

excitement city unlimited #3

this space was reserved for a front cover, inspiration for which never arrived...

This zine is published by Simon Billenness and Barbara Passoff:

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The zine is intended to be a five-weekly publication and it has achieved this so far. It costs 50¢ for inhabitants of North and South America. 75¢ will take it to Europe, Australia, Japan and, indeed, anywhere else in the world.

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## LETTUCE

((Here it is. This is the long, rambling letter column I promised you all last issue. Without much further ado...))

Andrew Poole I'm interested to see ECU. Indeed in another conversation at Manorcon (by the end of Sunday I was rather hoarse) I was talking to someone who had never heard of you and described you as the best zine editor we never had. Actually I think you put it exactly in your editorial; expectations were too high, though I think it was more that people expected you to be a top editor than Flame to be a top zine.

Of course you get the luxury of starting again from scratch, yet having had a wide variety and a considerable amount of experience. With what I know now I would have done things very differently. //

The other disconcerting thing was that I couldn't decide whether it was an expatriot UK zine or a transatlantic one. The title gives no clue. // And the content is a good blend of domestic and foreign (from whoever's point of view).

Gary Coughlan I like Excitement City. It's much like the style of the UK zines I get but much cheaper.

(( Starting over is indeed a luxury. The other day I was reading an old Flame 2 groaning at my typing and thinking how differently I would have produced the zine in retrospect. Today I put my ideas into practice with ECU. Hindsight is such a wonderful thing.

It's interesting to see that you view ECU as a transatlantic zine while Gary looks at it as British in style. I note that Derek Caws in War & Peace writes that ECU "has a very 'American' feel to it". There's nothing like unanimity!

I am making a conscious effort to make the zine a mixture of American and British. I'm in a unique position to produce a truly mid-Atlantic zine and I'd like to play to my strengths. However I do feel rather cut off from both the British hobby and Britain in general at the moment. I suppose this is inevitable after two years. Hopefully if I make it over to Britain for Diplomacy Worldcon, I'll feel a little different. Unfortunately the more I think about how distant I feel from Britain, the more I sense how out of place I feel in America at times, so it's not a subject I particularly like to dwell upon at the moment.))

Mark Nelson When the Zine Register 10 hits the streets can you order a copy for me and take it from my sub or would it be easier for you if I sent a sub via the ISE?

((I've no objections to you sending me a large ECU sub and then letting you draw on it whenever you hear of a North American zine or service you'd like to sample. The same goes for anyone else if they're interested. Perhaps I'll do a few more zine reviews this issue. After all everyone has done a sterling job plugging me!))

Ken Peel I sub to several British 'zines (four, I think), and I haven't used the ISE since my first explorations a year or so ago for one simple reason: it wasn't any particular help. Under you that may change, but to get people to participate, I think that you will have to promote the project anew.

Ken Peel Let me bend your ear... (((ouch!))) First, I sent Steve Knight \$20 for a slew of samples of whatever he thought I might be interested in. I waited and I waited and I waited. Finally, I wrote to the two British hobbyists that I happened to know, and asked for suggestions. Then I went ahead and sent a few actual greenbacks for several samples of several highly recommended 'zines. They began to arrive, and I found several of them mildly interesting. I was rather taken aback, however, by the fact that only two of them sent me personal notes along with the requests. Heck if I received a sample request from the 'ole UK, I would try to send along a little chatty something, at least to apologize for the probable disinterest of a local gaming 'zine to him/her and to suggest other possibilities. If I put out an actual postal gaming 'zine, I might do even more.

So I subbed to the two zines with the personal touch, to the tune of a couple of bucks, and sent along more substantial subs to Steve. My subs soon ran out, and still no ff via the ISE. So then I sent real money, and I mean \$10 in greenbacks each or so. So my subs get going, and then, guess what? I start to get a bunch of misc. samples from my original request some many months earlier. A couple more interesting ones hit my box, including another personal note. So I sub with real American dollars, and avoid the ISE having learned my lesson well.//

Well, the long and short of it is that while I think Steve Knight is a terrific writer and a humorous, sensitive fellow, he wasn't the most timely end of a "very special service" imaginable. And my guess is that timeliness in the ISE is absolutely vital...that, and a few more pubbers who actually give a damn about tentative inquiries from bro's across the sea.

