

HOUSE OF LORDS #16

This is *House of Lords*, a zeen by, for and about publishing and publishers, GMing and GMs. It runs no games, and is available to just about anybody. It's composed primarily of the thoughts of its publisher, and an array of letters on topics relevant to publishing a dipzeen in the modern world. Hopefully, this is a forum for those with experience to share the wealth.

"I like to think that those of us who publish do so because of some ideal, some image of what they want to produce. We all want living, vibrant zeens. That's what *HoL* is all about; helping pubbers get the most from and out of their zeens, in an atmosphere where even the angriest disputes can be talked out, or about, in relative safety." - Michael Hopcroft.

"*This is not a forum designed to improve The Poll.* This is a hotbed of lies and hatred. *HoL* is simply a nest of virtually all my attackers, with but a tiny fraction of my supporters represented." - Bruce Linsey

"Arguing...in *HoL* accomplishes nothing—that's a very limited circle of people who are all sufficiently well-informed already to have formed opinions you are not going to change.... *HoL* is a mere gabzeen, the only thing in the hobby even close to an APA." - Rod Walker

House of Lords is what you make it.

You can get this zeen one of three ways. First of all, by sending me one American Dollar per issue. Second, by trading publications with me. Third, if you don't pub, but get some interesting zeens which I don't get, I may be willing to trade for a few issues of those. Make me an offer.

I also expect a fair amount of participation from all of you out there. This zeen sinks or swims on the basis of your contributions. Yes; we spell it "zeen."

Your publisher for this evening is Julie Martin, 17601 Lisa Dr, Rockville, MD 20855-1319.

Each subheading has at one time been the subject of a New Business "feature." That's how we choose topics, more or less. If you'd like to see a particular topic discussed, just write a couple paragraphs worth of your opinions on the subject to get the ball rolling and we'll go with it.

Announcements

Simon Billenness (630 Victory Blvd, Apt 6F, Staten Island, NY, 10301) is taking nominations for his American version of the British "Rusty Bolt" Awards. The categories are:

- 1) Hobby Dyslexia Award for Rampant Misspelling
- 2) Player You Would Most Like to Stab
- 3) Odd Couple Award for the Strangest Hobby Collaboration
- 4) Worst Named Zeen
- 5) Nelson's Eye Award for the Least Accurate Hobby Observation
- 6) Stupidest Hobby Craze
- 7) Patience of Job Award for the Most Unreasonably Delayed Zeen
- 8) Most Boring Subject of Correspondence
- 9) Marycon Non-Event of the Year Award
- 10) Upstart of the Year
- 11) Microwave Award for the Most Reheated Feud
- 12) True Confession Award for the Juiciest Admission in a Zeen
- 13) Fake of the Year
- 14) True Hobby Peon (the person most dumped on in the hobby)
- 15) The *Blunt Instruments* Award for the Most Eagerly Awaited Fold

The nominations are due by Saturday, July 30.

Dick suggests another category for the Rusty Bolt (USA) Awards: the "Mrs Zarse Rusty Nut Award for Most Ridiculous Hobby Action."

The deadline for the Runestone Poll has been extended indefinitely since The Pollster doesn't have a record-breaking number of votes yet. Also this may give him the chance to do something he's been wanting to do for years: announce the results at a major ~~ego trip~~ con. Once again Our Hero changes the rules in mid-Poll. If you haven't voted yet, who knows, maybe you still can.

Mark Lilleht (PO Box 3166, Charlottesville, VA, 22903-0166) has published two issues of *The Scribblerist*, so it is now eligible to be voted on in the Runestone Poll. Good thing Bruce extended the deadline so that he wouldn't have an ineligible zeen on his official ballot!

Hugh Christie (43 East Houston Ave, Montgomery, PA, 17752) is publishing *Trust Me! I Play Diplomacy*, a warehouse zeen to replace *Over There*. Robert Smith is still running *Life Goes On* as a subzeen therein.

