

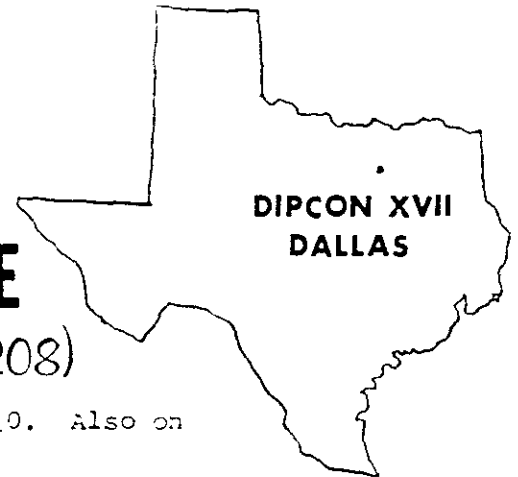


AUGUST 23 to 25, 1985
Host con: Dragonflight

ECOTOPIA 2

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIPCON ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

published by the Chairman, Pete Gaughan (817-633-3208)



...who has moved to 3121 E. Park Row #171A, Arlington TX 76010. Also on the 1985 Dipcon Committee are:

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As soon as Dragonflight publishes its registration sheet, or any data on reg prices etc, it will be printed here. Any comments on Dipcon topics may be sent to Pete for publication, and will be forwarded among the Committee for consideration.

Note the spelling change: Rod and I got crossed up on the book this came from. Ecotopia was a novel about a nation of the same name: the Pacific Northwest, which secedes from the U.S. and becomes a hip utopia. Subscriptions to Ecotopia are a SASE or 20-cent stamp per issue; hurry, since this will go up to 22 cents at the end of February. Actually, I'm being facetious. How many zines can you get for this cheap? .

PUBLISHERS please plug Ecotopia. Thanks to those of you who have already. This will become crucial after March, when people begin planning for vacations. My Committee colleagues have been remiss in this area, and I hope this rebuke produces slightly better results in their zines! Now to the topics at hand...

FUNDS FROM DIPCON XVII (DALLAS): Al Pearson writes to say that last year's Committee has voted to send \$50 to the Miller Number Custodian and the balance (as yet undetermined) to the Boardman Number Custodian. At last notice, there was trouble figuring out how much the Committee had coming from DFW Gamesters, due to some missing registration tickets.

NEW PROPOSALS: Robert Sacks and Terry Tallman are both suggesting an addition to the Dipcon Charter which would require any amendment to be ratified by the following Dipcon Society Meeting. As Robert puts it, "then people can argue the amendment all year in between."

Last issue I proposed to require advance notice of amendments to the Dipcon attendees; I'm sorry I wasn't clearer on this. Obviously, the Charter permits anyone to stand up at a Dipcon Meeting, or send a letter to the Chairman, offering an amendment or site bid. I'm suggesting that the rules be tightened in the Charter, which would not affect this year. Even if this is not acceptable to others, I offer it as a guideline to potential hosts or amenders--your proposal has a better chance of success if everyone has an opportunity to consider it. Look at Dallas for examples of amendments shot down because there was little time to debate them.

Robert Sacks also suggests raising the amendment-adoption vote from a majority to a 3/5 majority. (Currently, the Charter specifies a 2/3 majority for amendments to the site rotation, and a simple majority on all others. I assume he means only the latter.)

SITE ROTATION: Zones I (East Coast) and IV (Rocky Mtns, Pacific Coast) are eligible for Dipcon XIX/1986. There will definitely be a bid from MaryCon in Virginia, but I have not

heard from Strategicon (Anaheim, CA), or Atlanticon (??), both of which have been rumored to be interested. Three bids would be sufficient variety to choose from, but any others are very welcome. Prospective bidders should be sure to keep in touch with the Committee and probably should have a copy of the Charter.

I have two proposals for revising the Regions and rotation, and I know of two others (by word from third parties) which have not found their way here yet. The first offer is from Don Del Grande (142 Eliseo Dr, Greenbrae CA 94904-1339). His system is too involved to reproduce here, so write to him for details, but the net result is this:

1. Use the same four Regions as presently in effect.
2. Each year, as now, two Regions are eligible. However, these two are
 - 2a. the Region which was not chosen from the year before, and
 - 2b. a Region selected from the rotation I-II-III-IV-I-II-...
3. Votes for sites are weighted by time since Dipcon was last held there.