((As I said last issue, I've one or two horror stories from people whose subs were held up by Steve for a couple of months. Consequently, a few changes have been made. Since my appeal last issue, I've had about \$100 worth of business from Americans. The first few subs I sent off to Doug Rowling within 24 hours to reassure people that the ISE is back on track again.

In the long term, I intend to send Doug requests twice a month on the 15th and the last day of each month without fail. Also if somebody tells me that their sub is a rush job I will send it straight away. Now that I've received some custom from Americans, the future of the ISE is assured. However, like the ZR, I reckon I will have to provide at least a year of steady service before the inefficiencies of the past are forgotten.))

Nhan Vu Although I can't speak for other people, I can give some reasons why I currently do not use the International Subscription Exchange. First, is the fact that I'm already overburdened with my North American zines. Right now, there are about 70 or 80 North American zines, of which I subscribe to about 20. When I entered the hobby, I only knew about North American zines. By the time I learned about British and European zines, I no longer had enough time to participate in any other zines.

Another reason is monetary constraints. This is not a valid reason for someone who is a casual hobbyist, but an active Dipper can spend can spend \$100+ for subscriptions and then another \$20 or \$30 a month for postage. Because a British zine will cost more (airmail costs), it's just not practical for some people to subscribe when they could sign on with a comparable North American zine for less. This is especially true if you have other hobbies which also require a fair amount of money.

Lastly, there's a matter of distance. I don't mean with deadlines, that's no problem. the problem is that I find it hard to relate to the writing in

Nhan Vu ...these zines. When you wrote about the British elections last issue, my general attitude was rather apathetic. I know this is shamefully ignorant of me, but I can't seem to get myself interested in British politics. The effects haven't hit home yet.

This doesn't mean though that I'm against subscribing to a British or European zine. On the contrary, many of these overseas zines seem very interesting and well written. For now though, time and monetary restraints keep me from subscribing. I think perhaps in the future I may.

((I know how you feel. When you're busy investigating one hobby, you're really too busy to start sampling another one. It was a couple of years before I decided to get hold of a few American zines. However, once you feel you know your national hobby, it is a marvellous feeling to explore another country's zines. Your first year in the hobby always seems the best. When I moved to America, it was like being a novice again and that was a lot of fun.

I suppose in a few months time, you may feel ready to broaden your selection of zines. Think of it as something to look forward to! ))

Nhan Vu The reviews of Robocop interested me. I've seen the movie and basically agree with you and Barbara. The movie would have been much better without all that violence. It does, though, have a clear message. The future that this show depicts is a scary one. A world where a few extra bucks is worth more than a man's life is something I'm not sure I could cope with.

((One of the scarier things about the movie is recognizing events which already occur now and which are only slightly exaggerated in the movie. For example in the film Murphy, while still alive (barely) is obtained by the Corporation and chopped up (literally) to provide parts for the Robocop. Today there already have been examples of barely alive people being starved to death by the order of relatives and doctors. Maybe I'll write more about that in a future issue.))

Gary Coughlan I haven't seen it yet but I didn't think I would like Robocop until I saw the previews and an interview with the Dutch director. I've enjoyed his other movies, Have you seen The 4th Man or Soldier of Orange?

((Unfortunately not but I'd like to check them out now. I'd beware of Robocop because I suspect it is very different from his earlier films!))

Linda Courtemanche The "Robocop" reviews you and Barbara wrote were excellent, and they also made me realise in shock how long it has been since I have been in a movie theatre!! The last flick Steve and I have seen was "Dragnet", and we heartily recommend it -- it is a movie with tongue firmly planted in cheek, and we haven't laughed so hard in ages.