Christie has also published the latest *The Dragon's Lair* for Stephen Wilcox. Wilcox maintains the Dragonstooth (for original players), Gold Crown (for standby players), and Enamel Toad (combined DT and GC) rating systems. This issue of *TDL* (#12) also contains Dave McCrumb's *Grey Ghost* rating system for Gunboat Diplomacy, which I publish in *Lord of Hosts*.

Passchendale #59 was very interesting, containing two articles titled "Evolution and Evaluation of the Runestone Poll" and "*Once Upon a Deadline: A Review of the Latest Publisher's Handbook.*" François hasn't been getting *HoL* long enough to know how extensively these topics have been discussed or to be familiar with the discussions, yet his articles end up summarizing our discussions quite nicely, and he arrives at mostly the same conclusions. If François says it, though, it must be constructive criticism instead of a personal attack.

Just got *Sarmia* #1, another "occasional publication" from Rod Walker, this one dealing with the US Orphan Service and the *Pontevedria* game opening list. Inside, Rod says that he wants "to emphasize that *Pontevedria* is always free of editorial comment, feuds, politics, and similar unwelcome material," and then he launches into yet another attack on Robert Sacks. Well, technically, I guess this *is* a different zeen.

Also got a copy of "Wod's Wamblings." (*Wamble*, as Wod expwains, is a fine owd earwy-modern English word that wefers to the opewation of the bwain durwing a bout of extweme inebwiation.) It consisted of a bunch of Wod's pawanoid wavings. What a cwazed wacko!

PudgeCon: the weekend of August 13-14 at Bob Olsen's house (6818 Winterberry Circle, Wichita, KS, 67226). The second-biggest social event of the season. David Hood probably won't be able to make it since he's getting married on the 13th, but how about a honeymoon in Wichita?

Origins: the third weekend in August in Wisconsin. Go to PudgeCon or Vertigo Games instead.

Vertigo Games: August 27-28 at Brad Wilson's house. Write him (PO Box 126, Wayne, PA, 19087) for directions.

The Concept

(STEVEN CLARK) Edit and collate *this*.

(BRUCE GERYK) God this is a boring letter so far. What can I do to make it interesting?

What the fuck happened to Bobby-boy?!? There wasn't A SINGLE LETTER from Mr Kansas in the entire last issue. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HIM? DO I HAVE TO KILL EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN DALTON BEFORE I FIND THE ANSWER?!?

(PETE GAUGHAN) Let me get this straight—Larry wants to will you Mike Maston when Larry dies? This is an honor??

[Some are born to greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.]

(BOB OLSEN) Mr Peery writes that he doesn't run a letter column because he's "too much of a windbag," and challenges others to say the same. I pick up the gauntlet. Larry, you are a windbag! Hyork hyork, just kidding Larry (hey, did

you get my ballot?). I would like to address one point he raises, though—the question of whatever happened to feuding. I have several answers. For one thing, it became fairly evident that nobody cares; personally, I have yet to hear from anybody saying, “How do you answer the charge that you unethically smuggled purple-spotted kumquats into the Taj Mahal?” Second, as Larry notes, the stiletto has replaced the bludgeon—a needle deflates a balloon of pomposity in a very efficient manner. But most importantly, everything I’d care to say was being demonstrated and proved far more effectively than I ever could by the other side; the mass mailings constitute a devastatingly revealing autobiography, and the mass mailing that went out two days after the Challenger explosion told anyone with brain to think and heart to feel all anyone will ever need to know about its author.

By the way, I am shocked at the way in which *HoL* is being used as a forum for vicious personal attacks, such as that by that ignoramus, Ken Peel, on me. He’s fortunate that I don’t respond to every paramecium that falls off the turnip truck. All things considered, Mr Peel is no more of a nuisance to me than a gnat.

