: My mention of Diplomacy Digest in MOD was innocuous enough. If you can provide 10 names of people who sub primarily for the non-reprint material, you'll really surprise me. I painted an accurate general picture of the situation surrounding DD (both the style of the zine and the quality of its critics). You choose to pick it apart word by word. As for "criticism of zines" --- I would not want a Novice Packet to paint a picture of a wholly peaceful hobby. But even at that, the mention of the fact that people differ in their taste is hardly going to scare off novices. So, I don't feel I owe you an apology for the publishing article. You are overreacting, nitpicking, and

using strawmen to attack MoD. I will not comment on any other portion of MoD except these two items: I was thoroly entertained by portions and disappointed by others; and I would've listed several other zines (including DD) on the readings page. ((I appreciate your replying, and the final sentiment. But you still haven't addressed the reason I was so upset at what you wrote. Your "only running reprints" is just plain inaccurate. And your statement that I get a "lot of criticism" for this non-existent policy is also wrong. You refer to "the mention of the fact that people differ in their taste" ---- but you went beyond that. You talked about "a lot of criticism" ----- which is quite a bit different than people just disagreeing on taste. Tell me, Pete, how would you like it if MoD said, "Pete has come in for a lot of criticism because the only thing his Perelandra has is games. But the critics are always, well, generally, not subbing to P. All Pete and his subbers want is a zine with only games, so they are getting what they want." That's inaccurate for the same reasons that what you wrote was inaccurate. I agree that a Novice Packet need not paint a picture of a wholly peaceful hobby. I think a paragraph or two, carefully written, about conflicts in the hobby would be a fine idea. But that's not what MoD has. DW, Graustark, EE, North Sealth West George, just to name 4 zines specifically plugged on page 5 have all been subject to a considerable amount of criticism from time to time. Yet it is ONLY DD which is mentioned as being criticized. In my opinion, which you don't need to share, a novice publication should follow the rule that (except for what are obviously good natured jokes) if you can't say anything nice about a person or zine, don't say anything at all. Neither your comments nor Ed Wrobel's meet that standard. I understand that you did not intend to either rankle me or to print an inaccurate view of DD, but that is what has happened. Of course I would like DD to be plugged in MoD, with my address included. Because of the novice orientation of DD, I think it ought to be. But I'd rather have no mention at all of me or my zine, than what presently appears. Is it possible to respect such a wish?

## THE ZINE COLUMN # 85

I guess I should discuss the recent The Not For Hire #1 put out by Steve Langley. This consists mostly of Steve trying to respond to things said about him recently in NFA, plus an enormous raft of charges, some old, some new, against Bruce Linsey, Steve Hutton, and myself. Certainly the most potentially damaging one against me is, of all things, financial misconduct. He presents a financial accounting, purporting to show that at the time that he terminated my sub to Magus and his sub to DD, that these accounts were seriously out of balance. Why? He cites what he calls, "the obvious answer, that you keep dishonest subscription records and, as a result, steal your subscribers sub-fees", and concludes, "I think you are a bit of a thief." The possibility that I might have made an innocent mistake -- an arithmetic error, or an oversight, is not even considered --- he goes right for the "thief". The possibility that Steve might have made a mistake isn't mentioned either. But he did! He states that when I started getting Magus, I began with a "mutual sub": "I trusted you to credit me with the equivalent in DD." His account is provably false. We did NOT start with a mutual sub; I sent Steve a \$6 check which he cashed and for which he gave me my Magus sub. I sent a Xerox of this cancelled check; anyone else can have a copy on request. But even without that, the discrepancy can arise from my not crediting him with enough issues of DD, as Steve suggests, but also from his crediting me with too many Magus issues. Either error will knock things out of balance. But for the time being, I'm in a poor position. Steve will presumably publish my letter, but not everyone who read #1 will sub to TNFH (issues are \$1 each), and I don't know the names of everyone who got TNFH #1. All this because Steve either didn't keep full records, or didn't bother to check them before writing. Nor is this the only incident. In another, Steve notes that Bruce has quoted me as calling one of Steve's actions, "tasteless and indecent". Steve suggests that this might just be a Linsey "fabrication". But if not, he turns to me and says, "why didn't you have the courtesy to let me know about it?" See --- this way he can take a shot at both of us! He admits that if the quote were in the one issue of DD that he returned to me, then he'd owe both of us an apology. In fact, it's none of the above. I had said it in Steve's own zine! He not only printed my letter with that phrase, he commented on that phrase as well. In another incident,

I had included my ballot in the Freshman Zine Poll, which Steve runs, in the same envelope as an issue of DD. Sound innocuous? Not to Steve! He wonders if I wanted "to be able to publish that I had refused to accept his ballot" In that case, I "should be ashamed of" myself "for attempting to mess over a poll for feud purposes." And if I really did want my vote counted, "it wasn't terribly bright" of me to do this. So Berch comes out bad either way. Either a person trying to mess up the poll, or a "not terribly bright" person. In MY PERSONAL OPINION, if Steve cannot run the FZP without insulting someone who is just trying to save 20¢, then he ought to find someone else who can. Moreover, Steve has revealed that I voted in the poll. He did not say in advance that he was going to reveal the names of any voters, nor did he get my permission. So far as I know, I'm the only one who has gotten this treatment. One final incident, which shows his total lack of ethics. Remember I said back in DD #85 how Steve had printed a really vicious story about me? He had admitted that he didn't know the details, and he presented not a shred of evidence. He refused to name his source --- Steve is one of these publishers who doesn't believe in letting a person face his accusers. So what does he do in TNFA #1? He prints it all over again! And then three lines later, he invites me to disprove it! He prints a story, without any proof, and then points at me. And when Bruce (who is mentioned in this story) asks some questions about the specifics, he simply directly Bruce to me, as if I'm supposed to corroborate this story. There's a lot more, but what's the use? I want you to understand why I have such complete contempt for him. The accusations that he prints say little or nothing about me, but a great deal about him.

Diplomacy World #39, the first issue under the Byrne-Walker regime has arrived at last, and a number of changes are apparent. A slew of new (to DW) writers appear, the writing is much more informal, the articles are more lively, there is quite an emphasis on "gatherings", the average article size has fallen considerably, just as the number has risen quite a bit, and in general, DW has taken a distinctly more "fannish" cast. It has a new and crisper typeface, and a new publisher (George Graessle) who is in charge of pasteup, printing, stapling, trimming, and mailing. The issue has a snappy editorial by Kathy Byrne, Daf Langley on the making of an informal Con, profiles of two zines (Graustark and Europa Express), another really underhanded stunt from Shopp Rose, Russell Sipe on Electronic Mail Dippy, Walker on some options for A Rom, and much much more. ((OOOps, below that should be Larry Peery Box 8416 San Diego CA 92102))

Available from Larry is the BLACK AND BLUE BOOK 1985. This lists over 900 hobby personalities in alphabetical order, and also sorted by area code and zip code. There are also lists of hobby publications, projects, etc. There are codes for many of the people, so you can tell what their interests are in a variety of categories. Unlike previous censuses, this one is not limited to those getting a dipzine. There are also essays, lists of FTF cons, and "other surprises". It was put together on a Commodore 64 computer. Its 130 pages and costs \$4 plus \$1 postage and handling.

The previous census was compiled in Nov 1983, so its quite out of date by now, and this of course has a much broader coverage.

A fairly ugly story is being circulated in the hobby about me, to the effect that at some point in the past, I talked Bruce Linsey out of, or tried to talk him out of, seeing professional help, a therapist. So far as I know, this story first appeared in "Kathy's Korner" (Kathy Byrne) in Whitestonia. It also appeared in Steve Langley's The Not For Hire, and I've just gotten an indirect report (which I haven't been able to confirm yet) that it may have appeared in a third zine as well. No source was given in either W/KK or TNFA for this story; this is an anonymous smear. This is absolutely, totally false. I've never done anything of the sort. The story is in fact preposterous: I am a great believer in people seeing therapists ---- its my wife's line of work ---- and for me to give such advice to anyone would be totally out of character for me. The story makes me look bad ( a false friend to Bruce) and Bruce look bad (too weakwilled to do what'sright after pressure from Berch). I believe that both Byrne and Langley owe me an apology, and an explanation for why they did this.

The winner of the <sup>1985</sup> Don Miller Memorial Award is Bob Olsen...Ron Brown of Self has announced that he will be folding Murdrin' Ministers, largely because of time pressures. In its day, MM had some fine reading. The zine had a gentle manner.....