((Our favourite comedy of the summer was without doubt Roxanne. Like you, we hadn't laughed so loud in ages. It is truly an absolute gem. Great script, excellent jokes, beautiful Vermont scenery and, above all, a marvellous piece of comic acting from Steve Martin. We didn't see Dragnet because we didn't know the TV series it was spoofing. Maybe we'll catch it on video after your recommendation.

I'm curious to see you spell "theatre". If Americans use "center" shouldn't it be "theater" ?))

Dick Martin The Robocop reviews were interesting. We loved it! Too violent? Nah. You want "too violent" go see Rambo. All the violence here advances the story - it's clearly a brutal world out there. Just think of they could have added - real rapes instead of threatened ones, machine-gunned oldsters and the like. Even Murphy getting shot up happens largely off-camera. I thought the toxic waste bit at the end was there for comic relief more than anything else.

I thought Murphy as Robocop was one of the most deft jobs of characterization I'd seen in a long time. The sense of loss as he visits his old house is palpable, as is the awakening of Murphy in the android body. A surprisingly deft portrayal for an action movie.

Don't know what you're talking about regarding "compromise and reform" in Old Detroit. Government seems not corrupt so much as overwhelmed and helpless. New Detroit would just be an updated version of the Urban Renewal of the 60s and 70s. The incident with the mayor as hostage looked like an obvious take-off on Dan White going crazy in San Francisco a couple of years ago. Robocop isn't so far-fetched as you might think!

A great movie, and super entertainment, though not for the squeamish. Then again, I thought the most violent thing in the whole movie was, "Lose the left arm."

((I wouldn't say that was the most violent part of the movie. After all you don't see them hacking it off or anything. It was certainly the most callous part of the movie.

When I talked about compromise and reform I was making a more general point. There is a definite Western tendency to believe that deep-set problems can be solved through technological advance alone. Consequently other approaches such as reaching workable compromises between competing social groups or reforming the structure of the system are downplayed.

An example of this could be in the field of arms control. Pie-in-the-sky theorists (most, in fact, without technological expertise) believe that a wonderful, state-of-the-art satellite Star Wars system will render nuclear war obsolete. Unfortunately, this has attracted attention away from the possibility of reaching a compromise on nuclear weapons: the detente and arms agreement approach. Happily, the proponents of compromise do appear to have regained the upper hand with Star Wars research being cut and a arms agreement in the offing. However it is still a close thing.

So the toxic waste scene at the end of the movie was for light relief, eh? I think it was horribly over done. The man (a "bad guy" surprise, surprise) crashes his car into a toxic waste tank during the final car chase. He emerges horribly disfigured with acid burn. As the chase continues he shuffles back into view trying to speak but being unable because his tongue has partially dissolved. Finally he stumbles into the path of an oncoming truck and his head shoots off and explodes like a red melon. This is entertainment?))

Bruce Geryk The Robocop reviews were interesting, although I never even considered seeing the movie. Despite what people might say, I don't think that the violence and sadism exhibited in movies of that sort are valid vehicles for satire. Any sardonic portrayal of modern society gone down the tubes that has to resort to the stupidity that is found in the Robocop genre of movies is, by definition, bad.

Bruce Geryk Apologists for that sort of thing argue that the intent is to satirize, but it is the satire of children who are unable to comprehend subtlety. They just want an excuse to see people maimed.

((You may be interested to know that Barbara thoroughly agrees with you on this point. My view is that the movie contains enough satire of merit to offset the severe lapses in taste throughout the movie. It is a shame that Robocop is not the classic movie it could have been under more skillful writing and directing. However it remains for me the most controversial and interesting film of the year.