(CHRIS CARRIER) So Hugh Christie and Bob Smith are folding their zeens because of Feuding? Oh, what a shame...let us all take time out to shed a tear. *Bbbbbbuuuurrrrrppp*. Ah, that felt good. What a couple of cry babies. I agree with you, pubbing has never been and never will be a job for the thin-skinned. A pubber should be aware that anything that s/he says or does in this hobby, or allows to be said or done in his or her zeen, can start a major Feud. That’s simply a fact of life in a hobby with large IQs and larger egos. The best solution is mine: sit back and enjoy all the Feuds and Feuding.

Do you remember an episode of Star Trek called “The Day of The Dove”? Hobbyists should think of their side in the Feud as Kirk and the crew of the Enterprise, the other side as the Klingons, and me as the energy being who sits back and enjoys it. What the fuck—I’m one of the plebians, and need my bread and circuses. (I expect the last sentence to be featured in a Bad Boy publication in the near future.)

benzene is good. suggest all subscribe.

(SIMON BILLENNESS)

Zeen Recommendations

Praxis for excellent writing and juicy controversy
benzene for in-depth political discussion & general chat

Vertigo for laid-back fannishness

Graustark for solid, reliable GMing and principled pacifism

The Boob Report for press

The Abyssinian Prince for in-depth musical discussion

Zeen Register for its extensive & fair zeen listing
Right, that’s enough ass-kissing....

(DICK MARTIN) OK, I’ll bite on Larry’s questions. They’re always good for something or another... I think we should deal with returning pubbers who have had messy folds on an individual basis. Big surprise, huh? Really, if a pubber is running 20 games and folds because it’s too much work, comes back and opens 20 games again I would have my doubts. Pubbing should be a learning experience, and if the guy hasn’t learned his limits the first time.... I wouldn’t condemn him, but I wouldn’t jump on the bandwagon either.

Encouraging someone to try publishing seems counterproductive to me. If someone is ready to publish, he’ll do it. Until then, better not to talk the poor guy into something he’ll regret later. I agree on the shortage of zeens (good or otherwise), relative to the number of newcomers pouring into dipdom. There are quite a few older zeens that just aren’t as vibrant as they used to be.

(DAVE MCCRUMB) One comment that I keep hearing over and over again is that we have a shortage of good publishers. What is the correct number of publishers? And what constitutes a good publisher? I think that we have several good ones, and contrary to what most people think, I believe that there have been several promising additions to publishing within the past year. I guess most of them are concentrating on gaming rather than letter columns and discussions, leaving them out of consideration for most people.

It takes new publishers a while to hit their stride. There are a few zeens that start excellent, but most begin with a very modest format. You must give zeens a chance to mature.

(BRUCE LINSEY) For your info, I’ll be reproducing major portions of Dick Martin’s and Robert Sacks’ letters from *HoL* #15 in *Praxis*. I reserve the right from now on, to quote in part or *in toto* any letter you publish which contains attacks on either me personally, or the Runestone Poll. (For that matter, I may quote *any* letter pertaining to me or my projects.)

[Mark Berch, *Diplomacy Digest*, #103 (Jan 1987): “I think that, with rare exceptions, in amateur

publishing, *it is the author and not the publisher who has the right to erect barriers to reprinting.*"

[United States Copyright Office, *Circular R1: Copyright Basics*, (December 1983): "Copyright protection subsists from the time the work is created in fixed form; that is, it is an incident of the process of authorship. The copyright in the work of authorship *immediately* becomes the property of the author who created it. Only the author or those deriving their rights through the author can rightfully claim copyright."

[Robert Sacks, letter to Bruce Linsey, (7 June 1988): "I trust you will advise Stewart that you do not have any authority to speak for me, paraphrase me, or selectively quote me, and that since *Praxis* is not *HoL*, advice requested from the Lords is not requested from *Praxis*."