Regions eligible in '87 would be I or IV (whichever did not host '86) AND II (from rotation); '88 would be I/IV or II (whichever did not host '87) and III (from rotation); and so on. Votes are weighted more and more heavily (the method is very complex) as a Region waits longer and longer; the Region hosting Dipcon XX has votes for XXI counted 1/2, XXII counted 1, XXIII counted 1, XXIV counted 1, XXV counted 2, XXVI counted 4, XXVII counted 6, and XXVIII counted 8, if it does not hold a Dipcon in the meantime.

My biggest problem with this system is its complexity. Second, I don't see even a shade of possibility of a Region going five years or more without a Dipcon, unless it truly does not deserve one (for example, the current Region III is so sparsely populated with Dipsters that it could well be skipped next time 'round if that doesn't change). As Rod and I have both said in letters, why fix something that isn't broken??

The second proposal is along the same lines, but much simpler. Ed Wrobel (Box 3463, Arlington VA 22193) suggests three Regions and a vote-weighting system, to wit:

1. Region I would be all of the Eastern Time Zone, plus all of KY, TN, AL, MS. Thus, the dividing line would be a straight slash through Michigan (putting Detroit in the East) down along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to the Louisiana border, then along the LA/MS border to the Gulf (putting New Orleans in the Central region).
2. Region II would be western Michigan, IN, IL, WI, and all of the present Region III (the Great Plains and Texas). This Region would include Madison, Chicago, St. Louis, and all the major Dip populations in Texas.
3. Region III would be all of the present Region IV.
4. Votes would be weighted thus:
 - 4a. Sites within the Region currently hosting would have votes worth 1/3 of a vote.
 - 4b. Sites within the Region which hosted the previous year would get 2/3 of a vote.
 - 4c. Sites within a Region which has not hosted for 2 years would get full weight.

As I see it, this could be better than the current system. However, I disagree with Ed when he writes:

"If the idea is to keep the Dipcon site moving around the country, it makes no sense to provide an incentive to keep it in the same region two years in a row."

It does make some sense when you consider (as Fred Davis has) that Dallas and Seattle are about equidistant from Southern California. The very reason for offering a Region eligibility two years in a row is because it might miss its turn one year, or it might be the only place possible. If Strategicon were the only '86 bid, or only acceptable one, I would still feel comfortable with it because it's 1500 miles from the previous site.

The solution to your objection, Ed, may be merely to disqualify any Region from hosting two years in a row. But your system has some very attractive features.

The argument that Region III (current) is too weak, may be true. Ed's rearrangement does more evenly spread the potential sites among the Regions. Do not take the "50% drop in second-day participation" at Dallas as a sign of this, though. The drop in attendance on Sunday at Dallas was mostly due to the terrible schedule foisted on us by Crigins/DFW Gamesters. We are already planning a vastly improved schedule for '85 (more later).

PROXY VOTING: I have objections from several people. Ed Wrobel:

"The possibility of corruption of such a system is not only a theoretical concern. [Mr. So-and-so, a proxy-ballot supporter,] urged that the committee attempt to

'pack' the meeting to prevent DipCon from going to New York or California the next two years. (He had also proposed amending the charter to permit selecting the site two years in advance.) How much easier it will be to 'pack' a meeting by mail! Is this scheme really to broaden the voting base? Or to give publishers with high-circulation zines an undue amount of influence on the Society's decisions?"

Conspiracy theories aside, I agree that proxy voting would be subject to individuals (especially publishers, despite Fred Davis' faith in them) attempting to buy up proxies to gain a controlling vote at the meeting. John Caruso has also registered this concern, after initially supporting the proposal.

Fred expressed shock (his word) at the Dipcon Meeting at Dallas being in the hands of a "casual group of 26/27 people"...but after all, we were the ones who paid our reg fee and played the game, no? In his initial proposal, Fred writes:

"More important than the actual location of a DipCon is the method used to determine that location. A site selected by 100 voters will have far more credibility than one selected by 11 votes, no matter where it may be. Too often in recent years the DipCon Society Meeting has been held late at night or at an inconvenient time, with small attendance and sometimes ludicrous results. Maybe it's time to grow up.

..."What do you think? Who should select the sites? The Postal people who play in and publish zines which hold our hobby together twelve months of the year; or just those attending DipCon, many of whom are local players with no ties to the Postal hobby? I think you know my answer."