The movie should open in Britain over Christmas. The film grossed around \$50 million in the States so they are bound to show it in the UK during prime cinema-going time. I'd be interested to know what impression people in Britain get of the film. ))

Glenn Petroski You heard that I called Brux/Tomato con? ((Yes)) I even asked to speak with you! What's with this business of you being asleep at 10am. Here the opportunity arises for you to actually talk to me and you blow it just because you happen to be asleep! Sounds like your tough luck! I just thought that I'd give a friendly hello. I do hope that you got a good sleep and had one blast of a time at the con. Tell me about it!

((Maybe I'll do a Tomatocon review later in this issue, if I have time. Watch out. Your hobby inexperience is showing! Nobody gets good sleep at a con. 10am is one of the worst times to call a con. If you want catch people around when they're wide awake and eager to talk then 1am-3am on the Friday night is usually the best time!))

Glenn Petroski As for your politics, there is nothing wrong with them for any pinko commie bleeding heart liberal. I just don't happen to be of that ilk! Kemp/Hatch for '88!!!

((I strongly doubt that Hatch would make the Veep spot. After all, with Bork rapidly going down the tubes, Hatch may well be on the Supreme Court by Christmas. Personally I'd go for any ticket comprising Jackson and Schroeder...))

Mike Pustilnik I look forward to the political discussion. Of particular interest to me is the Democratic primary. The September 6th New York Times has a good article on it in their "The Week in Review" section, but I still haven't the foggiest idea of who I am going to vote for. I only know that I won't vote for Jackson. He has never held an elected office before. His anti-Semitic remarks in the 1984 campaign (when he called New York City "Hymietown") show him to be irresponsible at best and bigoted at worst. He is clearly unfit to hold America's highest office.

((I don't dispute that Jackson's remarks were irresponsible. However since then he has mended fences with American Jews (or at least attempted to) and pushed for the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate. He is the strongest candidate in the field at the moment and top of the polls. He's the only candidate who has a firm base and I suspect he may do better than expected in attracting white voters this time. Watch out for him in Iowa where he has spent much effort courting the farm vote. If I had a vote, I might well cast it for Jackson, particularly now that Pat Schroeder has bowed out.



Bruce Linsey Politics: well, you know I don't keep as well informed as you do. Nonetheless, Uncle Ronnie has severely tried my conservative instincts in the past couple of years. Maybe I'm just growing up politically but unless Jackson or Kennedy get nominated, I'll be voting for my first Democrat ever next election. Especially if Bush wins - ugh!

((I suspect that the Iran/contra scandal has badly tarnished not only Reagan and Bush but the entire Republican Party. There does seem a general desire for some kind of break from the Reagan years but that may not benefit the Democrats if the current wave Hart/Biden/Dukakis scandals persists.

And now from our new correspondent in Japan...))

Chris Edwards Thank you very much for sending me some copies of your zine ECU. The expanded Diplomacy game looks pretty interesting - thanks for offering me a place. I would love to take part but there are a couple of things I must mention. Firstly, although I live in Japan now, I intend to move to Britain sometime next year (probably earlier than later) so I won't be able to represent Asia for long in this game. My move out of Japan may involve me missing a turn, although it may be possible to find some way around that by having the magazine sent to Poste Restante in Hong Kong or some such ploy. If these things are no problem for you, then I would certainly like to play in the game. As far as subscription and postage money goes I could probably do the same thing as your Venezuelan subscriber, until I get to Britain.

((I don't see much of a problem having you in the Cline 9 game. The game will run to six to seven week deadlines so unless you're incommunicado for a couple of months, you should find sending in orders no problem. I'd gladly send the zine to you in Hong Kong - just keep me informed of whereabouts and for how long. As regards sub money, just send me a couple of dollars every now and then. The zine only costs you 75¢ airmail and the game reports are free. By the way, are you British or Australian? Judging by your name, you're not Japanese!))

Chris Edwards I wonder how you like living in New York. Nothing I have ever heard about the city has been good. Actually, my parents visited New York earlier this year, but I don't think they would contemplate living there. I'm sure you find it interesting though. I don't think that there is anything like ex-patriate living to broaden one's outlook.