{Dick Martin: "I think Linsey does everyone a disservice by reprinting my remarks outside the context of this zeen, in a necessarily selective fashion. The *HoL* readers are deprived of the discussion, the *Praxis* readers don't have the faintest notion what this is all about (or interest in the topic), and the editing quality drops to nil. These are sufficient reasons for me to request that my stuff not be reprinted."}

[Go ahead, Bruce. Make my day.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I just finished a letter from Sacks. If he's serious about treating "the Lords" as though we are some sort of body, then perhaps we should start behaving as such. Therefore, I would like to propose the formation of an informal organization of Diplomacy publishers.

For what purpose? To coordinate the various activities which have been handed to us. We could serve as advisors to anybody who wants the opinion of a good share of publishers. In particular, we could be of great help to novice publishers, not only by publishing *House of Lords* on a regular basis, but by establishing links for newcomers with experienced publishers who can help them with many of the various questions a new publisher faces. Such a one-on-one link many be even more helpful than a handbook, because every publisher will have his own problems and challenges. At the same time, we can serve as a forum for questions of particular interest to publishers, like what sort of openings sheet the hobby needs, what sort of zeen directory, and questions of general policy.

In my ideal structure, membership would be open. Anybody could join. The only difference for *HoL* would be that it is now the organ of an organization. It would then be possible to take votes of the active membership at various times on various

topics of importance to the organization and its publications. The organization would collect information for distribution through various channels like *HoL* and *KGO*'s publications. Funding would come from any individuals or organizations that wish to contribute; I don't see a need for any dues beyond subs or trades to *HoL*, and how would you get people to pay? It's the contributions of time, energy, and experience that are important anyway.

All this means is that the Lords can organize themselves as a loose body acting to serve the needs of the postal gaming hobby, a repository for the knowledge and experience of its members.

It would also mean that somebody who wanted to open a question "to the Lords" could effectively do so and expect some kind of rational response from the membership. My hope is that we could be seen as an open and stabilizing force in a hobby that is too full of pitfalls.

There are several possible things to call such an agglomeration. The idea that came to mind as I was writing this was the North American Association of Diplomacy Publishers. But that's a bit too long and formal, isn't it? We could simply continue calling ourselves "the Lords," of course....

What I would like to see next is people willing to correspond with novice publishers and potential publishers, on a volunteer basis, of course. They could always refer people to articles and publications, but there is a considerable advantage to having a real person helping out with the difficult early steps of publishing a zeen.

[So what's the difference between this "House of Lords" and *HoL*? Ah, I see: voting, funding, fancy title, "organization." You'd like to turn us into a "hobby service." No thanks; we've resisted this offer for years. Voting: I don't care to run any polls. And what provision would you have for enforcing "the Lords'" decisions? Funding: don't need it, don't want it. Fancy title and "Organization": you gotta be kidding.

[All the rest is at least part of what this zeen has always intended to be and do: all-talk, less rock.]

Archives

(STEVEN CLARK) File *this* away with your other zeens.

(SIMON BILLENNESS) To answer your question, the NGC was the National Games Club which functioned as a "hobby organisation."

Apparently it started up novice packages, a central Diplomacy waiting list, official NGC zeens, and plenty of criticism and dissidents. In 1974, it was really in its stride, filling several novice Diplomacy games a *week*. In one year (1974), the number of hobby members tripled and the number of zeens doubled; that was the "NGC boom." After only a couple of years, however, the NGC was effectively dead, but its legacy remains with the services it set up and the sustained hobby growth it kicked off.

(ROBERT SACKS) Reasons why a publisher should send his zeen to the Archives: if it is the sole and acknowledged Archives feeding information to a responsible orphan project, then the publisher would be under subtle hobby pressure to send in his zeen, and thereby provide Orphan insurance for his players; if the Archives is sponsoring a hobby flagship zeen, sending your zeen to the Archives gets a copy in trade of the flagship zeen.