Since Dallas was my first Dipcon, I can't vouch for Fred's (unreported) statistics on earlier cons. The time at Dallas was not inconvenient (except to the local players who were forced to wait for the continuation of their second round), and the site was selected by a group which was, by my count, 75-85% postal--the locals had no interest in hobby "elections" once they found out that Dipcon couldn't return to Texas anyway.

Fred proposes limiting proxy eligibility to those listed in the Census, or even to publishers listed in the Zine Register. IF a proxy amendment passes, it will have to have a method for determining who is a postal player (Fred: "submission of a page from a zine showing one to be playing in a game ought to be sufficient.") Limiting to publishers would be a grievous error, and the ZR is going through far too much turmoil right now to be a responsible list any how.

SCORING SYSTEM: We have a fundamental difference on the Committee. Terry has suggested a score based on centers owned, with wins and draws breaking ties. Rod has proposed a score based on win/draw, with centers owned breaking ties. I'm a very very undecided. Likewise on whether the system should be secret (that is, only general weight announced to the players, with specific numbers kept out of sight). I reprint, on a separate sheet, two pages from the '82 looklet on this subject.

COMMEMORATIVE BOOKLET: We have decided to issue one for Dipcon XVIII/Seattle '85.

TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE: Tentative times have been circulated among the Committee for a while and the general outline looks like this.

1. Most importantly, rounds will begin every five hours, but games will have the option of going longer if they choose. Some number of players left in the game (2? 1/2 of total?) will have veto power over such continuation.

2. There will be a Novice seminar, and special boards for new players whenever possible.

3. There will be a variant Friday night; Gunboat, if we can't find anything else.

4. The Dipcon Society meeting will probably be held on Sunday morning, before the final round of Diplomacy.

5. Players will be required to play in two rounds to be eligible for prizes (that's two PLUS the final, Championship Round) but will be encouraged and possibly rewarded for playing more.

6. Awards will include or consist of ceramic statuettes; come to Seattle to find out what they'll look like!!

7. Ads will be sold in the Comm. Booklet--but wait for details before sending \$\$.

8. There will be a huge, informal Beer Bash hosted by the Seattle Gang of Several on Sunday night.

from Buch
except from 82 Booklet

"Tales of the Dip Masters" The Borcht points
DipCon XV in 1982. Please read first
tournament report, guide, etc

THE CASE AGAINST A SECRET SCORING SYSTEM

The question presents a conflict of values. What do you want?

A. To have a normal Face to Face game. In this case, you do want the game kept secret. But if this is what you want, why have a tournament at all? You have a big room available for open gaming. But ignores the fact that a tournament game is different, and people do come to tournaments for something different.

B. To fairly select a champion. In this case, a secret scoring system introduces a huge element of luck: if you're lucky, your personal values will control the values of the scoring system. It seems a shame to introduce luck into a game one of whose charms is the lack of chance elements. Here's an example. You as GM have 17 centers, Turkey has 16, Germany has 1. Both E and T have statements from T tells you: "I plan to eliminate Germany on this move. Please do not support him." Should you let T do this???? In the Borcht Scoring system, you should say YES --- T will shorten the draw from 3 to 2-way. In the Calhamer system, you should say NO --- because you don't want to give up your undisputed lead. 2 players for England with equal skill but opposite personal values will act differently in this case. One will improve his score, one will ruin it --- but with equal skill, they should be the same. Or visualize this. 6 scoring systems are considered; one will be chosen. While waiting for the last game to end, the GM calculates everyone's score in all 6 systems, and posts them. The last game comes in, its scored, and as the GM's dice rolls across the floor to determine which scoring system will be used, and which 2 will be trash, the players will all see that a secret scoring system chooses its winner by chance.

The tournament was run by a team of Harley Jordan, Herb Barents, Fred Davis and Brian Calhamer, and used strict 15 minute seasons. The second round was seeded as has done this year. The top dozen finishers were Carl Eichelberger, Tedd Tribbath, Russell Blau, Jim Yorkey, Bill Becker, Matt Rosworm, Bill Yeaton, David Bront, Jack Brawner, Lowell White, Robert Sergeant, and Cal White.