((Actually, New York is better than its reputation would leave you to believe. Although the city is very scummy in places and typically filthy in most public areas, it is certainly not the hot-bed of robbery and murder that it is reputed to be. New York State has strong gun control laws which help to lessen violence both domestic and criminal. For example the rates of armed robbery and murder are much lower here than they are in places like Chicago, Miami, Detroit and Los Angeles. Culturally, I find New York very close to London, particularly when it comes to record stores. However I would prefer to live in New England, probably in Vermont or near Boston. San Francisco sounds interesting too...))

Colin Grubb I don't think that I'd be in too much of a rush to return to England if I lived elsewhere. The political climate is almost as chilly as the meteorological one. In fact I have recently started toying with the idea of taking a TEFL course (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) and testing the waters abroad, but I remain undecided.

((I find it interesting that most of the people who write from Britain, tell me to stay abroad and wish that they were out of the country too. I'd like to see some of the country before I leave like California, Washington and the South. However my intention is to return to Britain within a few years. ))

Andrew England Just so that you can sleep at night, I'll give you a brief history ((of the Australian postal hobby)) now. Prior to 1979, there were a couple of postal Dip 'zines in existence. However, sometime between 1975 and 1979 the hobby died. It was revived in 1980 when Richard Williams began a zine called Austral View which is now in its 83rd issue (although not in its original form). In 1983 another 'zine, The Go-Between was founded but in 1985 it was taken over by a commercial PBM company and as a result it has turned into a magazine for computer moderated games. The company still runs Dip games but not in the magazine. I edited Austral View for a brief time in 1984 (after Richard Williams retired). In 1985 a chap called Luke Clutterbuck, just returning from university in England, founded another magazine, Rumpelstiltskin. In early 1986, Austral View and Rumple merged to form The Envoy. This was for a time Australia's only zine devoted to Dip and its variants. In late 1986 a small 'zine called Detente formed but it has since gone bust. Anyway, in May this year I started Beowulf. Why? Well, The Envoy was (is) getting too large (and uncontrollable) and so more 'zines were needed to take pressure off it. Also I wanted to start my own 'zine from scratch. My ego I guess! At the moment it looks like two new 'zines will be starting in Victoria and Tasmania. So as you can see, we have only two (three counting The Go-Between) Dip 'zines.

If you think that's small time, well, we don't have a variant bank (to speak of), "Boardman" numbers or any of those other organisational masterpieces you Yanks have created. The one thing we have got is a national ratings system: "Stab", developed by myself and a chap from Queensland, Daryl Kibble.

Conventions... In South Australia we've held state titles over the past three years and this year we held our first national championships in Sydney.

So overall we're young and still developing.

((I find all this fascinating: watching a new hobby develop from scratch. I'm glad to see that you've established your own national tournament. Do you think you could host Diplomacy Worldcon in a few years time?

I received a couple of issues of Austral View just before you took over. Do you remember the issue which had a full page ad for my old zine 20 Years On?

Dick Martin Shawmut Bank paid a millionPounds for the entire UK? I think they got robbed - owning the UK is a money losing proposition (probably why they could buy so cheap). Maybe Shawmut wanted the prestige...

((Actually I hear that the UK is making a profit these days. Besides you could also get into some juicy asset-stripping if you had a controlling interest. The Royals would fetch several million if you found the right buyer. I'm sure some wealthy Texan would like to buy Buckingham Palace for an amusement park outside Houston. Maybe the Japanese could bargain basement for a Hirohito replacement...