(CHRIS CARRIER) Hinton has a history of constantly threatening to file frivolous lawsuits (known as Feud Fouls in this neck of the woods), and Peery has been trying to take over the hobby for years—to wit, his recent suggestion that "the hobby" should "deal with" people who have had a messy fold. What should we do with people who fold messily? Nothing. Maybe next time around people will have wised up. Or maybe the pubber will have wised up. Or maybe other people's pubbing practices are none of Peery's business. I especially like that last idea.

Actually, though, I find two archives more suitable than one, and they should trade with each other to prevent the loss of any material through a natural disaster such as fire, or an unnatural disaster such as the Bad Boys renting a tractor-trailer in San Diego.

Bad Boys

(STEVE LANGLEY) What sort of a topic is the Bad Boys? How did they come by that name anyhow? I know we started calling them that at Pudgecon, and I half sort of feel that I originated it, but it could have easily been a "monkey hear, monkey say" response on my part. If I did originate the thing, and since in many, many ways, the name makes the man, I am sorry. (Are those two commas correct? There was a double level of subordination, but does that require two commas? That's what I like about the English language, always new ways

to look at it.)

From personal experience (one weekend of casual observation) I have formed a picture: Zarse is a big teddy bear with a weird talent for unusual association and a lot more intelligence than he shows. Of the set, he is the pick of the litter. Geryk is a lot more intense and is very impressed with himself. Clark is a good looking version of Geryk, with not quite as many brains. The two of them, reading aloud Ken Peel's "tongue in cheek" article about getting into Diplomacy was very funny, because neither of them realized that Ken was tongue in cheek, and so they were getting loudly irate at some of the things they considered major gaffes on Ken's part. How bad is a person who appreciates their own satire and fails to recognize the satire of others? Perhaps we should call them the "Would like to be considered 'Bad' Boys of Dip"?

[Certainly one of the Bad Boys' weaknesses is that they don't recognize others' satire. I blame this partly on their lack of knowledge of hobby history. But you're saying that makes them less "bad"?

[It is another weakness that they have a title to live up to, which possibly makes them behave more outrageously than they would otherwise, and a reputation to live down, if they should ever decide they'd like to be taken seriously for a change. But they are not unique in this respect.

[What am I, the Hobby Punctuation Custodian? I like the multiple commas idea: the more precise punctuation allows more precise expression of your idea. Recently, one of the columnists in the Washington Post was talking about putting the question mark with the embedded question in the middle of a sentence, rather than at the end. "What is a Bad Boy?, Steve wanted to know." instead of "What is a Bad Boy, Steve wanted to know?" (Odd punctuation there, too.) There's no question that Steve wants to know; the question is: what is a Bad Boy? It has been said before that there is no such thing.]

(JOHN CARUSO) How can you have a concept discussion on people? Because they were conceived? How do you know they were conceived? Are you a mind reader?

Personally, I have no opinion on the Bad Boys. They exist, sort of like a plague of locust, though not as destructive, but harder to control. Hey, they have a right to express themselves. Who am I to tell them that their opinions are flawed? They are still young fellows, not long from their mother's womb. They still have much to experience, and experience is the best teacher.

I was never bitten by any pets before, but Woody took a chunk out of me. Does that qualify me for disability? Rabies shots?

[Did Robert hit Woody with the beer can before or after he bit you?

[Well, we know that Zarse was conceived, at least, because *someone* wrote his mother all about what a Bad Boy little Jeffie has been. Hey, we live with Dick's mom, and she loves to get mail. You think, maybe, if Dick is really, *really* bad...?]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Mending fences.... It's easy enough to break the fences. A little thing can do it. There are people in this hobby that make one boil with ill-focused rage; but that is not healthy for a publisher. I like to think that those of us who publish do so because of some ideal, some image of what they want to produce. We all want living, vibrant zeens. That's what *HoL* is all about; helping pubbers get the most from and out of their zeens, in an atmosphere where even the angriest disputes can be talked out, or about, in relative safety. I have yet to be told, "You wrote something really foolish in *HoL*. Given that my experience has been, to say the least, odd, that is surprising. It would be nice if some attention were brought to the topic of *ending* feuds, since it's so very easy to start them.