# NEW ZINES

The Razor's Edge James R. Early 3705 Uruguay Dr. Pasadena TX 77504

Benzene Mark Lew 1327 W. 27th Ave Anchorage AK 99503

The Alamo Times John Walker 4819 Corian Oak San Antonio TX 78219

Pommes mit Mayo Scott Hanson and Frauke Petersen 2626 Stevens Ave Minneapolis MN55406

Scipionibus Charles Arsenault 4490 St. Kevin #7, Montreal PQ H3T 1H9

Some of these aren't totally new. TRE has been around for a few months, but I forgot to list it earlier. Scipionibus has roughly 70 subbers, making it one of Canada's largest zines, yet was virtually unknown to the postal hobby, and appears to be a local, French language zine. Benzene is one of the hobby's oldest subzines. I'd describe Mark's writing style, but that's what he wants me to do, so I won't. I have always considered the presence of B in a zine alone sufficient reason to get the zine. Mark writes directly what he thinks, and you never know where things will make a delightfully unexpected turn. PmM is designed to be an international discussion zine, dealing with political affairs. Its very cheap at 35¢ an issue, and will have no fixed schedule. It may be that this was inspired by EE's success at such a thing.

<sup>from page 1</sup>  
superior method to the mean. These individual pairings tracked the final results quite well. That is, VOD beat out NFA in the direct comparison between the two. NFA and EE tied each other, and both beat SNAFU!. SNAFU! in turn edged out Excelsior, which in turn edged out Sleepless Knights, WHICH tied Pereleandria. One remarkable thing about the showing is that Canadian zines took 4 of the top 6 spots; in the past, they've never taken more than 2, and last year, there were none in the top 6.

DIPLOMACY DIGEST jumped 27 places from last year's 35th, to make it the "most improved zine". This partly reflects an inordinately poor showing last year. I was extremely pleased that 82 of you voted, by far the best turnout DD has ever had. I was surprised to see how widespread DD's readers actually are. Except for Dippy, a semi-local Chicago zine, every zine (on the main list) had at least 5 people who voted both for that zine and for DD. I was curious to see where my biggest overlaps would be. Of the zines with a lot of votes, these were Bushwacker, Mid life Crisis, and 30 miles of Bad Road. In each case, about 60% of the people who voted for that zine also voted for DD. Even in zines where I am not a big hit (Whitestonia, Feudesse, Magus), DD got 21-25 votes. In percentage terms, my most decisive loss was to No Fixed Address (2-24; i.e. 2 preferred DD; 24, NFA!). Most decisive win was over Feudesse, 20-1. The vote distribution for DD was most unusual. More than 20 of you gave it a 7 and more than 20 gave it an 8. No other zine had that many 7s or 8s. DD had little (only .5 votes) below a 5, but did not have the great strength in the 9-10 category (19 total) seen by zines like EE, VOD, DW, NFA. Yes, yss, I know: Who Cares?

Bruce has put all this together in a remarkable publication, The Cream Shall Rise! This includes a very nice portrait of John Leeder, the founder of this poll, with some of John's comments on this poll. Masses of statistical information are given, names of the voters, the addresses for the top zines and GMS, some jokes, a listing of the top 10 in all the past polls, a list of awards, quotes from the winners, some letters and on and on. Its 56 pages, and \$1 to those who voted, \$2 for those who didn't.

Ann Fothergill-Brown's MeANnderings won top subzine; it would be so nice to see her writing return to the hobby. The GM poll was won by Mark Larzelere, followed by Gary Coughlan, Andy Lischette, Bruce Linsey and John Daly. I was especially pleased to see Mark win. Mark is, along with Kendter and Sergeant, one of the three best GMS I've ever played under.

And if winning the Runestone Poll wasn't enough, Bruce Linsey has won the 1985 Rod Walker Award for his essay, "The History of a Diplomacy Zine", which appeared in Voice of Doom #100. As I was the winner of the 1984 Award, I am especially pleased that such an excellent essay won the balloting, which was conducted by Larry Peery. Over thirty items had been initially submitted for this year's competition.

As you'll soon see, this is a somewhat fractured and contentious issue. Things should be back to normal with the next issue.