## EXCITEMENT CITY UNLIMITED

### THE RULES FOR STAB

1. All orders are adjudicated as in the regular game; however only moves contested by a foreign power ( not units of the same nationality) will be reported. If two units stand each other off, both moves will be reported as having failed. If a unit attempts to move, unsupported, to a province occupied by a foreign unit, then that move will be reported as having failed and the presence of the foreign unit will be revealed. Nevertheless, any support being given to, or by, the foreign unit will not be revealed.
2. Support moves will only be revealed as a consequence of the unit receiving the support being attacked, and even then only when it is necessary in order to explain to the attacking player why his attack failed. For example, if a unit with one support attacks a unit standing with two supports, then only one of the defending supports need be revealed. If the defending player does not state in which order he would like defensive supports revealed, then the GM will do this for him or her on an alphabetical basis (e.g. Albania before Budapest). If an attack succeeds then obviously all supports for the defending unit must be revealed. Whatever the circumstances all supports for one unit attacking another unit will be revealed, even if all were not necessary for the attack to succeed.
3. Retreats and builds are dealt with in the standard North American manner. In the case of retreats, the GM publishes which units must retreat. Both the player who owns the unit and the player who caused the retreat are entitled to know where the unit retreated to. If the players want that information, they must submit a list of retreat options for the unit and give each one a code. The GM will publish the appropriate code in the following adjudication. Obviously both players will have to keep record of what their codes mean. The players actual moves can be made conditional on the retreats. As I remarked, this is pretty much standard American procedure.
4. As regards builds, the GM simply informs the players privately how many units have to be built or disbanded. The player then simply lists his or her builds with the following spring moves.
5. Although the GM provides players with a full list of which supply centres they control every autumn season privately, players are informed immediately if they lose a home supply centre. On top of this every autumn the GM will publish the seven supply centre totals without indicating which total is for which country.
6. NMRS are published. Orders for non-existent units are published and labelled as such. If a country NMRS, all retreats result in disbandments and are published.

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This is one of several versions of Stab. These rules have been taken from Steve Agar's compilation of variants of Stab. The variant itself was invented by Andy Evans.

## ECU: THE GAMES

### International Cline 9 Person Gamestart

A week ago I sent out the gamestart announcement to the fine cast of Mike Pustilnik (USA), Robert Acheson (Canada), Andrew England (Australia), Mike Hopcroft (USA), Walter Compton (Venezuela), Mark Nelson (UK), Colin Grubb (UK), Chris Edwards (Japan) and John Crosby (USA). With five continents represented, this is certainly a truly international line-up!

The game name is Artichoke Hearts. It will be run outside the zine to six to seven week deadlines. I already have one standby: Jack McHugh but I could do with a few more. Is anyone interested?

### Waiting Lists

Stab: GM - me

Derwood Bowen, Doug Brown

Come on, folks. You've seen the rules now join in! Please give me your preference lists straight away. I need a list from Doug Brown too.

Downfall of the Lord of the Rings: GM - me

Nhan Vu, Bruce Geryk, Doug Brown, Cathy Ozog, Rod Walker, David Anderson

Just two more needed. Again please send a preference list along with your request to play.

Stab and Downfall will be played in the zine to five week deadlines (hopefully!). There is no gamefee for either game.

Railway Rivals: GM Brian Longstaff

Doug Brown (USA), Mark Nelson (UK), Conrad von Metzke (USA)

I've not heard from Brian on this though I hear that he's trying to recruit some British players. I'm hoping for a sort of Anglo-American challenge game with the same amount of players from the USA and UK. Again this game will be run outside the zine to independent deadlines. Expect some sort of gamefee too to cover the cost of the maps.

In addition to all this the Cline 9 game which I used to run in Costaguana may well be transfered to this zine if the players concerned agree. Most of them are already subscribers or traders already so it's no big deal. Conrad seems to prefer the idea. It would certainly be convenient for me.

Would anyone be interested in GMing a regular Diplomacy game? I'd like run a straight forward international game but I really don't have the time. However a couple of people have asked to play. The game could be run outside the zine at your own pace. All I'll do is get together the players and think of a silly game name.

Next issue might include the rules for Excalibur or maybe some blurb on all the different versions of Cline. Did you know that the Pustilnik-Billinness version of Cline is the Mark VIII version? I can see you're impressed...

## THE PICK OF THE SLIME: PART I

I'm not sure if there's enough room for the whole of this article and a few other bits and pieces, which I'm determined to squeeze into this issue. So this issue you'll probably just get the Democrats this issue and the Republicans plus a bit of analysis next. Enjoy...