Why do I care what people think? Because I'm not a total boor, that's why. Just because I'm "paranoid" doesn't obligate people not to be out to get me. Geryk should know that by now. Why should I bother? Because I happen to be conscientious about publishing.

Is it a character failing to prefer being liked to being hated? Or at least having people undecided? I could probably be extremely obnoxious if I wanted to, but I probably wouldn't like the results either. I wonder what would happen if Dipcon 89 came along and Geryk and I found ourselves in a tournament game? You can't iron out so many months of bad vibes with 15-minute diplomacy periods.

I got the Linsey "fake." I will probably get the next one as well; he's been running these "commentaries" on the last few issues, since there's so much talk about The Poll. In fact, I received many of the fakes mentioned in your editorial. Apparently it's that time of year. Since I've just told everybody how I do *NUTMGS* now, I'll probably see a fake of that one too inevitably. Probably including a suicide note to make everybody believe I've killed myself.... Sending me a hobby joke is pointless, because I rarely get the punchline. I've

been told to ignore the Bad Boys, but at times that is like ignoring the bubonic plague. They would make it a lot easier if they dropped out of sight for a while and started over again in a few months.

Correspondents are not strangers; at least, I do not consider them such. that may be why my approach differs from theirs.

I did have a few Bad Boy comments as it turns out, but I'm not entirely pleased with them. What can you say beyond a certain point? They would be pleased to hear anything I had to say against them; more evidence of the Great Hobby Conspiracy. I haven't written Geryk concerning the directory yet, and I probably won't; the point of diminishing returns passed long ago. Besides, anyone who would do what they've been doing lately must have either a death wish or a strong streak of masochism. In either case, they would enjoy hearing once more what scum they are believed to be.

A lot of people have been advising me to simply ignore the bastards, which would be fine if I could only convince them to ignore me. It always works that way with the bullies. How do you tell somebody to stop hitting when you are winning the fight?

At least they don't NMR (or so I have been told), which would be great if only there was anybody who would let them play in actual games. Do they even play Dip anymore, or have they given up on it?

[Seems like quite a few of the most influential people in the hobby don't play or run the game at all! The point has been brought up before: why should Dipdom listen to people who don't play Dip?]

(SIMON BILLENNESS) I suppose you have to concede that Geryk & Co have a point about some people taking the hobby too seriously. However, I can't see how the Bad Boys have encouraged anyone to lighten up. Instead, they've just lost all sense of decency while tediously burbling on how wonderful they are. Am I the only person in the hobby who finds them burnt out and very boring to boot?

(STEVEN CLARK) Why don't we like Chris Carrier? Because he is a complete *Turbo Freak*. We have talked for over an hour with Chris on the phone, and it was obvious from the first sentence that Chris has little touch with reality. Chris got a BA in Economics from a State Univ (Sacramento State, to be precise) where he didn't "excel," and when he didn't get an awesome job, he blamed it on

society. Chris thinks successful people don't exist. Chris has no friends. The only people he knows are family, coworkers (at a job he describes as dismal), and hobbyists. He thinks that to live your entire life through the mail is normal and OK. Do you really think we would team up with someone like that????? Most freaks realize that they are failures (thanks in some portion to our efforts), but Chris, whose off-hours consist exclusively of eating, "jacking off," and Dip, thinks he is normal.

[I thought you might team up with him because he enjoys watching feuds. I didn't think you would necessarily be *friends*. But you talked to him on the phone for an hour, didn't you?]

(CHRIS CARRIER) Bad Boys as a concept is worth discussing. What I like about you, Julie, and Dick is that you share with me a common *joie de combattre* in the hobby, as evidenced by your "zeen-faking and poll-tampering and all those other kinds of nasty fun." Just as I enjoy treating Feuds as legitimate hobby games and treating them as a jolly spectator sport.