DipCon XII was held with Origins '79 at Weidner College in Chester PA in late June, and was a three-round tournament, with 2 rounds Sat and one Sunday. With the time requirements of 3 rounds, and not being permitted to start before 10 AM, all games were curtailed at 1907, making wins virtually impossible, so that a reduced victory criterion of 12 centers was used. We had exactly 7 winners over the first two rounds at all, one of them did not show up on Sunday, so that the top board couldn't be a all-winners game. This used the original form of the Borcht system: 60 points to the winner, or shared equally by those in the draw, with no bonuses/penalties, plus the GM point per center. The complaints about this were that the gap between a win and a two-way draw was too large, the gap between 6 and 5 way draws (and also the 5-4 gap) was too small, and that not all those in a draw should share equally --- all of which resulted in changes made for this year. John Boyer was the Tournament director; the staff included Rod Walker, Fred Hyatt and myself. The top 12 finishers were Ben Blockki, Peter Stasman, Matt Rosworm, Scott Walker, Jack Brawner, Steven Hokason, Fred Skusand, Mark Elliot, Michael Kullin, Karl Schuetz, Walter Blank, Robert Sergeant.

There were 11 other DipCons, and perhaps their stories will be told at another time, just as this can may rate a paragraph in some future history. But this should give you a good idea of the considerable variety involved. Not only were none of the past 4 DipCons the same, they really weren't even similar. Each had a distinctive character, and no doubt DipCon XVI will have a few twists of its own.

The Case For a Secret Scoring System
by Steve Langley

The point of Tournament Diplomacy is not to determine who is best at playing the "scoring system" but who is the best diplomat, or should be. Unfortunately, human nature says differently. The win is the thing, and to win, you don't necessarily play Diplomacy, you play whatever will get you the highest score. Because of this "human" tendency among Tournament Diplomacy players, there are many fine diplomats who choose not to bother with tournament play. They, purists as it were, would rather play Diplomacy.

One way to bring the reality more into line with the ideal would be to make playing the "scoring system" impossible, or at least very difficult. Keeping the scoring system and the player's intermediate and final scores a secret until after the completion of all play is the most obvious technique to accomplish this goal.

It has been argued that the scoring system can not and should not be kept a secret. Perhaps not. Player scores, however, can and should be kept a secret. Come the final round of play, no one needs to know who is the top player of the top board, or even who is playing on the top board, other than the people running the show. Without that information, the situation of "getting the leader" can not arise, and we can all get down to playing Diplomacy.

There are hundreds of forms of scored competition. I do not know of one that uses a secret system. The basketball player knows when the clock runs out, the chess player knows the relative value of a win and a draw, the baseball player is instructed as to the difference between going home and staying at third, and in a typing competition, everyone knows what each error will cost in wins. Fairness dictates that everyone understand how their performance be evaluated.

Incidentally, I do agree that scores should not be posted part way thru the tournament, and this was not done at DipCon XV. In practice, the players do talk

FEERICON II ----- Results and Description

During the same weekend as DipCon XV, Larry Peery organized Feericon II in San Diego, CA for those unable to make it east that weekend. In an expression of solidarity, the same scoring system was used. Larry has been working hard to build up the Diplomacy community in Southern California, and was rewarded with a turnout of people, 42 of whom played in the dippy games, giving a total of 16 boards over both nights. I charged \$7 to play, but offered a dazzling variety of prizes, including Asper hand-crafted certificates, Tee Shirts and various publications. He even managed to get publicity in a number of newspapers. His player handout included paper for writing orders, which Larry apparently wants to collect for analysis of openings used, and possibly publication of some of the games --- awfully ambitious stuff. The top finishers were Scott Cox, Paul Rosenwalg, Craig Cameron, Jim Windsor, Jack Easters, Larry McCloud, Bill Hugh, Gregg Hanna, Dave Grabar, Mike Reynolds, Mike Denton, and Robert Finley. Larry St. Germain won a special award for getting 4 builds as Italy in 1941. Feericon III is set for July 29-31, 1983; for details write him at box 416 San Diego CA 92116.

RESULTS OF PLAYER SURVEY

To my amazement and delight, almost every player filled out the survey, although not everyone answered every question. Here's what I found out.

Age. This ranged from 13 to 57; the median was 23. The distribution by decade is as follows: Teens: 34%; 20's: 40%; 30's: 18%; 40's and above: 7%. Half of the players are between 19-30 (inclusive), or, 16-25. I was a little surprised that we had so few players below the age of 15 (only 3). The most common ages were 16 (with 13 players at that age), and 15, 17, 19, and 22 (each with 10 players)

Questions on secret scoring system
22%