### THE DEMOCRATS

Theoretically, the Democrats seem to have a lot going for them. Traditionally, they are the stronger of the two parties. More people identify with the Democratic than with the Republicans. They have a strong base in local and state politics. Nationally, they seem to have controlled the House of Representatives for aeons. Even before the Iran/Contra Affair, the Democrats scored a good success in retaking control of the Senate. With the doubts raised in the Iran/Contra investigations, the Democrats have definitely increased their momentum. Even though Reagan retains a great deal of popularity, I sense that Americans as a whole have had enough with the style and the conservatism of the past few years. Just as eight years of the popular Eisenhower led to the election of Kennedy, I feel eight years of Reagan, could well end with a Democrat waiting to take over the White House.

The problem with the Democrats is that the Party is deeply split. At state level it is an advantage for the party to be able to appeal to liberals in the East and conservatives in the South. However this makes it difficult to unite around a candidate and an agreed platform on the national level. At the moment none of the current candidates has a decent lead over the rest of the pack. This should make for a fascinating race over the next few months.

### Michael Dukakis

I reckon Dukakis would appeal to most people in Britain, for what it's worth. This current governor of Massachussets is basically a European-style social democrat. The main plank of his platform is economic growth with moderate government intervention on the successful Massachussets model. It's certainly true that his state has been a veritable paragon of good economic vibes, but Dukakis conveniently underplays a number of important factors.

Much of Massachussets' growth stems from federal investment. To be more specific, the state economy has benefitted from large military contracts. However this is not the sort of thing which receives much coverage from a good liberal like Dukakis. Whether the Massachussets success can be duplicated on a national level where economic conditions are very different and more varied is, to say the least, debatable. After all, I suspect the Federal government has less control over the national economy than Dukakis' state government has over Mass.

On foreign issues, Dukakis is fairly quiet. Overall he appears liberal and opposes aid to the contras and is amenable towards arms control. On social issues, again, he's relatively liberal though his support for a blanket ban on gay foster parents shows that his tolerance has limits.

Personally, he's fairly uncharismatic but not a complete bomb like Babbitt. Though seen as dull, unlike Bush, Dukakis does seem to be respected. He seems, likewise, to have a healthy respect for the electorate after his defeat several years ago in the Democratic primary for the Mass. gubernatorial nomination. Of course now his Mr Clean image has been shattered after his aides knobbled

Biden. Whether his formal apology and sacking of the miscreants will defuse the criticism remains to be seen. I expect Dukakis to flop in Iowa. (Telling hard pressed farmers to diversify into Belgian endive is not wise...) However, he should bounce back with a victory in the New Hampshire primary. After that, who knows.

#### Richard Gephardt

It has been a while since I came across such a noxious, oozing slime as Dick Gephardt. I dislike his style and everything he stands for.

Gephardt is a candidate of dying industries. His main friends are to be found in the bureaucracies of the big unions. His trademark so far is his support for measures of warmed-over protectionism. If he ever dropped form the race, I would throw a celebration party.

Of course this would never happen this one-dimensional all-politician. I can't imagine him ever being embroiled in a juicy scandal. If propositioned by a sexy woman, I expect he'd just ask for her vote and move on to the next gleaming round of photo opportunites.

Sadly, he's moving ahead in Iowa, which may give him the momentum to find support in areas where he's weaker like the East and South. With Biden gone, Gephardt is the only major sleaze left in the Democratic race.

#### Paul Simon

This is not the singer, I'm afraid, but a Senator. Simon is distinctive for being the only classic New Deal liberal in the race. While the rest of the candidates are uniformly tagged as neo-liberals, Simon declares that he is "not a "neo" anything".

Simon cuts an anachronistic figure with his bow-tie, a favourite trademark of his. This obscures the fact that he is a very skillful politician. Ironically, he capitalises on his telegenic appearance by appearing honest and different and, consequently, coming across well on TV.

Simon, I suspect, will be more successful than most people predict. He is gaining in Iowa and has a popular touch, even among independents and conservatives, whilst remaining a standard-bearer for unabashed liberalism. Watch this bloke.

#### Bruce Babbitt

Babbitt was my initial favourite. He is a very popular former governor of Arizona. I figured that anyone who can remain as liberal as Babbitt has, whilst governing a conservative state like Arizona, has guts and ability.

Like Dukakis there's no guarantee that he can translate his local prowess into national success. So far, he's proved to be very bad on televised debates. The current gossip is that his campaign is going so badly that he might as well advance unpopular ideas such as a tax increase.

Apparently he is betting everything on an early breakthrough with an advanced direct mail campaign in Iowa. If he fails, he won't even be salvagable as a Veep.

## Albert Gore

Albert Gore is the token Southern conservative. He would only seem to be running because weightier conservatives like Sam Nunn or Charles Robb have bowed out of the race. He is wisely making room for himself on the right by criticising the other candidates as too liberal for Southern white voters.

His campaign strategy seems to be to discount Iowa and New Hampshire and concentrate on the South. He hopes to deflect the momentum from the earlier primaries by urging Southern voters not to let the "Yankees choose our President". However, even in the South, he seems to be trailing Dukakis slightly and Jesse Jackson by miles...

Of course, Tipper Gore and her pet schemes for rating rock records may be a factor. Do people really want her as First Lady?

Gore is an attractive choice in a Vice-Presidential slot for people who want to balance a "liberal" Presidential choice. However you do not necessarily have to run unsuccessfully for President to be chosen as Vice-President. Unless Gore manages to gain a solid Southern following, I could see him passed over in favour of Sam Nunn.

## Jesse Jackson

With the fall of Hart (and the non-entrance of Cuomo, Nunn and Bradley), Jackson remains the top of the polls amongst the Democrats. Jackson achieved miracles last election and I expect him to do better second time around.

Jackson is the only experienced campaigner in the field. Last time, he monopolised the black vote despite the fact that most black leaders did not endorse his candidacy. This time around endorsements abound and Jackson is free to seriously court the white vote. Iowa should be a good indicator of Jackson's new tactics in a state with only about 2% blacks. His aggressive campaign for the farm vote should bear fruit.

Sadly, I don't think the country is yet ready for a black President, or even a black Veep. Jackson's best hope, I reckon, would be to gather enough clout to write the Democratic Party platform and get the eventual nominees to stick to it. If I had one, he'd get my vote.

NEXT ISSUE: THE REPUBLICANS...

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There's not enough room here for a proper Tomatocon review but, suffice to say, Barbara, Gloria and myself had an excellent time. If anyone's interested, I might print the famous Vegie Chili recipe which I used two years ago...

Driving back through New Hampshire, we found at a service station a video machine entitled "Contra". It showed two bare-chested, bewepioned Rambo clones in a jungle about to fight off the "Red Falcons". Nobody was playing it; somewhat appropriately, it had broken down.

New Hampshire is an interesting state. There is no state income tax nor any sales tax except on such items as petrol, cigarettes and booze. Few stores are allowed to sell drink as it remains a monopoly of a few state-run outlets. I wonder if that helps to cut down on alcohol consumption?

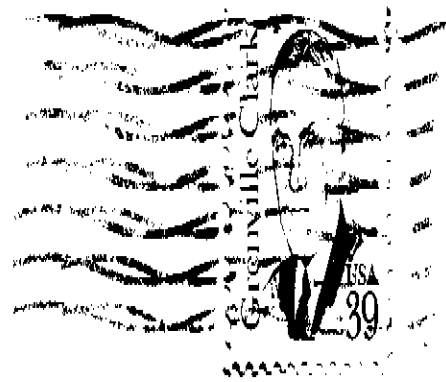
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sure, I'll trade with DWN.

*Ji*