But the Bad Boys are something different, and I have no qualms with any of the measures that have been taken to date against them, even though I agree with their theory that there is nothing you can write in a Feud letter to someone that could cause "hurt" and "pain," contrary to the theory spread about by the bleeding heart crybabies in the hobby that Feuds, ordinary, non-Feud Foul feuds, can hurt people.

As you stated, "Something is wrong when Chris Carrier... the feudmonger ((Feud Fan)) can't get along with the Bad Boys. They should be natural allies, wouldn't you think? Or has the original concept degenerated into mere frat-boy type bashing of everyone not in the frat? Gimme a clue!"

The Bad Boys are basically spoiled party children who are scared shitless of failure, and now, as the end of their lives in cosseted academia becomes a near-future event, they project their fear by attacking other people who are not as successful as they envision they will be in their wet dreams of grandeur.

It is also clear that seeing that the Bad Boys tried to find a home among the Bruxelles in the hobby, and failed, they are now kissing up to the Bruxbashers. I would urge you to reject these overtures. They think no more of you than they do of Linsey—in their book, both of you are freaks—to quote them, "If you have a significant role to play in the hobby, you are wasting time you could put to use making money if you had a good education/job, but of course you don't." Now you, Julie, and

Dick, between you are putting out *five* zeen titles. If your name wasn't Martin—if, say, it was the Courtemanches, or the Langleys, or any other hobby couple putting out five titles, he wouldn't be kissing your ass—he'd be kicking it and calling you "turbo freaks."

Far better to associate with persons like myself, who respect the effort and work that goes into publishing, and who shares with you the job of postal warfare and hobby combat. Also, wouldn't it be justice if any of those death threat letters wound up coming back to haunt them and screw up their Real World search for jobs? After all, they came to this hobby to taunt us for having "failed in life," so wouldn't it be wonderful if they failed in life because they joined the hobby?

[Well, Chris, you have a good point there that putting out five zeens should qualify us as "turbo-freaks," if that's all there was to it, but aren't you forgetting the rest of the quote? I make enough money, and I have a three-day work week, which means I have plenty of time to waste doing zeens (there not being much point in trying to earn more—I hardly spend what I make now). Furthermore, I really don't spend that much time on zeens: 8-12 hours every six months for *Lord of Hosts*, 35-45 hours every three months for *House of Lords*, a couple hours a month on *Retal*. That's not a lot of time for a hobby I share with my husband; beats watching TV. The clincher: I never let the zeen come before real life. As I've said before, I do it when I have the time, material, and inclination, not otherwise.]

(DICK MARTIN) Gee, you try to come up with an interesting topic on something current in dipdom, and the readers lose the forest for the trees. The Bad Boys isn't just about Geryk, Clark and Zarse, it's a whole state of mind. Many of you may not have noticed, but dipdom is a lot more boring these days than it used to be. Oh, sure, there's a mass mailing or two every month about some imagined slight, but for the most part it's dull as doorknobs. Save us from ourselves, François!

It seems that dipdomites suffer from a singular lack of ambition, as well. Content just to while away their boring lives in front of typewriters or terminals, devoting whatever creative energy can be drummed up on "hobby politics." Ho hum. Dipdom ought to supplement whatever outside activities you may enjoy, not overwhelm everything.

Not that having an Audi should be the benchmark of acceptability, but please come up with an attitude better than "My life sucks, and I don't

really care.” Whew, a little of that goes a long way.

Ever wonder why you don't see many “successful” people in Dipdom? The only ones I can think of offhand are the lawyers, and I think they can deduct the lying and cheating of a Dip game as an educational expense.

[I don't have an Audi, I have an innie! (Belly button joke!)]

(BOB OLSEN) My, we're getting pretty desperate here, aren't we, with the Bad Boys as our new topic? Just goes to show how little it takes to achieve Celebrity in the hobby. If it was at all possible to take them seriously, I'd have to agree with Mr Gaughan—they are nasty little brutes, aren't they? But the whole thing is just a little bit overblown and comes across as, well, sort of silly. On the other hand, it must be admitted that though as literary *artistes* they aren't fitten to carry Ed Wrobel's pencil box, they are unmatched in their ability to goad their victims into embarrassing, fatuous statements. (The *Random Thought* that arrived the other day contained Fred Davis' assertion that in going after him they were “kicking a cripple”...my, my, my.) The most interesting thing to me is that in their brief tenure they seem to have arrived at conclusions that some of the rest of us only came to after years of anguish and self-delusion.

As Mark Twain might have said, everybody talks about the Bad Boys, but nobody does anything about 'em. At least not till recently...when firm and effective action was taken by the one who generally takes care of such things. Not surprisingly, given his limited behavioral repertoire, he chose personal-life interference. I rather suspect the Boys really had no idea how crazed a wacko can really be...they know now.

What I take to be the Bad Boys' basic position—we all settle for less in life than we could have, and a life that contains nothing but The Hobby is no life at all—strikes me as a truism. And the arguments of the more rational anti-Bad Boys people—people are not for pooping and when you've heard the F-word once, you've heard enough—likewise is a truism. Both sides are, basically, right. Of course, some people may regard this position as somewhat wimpy. Thank you!

(JAC WORDSMITH) I admire what the Crude Dudes are trying to do—puncture the pomposity and pretentiousness of some who take their Dip activities a lot more seriously than I think is appropriate for a hobby. The BBs have the

arrogance, certainty, and cleverness of their youth, but not yet the restraint, tolerance, and wisdom which time teaches. During their work together on the NAVB, Bruce Geryk and Fred Davis must have come to a meeting of the minds: just a few days after Fred's college-name-dropping spree in his “Feathered Serpent” article in *Bushwacker*, I got a letter from Bruce G saying among other things that he believes that college degrees are not worth much unless they're from a name college. If we ever hear Bruce stooping to boasting about being admitted to MENSA, then we'll have some grounds for believing that the Killer Bs/Fred Davis fireworks were all a sham—in which case I'll think that it was all done for entertainment and so think better of them all.

[That Jac W, he's just a crazed wacko!]

(DAVE MCCRUMB) I see that Linsey's “pet Geryk” has bitten him. In most cases of a vicious attack by a pet, they check the pet for rabies. I understand that this requires the removal of the head of the pet. Has this been done? That would certainly explain a lot.

[No, I'm afraid that some crazed wacko animal rights group has been hiding the pet Geryk to save him from this cruel fate. This means that Linsey has had to undergo a series of painful and potentially dangerous rabies shots, which also explains a lot.]

(ROBERT SACKS) I'm going to try to explain why being “Bad” to hobbyists is a bad idea. It has to do with basic morality. It doesn't matter if the basic rule of the game allows you to lie to other players within the game. Basic morality applies once you leave the trivial arena of negotiating and writing orders.

I'm not going to pretend that playing Diplomacy, or any other game, is important. Playing a game is a social activity. There is some thrill in playing a game well against good competition, but few people play games by mail because they can't live without that thrill. I would agree that people who can't live without that thrill are in a bad state. I emphatically do not agree that it is justified to hurt them further if they can't live without such a thrill.

Basic morality applies to the relation between the gamemaster or publisher and his players, the relation between players outside of the game, the conduct of hobby services, and general editorial policy. Basic morality suggests that you act in an honest and responsible manner, and that you avoid gratuitously hurting people, especially people who themselves

aren't hurting other people.

If you honestly believe that someone is hurting people, then you may not be able to act in an honest and responsible manner without hurting, but you are not released from the basic obligation to act in an honest and responsible manner. A long time ago someone asked me if someone else acting reprehensibly allowed me to tell lies about him; no, I replied, it allowed me to tell the truth about him. Simply being addicted to the thrill of playing games by mail is essentially a victimless act—you shouldn't attack people for it.

Burnout

(STEVEN CLARK) