

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

Issue #95  
December 1985  
NMR/Droupout

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Subs: 10/\$4.50  
Europe: 5/E2  
Circulation: 100

I don't really have any page-one type announcements or pronouncements, so lets get on with the show!

## THE ZINE COLUMN #89

The latter half of 1985 has seen precious few new zines, but another impressive Canadian zine has appeared: Praxis (Alan Stewart, 702-25 St. Mary St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 1R2, 10/\$5US for US, and 10/\$7 in Canadian. Just to confuse matters, I've paid Alan for a US sub in Canadian dollars....). The first issue has Alan writing on a wide variety of issues, including negotiation, some questions of player ethics, hobby politics, his personal life, a quiz, and more. If he can keep this up, and elicit readership participation, this could become one of the most lively zines in the hobby. In his games, he uses a pretty strict rule of season separation: After 1901, at least 50% of the surviving players must request a separation to get one. That means, for example, that even three requests might not be enuf.

Larry Peery has put out the real DW #40, a kind of demiDW which looks less like a real DW than the fake "401", but has some right interesting reading in it. Larry has also packaged the vast treasure trove of DW articles into several different forms. An "Anthology" of the best from the first 39 issues, printed full size with a comb binding is \$10.00. A complete reprinting of all the major articles is available for somewhat over \$75 (facsimile). You can get individual essays at 15¢/page, and you can ask for all of them on a certain topic, e.g. Humor or Ratings. There is a complete index to this material, priced at \$2, to help you pick out what you can really use. And of course, there is DW itself, 4/\$12 (\$2 extra in Canada), mailed first class. The next issue will be out in late January, and some very interesting material has been lined up (Box 8416 San Diego, CA 92102) (That #40 was free).

Quite a bit of interesting reading has been published recently. One of the best Xenogogic's in a long time was Vol XIX, #4, with a large collection of letters printed, many of them to and from Rex Martin, editor of the Avalon Hill General, concerning his remarks on the hobby and its publication. Larry has some interesting thoughts on the use of the telephone in and out of games. Melinda Holley kept track of her

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((Quite a few people over the years have handled orphan games, but then man who first did it was Greg Warden. This essay appeared in the Nov 1975 issue of his zine, En Passant #70))

#### ORPHAN GAMES PROJECT NEWS

There is an interesting article in Impassable #58, "Orphan Games and Other Ramblings" by Francis McIlvane. Francis suggests that publishers announce when a zine folds, in the same manner that they would announce and plug a new zine. This is an excellent suggestion. The two biggest problems that I encounter with the OGP are finding out when a zine has folded, and getting the information regarding the abandoned games. If all publishers would keep their eyes peeled for zines that fold, and if they would announce any folding that they encounter, it would solve the first problem.

Francis makes another point. If the OGP has any failing, it is that it takes an awfully long time to transfer games. This is true and the result of difficulties that I have in getting information. I have always based my work on the assumption, to begin with, that the OGP is a player help organization, rather than a watchdog. Because of this, I have always worked on the assumption that when anything went wrong with a game, the players would notify me and request a new zine. This is really not too much to ask; all it takes is a quick letter from one of the players. It is surprising, however, just how few players bother to do this. It can't be that they all don't know about the OGP because this service has certainly received plenty of publicity. More than likely, the players expect the OGP to step in and do not bother to notify me. This is a mistake. Odds are good that I do not trade with the zine and that it will take me quite a while to find out. The players are the first to find out that a zine has folded, **AND IT IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE REST OF THE HOBBY!** I don't think that this is too much to ask. If I'm going to spend hours trying to find homes for abandoned games, I believe that it is only reasonable to expect that they players expend a little effort, i.e. write me a postcard or letter telling me that the zine has folded. Maybe even send me some information regarding the game: addresses, game charts, etc. Once I am notified of an abandoned game, and once I have all the information, transfer is a quick and easy process. I will always write the publisher first, however, to make sure that he has folded. This is only fair: It gives me a chance to hear his side of the story and avoids countless hassles later on. This process never takes more than a couple of weeks.

The OGP is not perfect, and I will be the first to admit it. But if I am notified of an abandoned game and supplied with the necessary information (which, as Francis points out, should be easily available to the player) the game will quickly and efficiently be transferred. If the player has performed the above two steps, and if then his game is not transferred by me with speed and efficiency, THEN AND ONLY THEN, as far as I'm concerned, DOES HE HAVE THE RIGHT TO COMPLAIN.

I would appreciate any comments on the above.

((You'd be surprised how little has changed in the past ten years. After the OGP languished under Ray Heuer, the United States Orphan Service (USOS) was started up. Its presently run by Jim Burgess (100 Holden Street Providence RI 02908) and Kieth Sherwood (4624 1/2 Muir San Diego CA 92107). Jim recently wrote me the following (I had mentioned to him that 2 or 3 of my subbers has told me about the non-appearance of Terry Tallman's NSWG) :))

"There is no way the USOS can do its job without people keeping us informed about what's going on. Would you mind reminding your anonymous subbers about that if you happen to remember? I'm giving people who should know better ... a hard time when they fail to inform me of problems. The psychology of the players should change. It's their game, not the GM's."

((One difficult point in all this is: How long should the player wait? One month? Two? Three? six? Its all well and fine to talk about publishers announcing folds, but if there are any orphan games, the odds are the GM hasn't announced any official

fold --- and at what point can others do it for him? If, for example, NSWG has not appeared since June 1985, and its Dec, should the zine be "announced" as folded? Should the same standard be used for prompt zines as is used for zines which are frequently late (e.g. NSWG). One must recognize that zines have returned after very long delays (e.g. Envoy and DW, to name two recent examples).



((The next exchange of letters provides a nice contrast in attitudes. It is from Impassable #73, Nov 1976, John Boyer, Editor))

Howard Mahler: I'm constantly distressed to see how many games which should be draws are not, simply because of missed moves and/or incompetent play. Nothing can be done about the latter, but the former can be eliminated. Two well-known methods exist: First one can have a standby for each country who sends in orders for that country for each season. This is fine for Demo-games, but not really practical in most cases. The second method is to have someone make "neutral moves" for any country that misses. This again requires a bit of effort. Of course, somewhere in between is to have one or two people send in orders for all countries every season. These would also be the standbys for the game. I highly recommend that you try this for the games you'll be starting soon.

The particular game that sparked me to write this letter is 75G. From the S09 position, the 3 western powers could force a stalemate line ..... However, with the English miss of the Summer and Fall moves, the Italians and Russians have broken thru. I still do not know whether the west would have had the cooperation and skill to set up the stalemate line, but this way Germany never had a chance. Of course, now there is virtually no chance for a 5-way draw, while the stalemate line would very likely have led to one. If either Italy or Russia wins or get a 2-way draw, they will have done so by default. Another game that had a similar history in your zine is 73BU.

The adoption of no missed moves guarantees, would lead to more draws perhaps, but certainly to more enjoyable games. In closing, let me say it is particularly destructive to allow missed moves in the first two game years.

John Boyer: My GMing philosophy is different from yours, Howard. First of all, if you missed, you were incompetent. Why should incompetent people be helped by neutral orders. And if not, should players be removed on one miss only? Just recently I received a letter from one of our readers concerning moves which ---to him---were not so neutral. I had to explain to him that the moves were neutral, altho they hurt him more than anyone else. So, not only do you have to consider the moral issue of helping incompetent people play the game, you also have to consider how neutral moves can affect the other players. Rarely would everyone be satisfied with "neutral moves" altho they'll accept a missed set of moves. Worse yet are those that like to miss early in the game. Again we are faced with incompetent play, but early in the game rather than later. I had one such notable case and despite telephoning him 3 times and making contact with his roommate once, and also in waiting several days past the deadline (it was one of my few really late issues), I still did not get the orders. So, he suffered. I have to follow my own philosophy and inclination to penalize incompetent players. ((The problem is, it often doesn't work out that way. The player may have in fact, dropped out of the game already. In that case, the person you've penalized is really the replacement player, the one who will eventually take over the position. This is especially true in those critical S01 NMRs, which more often than not represent dropouts. And even otherwise, it may not be a matter of a player being incompetent, just unlucky. This I think is one of the weaker arguments that can be thrown against neutral orders.))

## GENERAL ORDERS

((General Orders are one of the more imaginative ways of avoiding the first NMR. The

following exchange between player Stephen Hall and GM/publisher Edi Birsan occured in The Arena #38, 11-30-73)

Hall: First, how does a GM use General Orders? Does he make up moves for them himself? Is it done with or without knowledge of the allies' and enemies' moves? Is it usually a standard best reply or is the move created from the GO an attempt at a lucky guess? Once a GO is used, it is discarded, right?

Birsan:...If someone is missing I then hunt for the GO's and a fone number. I call collect to the player and hope that he is home. If that fails, I hope to find at least his GOs. With them in front of me, I give a call to a local player, and first give him the situation on the board and then read the GOs. He/she then gives the orders with the following guidelines followed: no supports given or expected from other players, no new invasions started and hold on to what you have at the expense of position. Nobody, including the GM looks at or sees other players' moves first. Sometimes the moves are the best possible, sometimes they are not, depending on the quality of the player involved. No matter what, tho, they are generally better than NMR. No GM should admit that he ((himself)) makes the moves for the GOs because he can get a lot of flak from players on occasion, and anyway, there are generally one or two locals that can be counted on from time to time to deliver. Once used, they are gone, and naturally, they may be revised at all times. Oddly enough, GOs are not used on retreats --- a matter of tradition tho I don't know why.

Hall: Can a player send in two GOs to be used consecutively?

Birsan: No

Hall: Put another way, can GOs be used for two consecutive move seasons?

Birsan: Yes. This was done at least in DUNE ((another zine by Birsan)) when a player for Russia missed spring, but had GOs on file. Then he sent in a new set of GOs, but failed to follow up with moves. At last he was removed the following season or so.

Hall: Does the use of GOs (i.e. a missed move) count as a missed move in considering replacement?

Birsan: Yes, it counts toward your total miss count.

((Few GMs use GOs nowadays, either because they don't want to bother, or they have some philosophical objection to them. Birsan's setup is probably fairly typical. I don't think his various "guidelines" are such a hot idea, tho. Why should the GOs, for example, bar a player from supporting an ally, a perfectly ordinary action. In an extreme case, the GOs could hold a player back from a certain win. I think such bars also increase the chances for a player deliberately NMRing. Suppose a player were obligated by alliance to doing something that he really didn't want to do --- and one that was prevented by the guidelines, e.g. support his ally's attack. He just NMRs, lets his GOs take over the position, hoping for the best, but now he doesn't have to present any explanation for why he didn't do it, beyond the fact that the USP"S" failed to deliver his orders. With no such guidelines, the player would also have to explain why he didn't have GOs written well enough to cover the contingency.

One obvious drawback is that the GOs can become obsolete; it is all too easy to forget to update them when your strategy changes. This doesn't have to happen, tho. A very rare case where a GM commented on the GOs used occured in the Aug 14, 1976 issue of Diman, where the GM said, "Ned Goltz is to be congratulated on the most lucid set of GOs the GM has ever received, and it is a tribute to his gamesmanship that his orders, written last January, were still clearly relevant to the position this season." The HRs in Diman provided that the GOs could be used for only one non-winter season.

Still, I think GOs are a fine idea, keeping in mind that anyone can be victimized by the USP"S". Altho not purely the product of the player-of-record, they do reflect his intent, and a well written set could easily leave the player called in very little decision making to do, probably just those on the order of more subtle points, such as which direction an attack would come from. If all GMs were to use these, I think games in general would be less disrupted by NMRs. I was actually called once by a GM, and asked to create some orders. I didn't get his zine, so he figured I wasn't familiar with the game, which was true. He gave me the board position, and read me the GOs. I asked if his HRs had any special rules governing the creation of the orders. He said that his HRs, which

ran almost 2 pages, made no mention of GOs, but that this one player happen to include them, force of habit, he figured. So as long as he included them, I might as well use them, he reasoned. I didn't see it that way. I told him that if he had a set of HRs which made no mention of GOs, then they ought not be permitted, in the same way, for example, that a GM who doesn't provide for "Neutral" SO1 orders ought not use them. I asked him if he had ever discussed the topic with the player; he said no. That was a relief; had he given the player the assurance that they would be used, the player would at some level be entitled to rely on that promise, and that would be a much stikier situation. I said that he shouldn't, in my opinion, use them, and I didn't feel right in providing them. He said he could see my point, and that if he still wanted to use the GOs, he'd find someone else. But I digress))



((Debates as to whether it is better or worse to replace a player (rather than let the position go into civil disorder) are fairly common in the hobby literature. It's quite unusual for this discussion to take place after the game is well underway. The following is from Ode #7, April 1980. The game in question was begun as an international game by Conrad von Metzke in If Its Free, Leave Two, and was later orphaned, and eventually wound up in the hands of John Marsden, Ode's editor and GM))

#### THE BDC41I PROBLEM

...Its not the usual policy of GMs to publicize their problem situations ((actually, it usually is, fortunately for me!)) but in view of the important place 1974N has in the history of Postal Diplomacy I think it is worth trying to reach some sort of acceptable solution to the situation. Consequently, and with apologies to Roland, who I am sure never intended that I should put this into print, I hereby reproduce in full the letter he sent me:

Roland Prevot (Russia): Dear John, if there was such a thing as a Calhamer or Gladys or whatever award for "most useless performance of the year", I would certainly vote for your would-be restarting for 1974N. It would have been at least as well to leave things as they were instead of making the mess that you did. I would say that the result is zero for everyone concerned, including France who got a worthless victory that he in no way deserves. The proper result of this game was a 4-way draw. This should have been obvious for the stalemate line had been established already for several seasons. By refusing to put in a standby player for Turkey, you turned what was a fine game of diplomacy into a sort of game of patience, where the only rule is to wait until the others drop out.

You are saying that this game did not use standby players. This is not true, and if you have been told the contrary, you have been misled. Remember, it was started in 1974 by an American. Americans have always used standby players (and still do); and even in England at that time, most GMs used them. It was only later that the craze of not using them started. It is true, tho, that there had been two instances where players dropped without being replaced (E and A), but in both cases, it would have made hardly any difference, for they had very few SCs left; the GMs chose not to bother somebody with a hopeless position, and this was fairly understandable (I do exactly that all the time in my own zine).

Anyway, I am not conceding the game to France. I am dropping out (or resigning as you wish). I do resent the fact that you used the orders I had sent you for last season when I am pretty sure I had specifically requested you not to use them if players were missing.

Marsden: What Roland actually said, just to set the record straight, with his orders, was "...don't publish an Autumn 1924 with NMRs - Please." If I had followed that request, there never would have been another season, which probably would have pleased Roland ((I have to agree with John; Roland's request was awfully ambiguous, and I would not have taken it in the manner Roland later describes it.)) 5

Robert Correll (Turkey): I write you to inform you that I am no longer ingerested in playing in 74N. As such, I would agree to a draw including myself if such has been proposed. There have been no replacemnt players in 74N to my knowledge and to my recollection all previous positions have gone CD. Those were the original Rules, anyway.

Dave Johnson (france): Robert pointed out when we talked that it had been the practice in this game to put dropouts into anarchy, not ever to appoint new players. Upon investigation, lo and behold, I did find him to be right. Copies of zines issued by the original Gm ... and your predecessor John Piggott are enclosed. You will note that both England andAustria have gone into anarchy, to the benefit of all three of my remaining opponents. Supported by that precedent, I must therefore warn you that appointment of a new player will be under my protest and withdrawl.

John Piggott (Ex-GM) The short answer to your query is that I don't know whether Conrad von Metzke's original HRs for BDC411 permitted standby players or not!....I suspect there never were any House Rules, or maybe rudimentary ones such as I used in Ethil The Frog. Once possible point of relevance is that Austria dropped out while I was running the game and went into anarchy; I don't use standbys.

Marsden: So that's it. I know that Dave was always adamant that the stalemate line did not exist, and Roland that it did. The proposals for, respectively, a French win or a four-way draw have been submitted, and rejected, for several seasons, and it was obvious that they were not going to be able to agree on an ending. Consequently, the question become one of whether to replace Turkey or not, and in the situation, all I could do was ask, "if the game were still running in Ethil the Frog, and Robert had dropped out, what would have happened?" I think Turkey would have gone into anarchy in that situation, and I therefore followed that line.....I'll mail a copy of this sheet to Conrad von Metzke for his comments (if any)....

((There's not much information I can add to this situation. In the last season to be published in EtF, the GM stated that there was a stalemate line. As for how the game was originally run, I don't know. At the time it was started, Conrad's normal policy was to replace players in significant positions, and possibly all of them. Its possible that he set a different rule for this game, tho with Conrad running 40-odd games at the time, he'd have an incentive to keep things simple. An announcement appears in Constaguana for the game, but makes no mention of the standby policy.

((The broader question here is how to run a transfered game, when the old and new GMs do things differently. Should the game be run under the original HRs, which is after all what the players originally signed up for, or should it be run under the new HRs, which the GM should be able to do a better job with, since those are the ones he wants. The Original HRs may not even be available. I have seen plenty of examples of both practices. AT any rate, when your game is transfered, please be alert to the possibility that the game will now be run differently in some important regard. The old GM, for example may not have required that draws include all survivors, but the new one does. This can have quite an impact on the game)).



((You think your game has had a rough time? Listen to Brad Hessel's account of 75AR at the point he took over the game, just after FO4, from Diman #29, 2-12-77))

....Richard Kovalcik, who having replaced John Baker (who had replaced Perry Gemignani) as T in WO2 was kind enuf to send me the relevant pages from back issues of ((Peter Berggren's)) Turnabout. The game began in March 1975, and after SO1 was de(ay)ed once, it wa finally printed in late May --- and after 8 weeks, two of the 7 players NMRed! This sort of set the tone for the first four gameyears of play. The original France never submitted one set of orders and was dropped in 1901, along with the original Austrian player. Gemignani lasted until FO2, and by the end of 1903, only two of the original 7 players remained ... Those were Scott Rosendburg (E) and Matt Diller(G), who thru cooperation and lack of competition were doing well. At this point

they both dropped out as well. Hence, when T folded, none of the original players remained in the game, and only one had been in the game for as long as two full game-years. Greenwell is the ~~thn~~ second English Player, Hollingsworth is the second German player (not counting Mike Novick, for whom the position was listed by Ray Heuer ((the orphan director))), but who never submitted any orders and was never listed in T...). Kelly is the ~~thnd~~ player for Italy; Pete Walker is the third player for Austria; Rueth and Kovalcik third for R and T (Edi Birsan having resigned). In a way it seems silly to continue this travesty, but three of the six players listed by Heuer as Players of record at the time Berggren folded do wish to play...I note that 18 players have participated in this game and point to the current record of 22 (in 1969R) (18 in less than 4 complete game years..... ((After some bookkeeping details he then reprinted a letter Berggren had in Carn Dum #26 in January ....))

Yes, this is Peter Berggren. After a long suspension of my responsibilities, for which I am 100% accountable, I wish to set things in order to the limit of my abilities. I have had no contact with the diplomacy community since June 1976. As such, I have no idea of what has occurred since then, even as it affects the games which were carried in Turnabout and The Glory Gazette. I am unable to GM any games or publish any newsletter....Full refunds will be issued. As for the games ....I leave them to be transferred to other zines via The International Diplomacy Organization and DNYMPA (("Duh New York Mafia Protective Association" ; a loose collective of New York area publishers, for the purpose of mutually insuring each others' games)) ...if they haven't been already ((he then offers payments to new pubbers who will be taking over his games. Here comes the funny part:))

I realize that I have shirked the responsibility I took on when I started these games. I don't take on any responsibility for any drastic inconvenience that may have been caused the players in these games, because the insurance organizations previously mentioned should have stepped in to prevent these inconveniences when I stopped publishing. I don't know whether they did or not. I only want to make full financial reparations so that the charge of "rip-off artist" cannot accurately be leveled against me..... ((Ah, yes, one parting shot! The game actually settled down at that point. The next dropout was Hessel himself, who orphaned the game in FO9. The third English and Russian players dropped in WO9 and S10 respectively, and the game finally ended in W10 as a 17-17 G-I draw. It seems to me that an issue with this theme ought to have one "horror story" in it. A game such as this makes an elegant argument for not using standby players at all. It is most peculiar to have a game where the two leading players both drop out in the same year.))



((Our next item comes from 1901 and all that #95, April 1978, by Richard Walkerdine))

We quite often see publishers decrying game deposits on the grounds that they are a nuisance from a book-keeping point of view, and don't deter people from dropping out anyway. The first argument is hardly worth considering - anyone who can't organize a simple system for keeping track of a few deposits wouldn't inspire me with much confidence in the way they could organize greater projects - like running a magazine for instance.

The second argument is worth refuting - I once proved, over quite a large sample of completed games (1901 games and BDC games); that deposit-games had 25% fewer dropouts than non-deposit-games. This was probably caused by a combination of two things - ...deposits did deter people from dropping hopeless positions, AND, deposits perhaps deterred potential dropouts from joining games in the first place. Of course, the real reason that publishers don't like deposits is connected with this argument - they fear that because of the competition they won't get players joining their games when they can get cheaper games elsewhere. Personally I'd rather play in a game where I think there's likely to be a lower incidence of dropping-out because deposits are in use, but I can't speak for the cheapskates of course..

Deposits do have other advantages, not least that they provide a handy 'float' for the publisher to indulge in bulk (thus cheaper) buying of materials. Also, when banked, a modest source of extra income from Interest. (I had £120's worth of deposits in account at one time - not bad at 6% p.a. tax-free....) Also, and finally, 'seized' deposits from people who do actually drop-out, are another source of welcome extra income, and inevitably should mean that dropouts are subsidising non-dropouts - A Good Thing. Deposits rule, okay?

((I don't know why more Gms don't use the NMR Deposit system. The argument that these "deterred potential dropouts from joining games in the first place" strikes me as very hypothetical. I just don't see people saying, "Since I'm an upcoming dropout, where can I do this cheaply?" The main value of the NMR deposit is that a player may send in a final set of orders with his resignation (rather than just disappearing) in order to retrieve his NMR deposit. This assumes that the GM does the standard American practice of returning the deposit if the player will resign. The player is still gone, but the new player will get a position that has not been damaged by the NMR. Plus, he and the other players have the certainty of knowing who will be playing the position earlier. Small things like that can make a difference in a game. Also, if the GM is having trouble finding standby players for the zine, he can have a policy that the standby player "inherits" the deposit. This can particularly be a factor if the GM has trouble finding people to take over very small positions --- these will deliver the deposit all the quicker.



((The next item also deals with what services the GM provides for his games. Its also one of the oddest complaints I've ever seen. The writer is the Editor of "          " (pronounced "Quotes"), James Massar, and its from #25, May 1973. Comments in triple parens are by James)).

In the last 2 issues of Marcus, I have had letters "printed" concerning Mark Weidmark's policy toward standbys. I put printed in quotes because I have been edited censored, taken out of context, and otherwise "yellow pressed" by Mark Weidmark. It is obvious that one cannot get a fair treatment in Marcus, so I have chosen to make my reply here...

In issue #17, I was called upon to make standby moves in the Youngstown Variant game. Weidmark supplied me with no other information concerning SC holdings, nor the addresses of the other players.....I sent off a letter of protest which was "printed" (see above). Weidmark responds, claiming that he prints address lists every 5 issues or so (but never tells me he does when I'm called to make moves), and claims I have all the pertinent info in back issues. Then he says, "Standbys of the world, wise up!"

So off goes another letter: "You think I'm supposed to remember that you publish addresses every x issues? Telling me to look in back issues presupposes I have them, which I might or might not. I say "Wise up Gms of the world." Standbys do the GM a service, as well as the other players. They have a right to expect to have all the pertinent information in front of them when they are called to make moves.

Weidmark replies: "Sure you're supposed to remember I publish addresses every x issues ((I receive some 15 zines every three weeks, and I am supposed to remember exactly when and where list are being published!! I really pay attention to these dynamic, interesting, and entertaining address lists!))) If they don't, they are just not very interested in the game at the moment. The Hell standby's do the GMs a service. Standbys get into games free, and in my zine, if they entered a game as a standby, and their sub was going to end tomorrow, they'd get the damn zine till that game was finished, no extra cost. Any possible service standbys do is countered by free access to the games, and free continuation of subscription ((Bull! First of all, in my zine, standbys must subscribe, and if you are that stupid, its not my problem. Anyway, I get the zine anyway, so that isn't particularly relevant. Secondly, I cannot agree that standbys get more than their share in return for those services. Most standbys are not actively seeking games. Most of those on standby lists (you, yourself, for instance) are in one hell of a lot of games



They do it as a service to ensure that games don't fall apart. And What a Service! One look at any of the "\_\_\_\_\_ " games will tell you that not one of them could have survived without standbys --- some positions have had three players .... if this is a hobby to you, then, like me, you don't want to see any games fall apart if you can help it --- and you damn well need the services of standbys to ensure it!)) "If I had to do all you suggest to get a standby, then I'd rather let the countries go into civil disorder! ((If that is your attitude, it is a very poor one ... Altho I don't mean to judge, from the evidence at hand I would say that you are very overcommitted, and you should cut down before you follow the route of Rod Walker, Steve Bell, or John McCallum, among others....)) ((It seems to me that how James handles the situation is not really the point here, so his pointing out that he charges standbys for the sub isn't really a refutation. There is a certain symmetry to the situation here. Each gives to the standby what he thinks is important. Weidmark, in essence, gives money or credits allowing him to play for free; James gives the addresses. One can argue which is of more use, tho it must be pointed out that the sub is not otherwise obtainable (if you aren't a trader) without shelling out \$\$, but the addresses are there, if one will spend the time. So one asks for time, the other for money.)) ((James goes on to note that the Canadian zine Arrakis (he was called to standby) gave him all the addresses. He then continues quoting from Weidmark:))

"It doesn't take a standby 1/2 minute to find all he needs ((maybe, but at least he should be told where to find it!))), and you want me to type it all out for you, as if you were retarded ((Well, I type it out, and Leeder prints it out, and others send address labels -- are we all retarded?))) If I'm entitled to "all" the pertinent information, then, since you cannot assume I have all the back issues, is it not within my rights to demand a complete history of the game, including every move, every press release, every build, and every retreat! Adn if you don't have spare zines, would you type all this on request...? ((No, because the information is not pertinent....)) ((He then called for further comment. It seems to me that if a GM provides all the addresses at gamestart, then he ought to provide them when a new player is called on to standby, since for him, this is a new game. A GM is foolish to assume that these back issues are being saved; many players do not save back issues of their zines, especially if they are not playing. I would suggest to GMs that when they print an address list, they run off a few extra copies. When standbys are called, just stick one of these sheets into the envelope. This saves everybody the work. I also suggest that the GM jot down on the standby's copy the list of SCs that he owns. In that way, he has all the essentials: addresses, piece positions, and SCs held. It also communicates in a very pragmatic way that the services of the standby player really are desired. In the next issue, there were a couple of letters:))

Rick Loomis: I think you are both somewhat wrong. You had a right to complain, but his treatment of standbys is not all that unusual.... I don't mind particularly, but if a standby player does complain, the GM should try to adjust the complaint, rather than print letters that make the complainer look dumb. In conclusion, he has the right to run his games any way he sees fit, and if I were you, I'd just quietly withdraw from his standby list, thank him very politely, and say, "Don't call us, we'll call you." ((Yes, but then we wouldn't have had this interesting, albeit overly harsh discussion. When people speak their minds, we get a chance to see --- and evaluate --- conflicting points of view.))

Burt Labelle: "I'd like to comment .... to be blunt .... I feel you are trying to bust ass with Weidmark. I would have to agree ... with the comments made ... about 85% to 15% in favor of Mark. Your letter... agreed, it should not have been edited. SC and Addresses: Get off your fat butt and dig them out. Re standbys subbing/not subbing: Telling Mark he is stupid is an error on your part. When you start publishing Marcus, then you'll be able to dictate its policy. Poor attitude because of civil disorder, etc : if all standbys were as difficult as you are with Mark, I couldn't blame him, really ((James then conceded that he shouldn't have tried to tell Mark how to run his zine, but pointed out that neither writer addressed the question of whether the standby is doing the GM a favor or vice versa. As I see it, tho, its too mutual for this to be a valid question either way.))

hobby time over 30 individual days, and I was fascinated (and in a few cases, horrified) to see how time was spent. Letters from Olsen and Ed Wrobel put themselves in such poor lights that you wince to read them. Scott Marley in New York, Con reviews, and much more (Subs are \$3 per issue but these usually run around 100 pages, published quarterly). (Larry Peery)

No Fixed Address has returned to publication after Steve's sojourn in Europe with two issues full of interesting reading. The most unexpected letter writer to turn up was Bill Highfield, who checked in with a wide-ranging one in #34. He touched briefly on the now-famous letter Bruce wrote to the NROTC about him (see DD #83). He said this had no effect on his career ("the NROTC threw them out"), but that he left for totally unrelated reasons (a severe allergy). This completely contradicts people like Steve Langley, who said explicitly that Bruce had ruined Bill's career, so a retraction would certainly be in order. The issue also had a rather devastating response by Steve Hutton to Steve Langley's charge that Hutton is a liar, and a number of other things Langley had said about several other people, including me. All of it done in a concise, logical, and annihilatory manner. The issue also had a very funny parody of all hobby feuding by Chris Carrier. Without really taking sides, he converts the whole thing to a gigantic FRP-type game. It also had the usual nonsense from Robert Sacks ("...Actually, the church was correct with respect to Galileo..."), Ron (Canada's) Brown's account of various felonious activities, and a good deal more, and #35 was full of fresh goodies, tho much shorter at a mere 48 pages (Steve Hutton 1175 Broadview Ave #711 Toronto CA M4K 2S9)

## THE ZINE COLUMN #90

This is the first and I hope last update on this matter. Back in DD#92, I recounted how Steve Langley had accused me in The Not For Hire #1 of being a "thief". He presented a calculation, purporting to show that at the time that he liquidated my Magus sub and his DD sub, the two were seriously out of balance. He said that when I had started getting M, that we began with a "mutual sub" ("MS"), that is, an exchange of sub credits for our zines. But in doing so, Steve created a non-existent MS transaction. I sent Steve a Xerox of the \$6 cheque which had actually started my Magus sub. That payment had not figured into his calculations at all. As Steve was later to say, "My report Card did mislead me. I had you marked down as MS". Even without this check, tho, a discrepancy could just as well have arisen from him mistakenly giving me too many issues, and even if 100% Berch's fault, it could just as well have been a simple arithmetic error or an oversight. "theft" would require intent to steal.

Round 2 appeared in TNEH #3. Steve conceded the error on the check, and also stated flatly that he had never made a single mistake in the Magus sub accounts in his favor. He called me a thief on page 4, said I stole his money on page 5, but then on page 7, said I wasn't a thief. For the first time, he stated what the amount was --\$4-- and appeared to state where the problem occurred, saying, "the last time you asked me to credit you with an additional \$4 worth of Magus, I shouldn't have done it." This was the only transaction that he mentioned, so I checked it out. This occurred in Spring 1984, when Steve's DD sub ran out. I gave him 10 more issues (worth \$4). Steve jumped my M sub 7 issues (worth \$4.20); I sent him a Xerox of Magus covers to show him this. Everything appeared to be in order, and, as I said, this was the only transaction he pointed to.

Round 3 appeared in TNEH #4, and found Steve much more subdued. He called it "Petty theft at the worst", and only once; elsewhere he called it a "mistake" and an "error". He also said the following: "When his sub ran out, Magus 26, Berch and I exchanged \$4.00 credit in

mutual subs". He affirmed that the error was #4, and that it was "an error at the time". What "the time" refers to is a little vague, but the only specific transaction he refers to was at Magus 26, so I assume that's what he meant. I went to check this out, only to discover that Steve had created a second non-existent MS transaction. My M sub had NOT run out with #26. So it was back to the Xerox machine, to show Steve that the covers of M #25, #24, and #23 all showed me already paid up to issue #31. At this point, I'm beginning to doubt that the records that Steve refers to either exist or have any value at all.

You'd think, three strikes and yer out, or at least Steve would be a little more cautious. But no, Round 4 (TNEH #5) has Steve coming out with guns blazing. The words thief/theft or steal/stole appear nine times in the course of a single page. This gives his discussion a somewhat frantic quality, almost as if Steve hopes that repeating the words again and again will make it more persuasive. He says, "Yes, that's the final position I plan to take. Mark Berch is a thief." ---- this before he's even gotten a response from me to his latest barrage. Previous Berch comments are collectively scorned: "The responses you have given are exactly the ones I've been wanting. You see, the more nits you pick, and the more you chase after side issues, the less bad I feel about pursuing the matter." Sure, I produce a check he didn't mention, and he talks about nitpicking. The story undergoes some changes, too. The \$4 figure is retracted, and is replaced with a \$6 figure. And he points to a brand new time frame: the point at which my Magus sub jumped from 31 to 41, a period when his DD sub did not move at all. He says, "On or near the Magus 31 issue, we again exchanged a mutual sub for some unknown amount. Since your sub was running out and your records (covers of MAGUS) show that your sub was at 41, it was likely \$6.00. I gave you \$6.00 in Magus credit, and you gave me ??". This is the origin of the \$6 figure.

I believe that Steve has created --- you guessed it --- a third non-existent MS transaction. I believe that no such transaction was ever requested or intended, and that I in fact paid Steve \$6 in cash for the M sub extension from 31 to 41. Note the qualifier at the start of those two sentences. Tho I have proved errors above on Steve's part, and will present more below, I cannot prove that there wasn't a request for a MS transaction, and I cannot prove that I paid him the \$6. I can, however, present a very strong circumstantial case:

A. The strongest argument actually comes from Steve! Listen to Steve slitting his own throat in TNEH #5: "You seem to be able to come up with Magus covers at will. How about coming up with the one that changed your sub from 31 to 41? If I'm telling the truth, I should have put a little note on the cover to ask you to credit me with \$6.00 worth of DD." Indeed! My sub ran out with #31. On #32 my account is changed to 41. There's a note on there, but it's on another matter. Steve did not ask for DD sub credit on #32 because by then, he had already been paid.

B. A \$6 MS would be outside the normal pattern for us. As Steve had said in TNEH #4, the MS was for \$4; the previous \$6 transaction was in money, not MS sub credit. Basically, what's happened is that Steve has repeated the same error he made in round 1. He reported what was actually a \$6 money transaction, as a \$6 MS sub exchange. It arose under the same sort of circumstance: a Magus sub account at zero. (The first time, my Magus sub was just starting; the second time, my Magus sub has run out.) The ONLY difference is that this time, I don't have a check to prove him wrong.

C. This is the weakest argument, but I'll make it anyway. A \$6 MS at that point would have been outside my normal practices. Let me back up a bit here. DD has relied on mutual subs rather than the straight trades since its start in 1977. It is rare for me to trade with an American zine. In fact, since Runestone folded a little while back, I'm the oldest zine in the hobby to rely primarily on MS. Nearly all the zines I exchange with are more expensive than DD, so that my sending out money payments to supplement a MS arrangement is very routine for me. I've made well over 100 MS exchanges in my career. My point here is not that practice has made perfect (no one is perfect), but that I developed certain standard practices simply from having done this for so long. An MS transaction can be done at my dollar figure (e.g. \$4) or the other guy's (e.g. Steve's \$6). If the other guy has some sub left to DD, I will normally do it at the lower figure. The MS is going to run up his DD sub, and there's no point in doing it for a larger amount than is "necessary". At the time my Magus sub ran out, Steve still had DD issues left, and a Mutual Sub exchange at point, if done according to my normal practice, would have been for the \$4 amount.

Steve says, "I recommend to anyone who subs to DD, keep close records of your sub account. Mark Berch doesn't and will steal from you if the situation arises." Alright, I'll pass that warning along. This is the first time I've ever had such a problem with an MS. If I am such a thief, and it's such an easy thing to spot, why has it taken me 8 years to get "caught"? Steve didn't record that \$6 check as such, he incorrectly had me listed as having my Magus sub run out with #26, and he talks about an MS request (on issue #32) that he didn't make. I wonder if he's told those who sub to Magus about his proven carelessness? I doubt it.

I repeat: I cannot prove my innocence here, beyond making a plausible circumstantial case. Steve cannot prove that I stole the \$6 from him. It seems to me, tho, that if you use words like "thief" and "stole," that the burden is on you to prove it, not on the accused to prove himself innocent.

I am sorry for all the space this has taken. But I did raise the subject earlier in DD, and it does concern how this zine is run, so I felt some obligation to set this stuff out. I have responded to each of the TNFHs which discussed this. I will go back to the Xerox machine and send Steve the covers of #31, #32, and #33, and he has gotten a copy of this editorial. But things have their limits, and I'm just about at mine in terms of how much time I'll spend on this. I rather suspect that the next TNFH will kick off round 5 by Steve. His story will presumably change again. I mean, he's going to have to do something about the fact that the request he refers to doesn't exist. I can't see Steve sticking with a story that says, in effect, that I am a thief for not complying with a non-existent MS-request. At that point, tho, I may just walk away from the whole thing.

I'll close with one very curious and (to me) revealing anecdote. Steve has obviously spent a great deal of time on this matter. Yet when I looked into this myself, I quickly ran across an odd error Steve made in calculating my refund when he liquidated my Magus sub account. I had bought the issues at 60¢, but Steve cashed them out at the by-then current rate of 75¢ each. For 9 issues, that came to \$1.35. Thus, \$1.35 of the discrepancy arose from the fact that Steve paid me too large a refund. It was Steve who did the calculation, and in TNFH #5, he explicitly states that it was his error. He also says this about my pointing the error out, again from #5:

"How clever of you to rationalize your theft of \$1.35." (emphasis added). This \$1.35 was entirely his error, and yet he cannot resist the temptation to call it my theft. Keep this sentence in mind the next time you hear Steve Langley call me a thief.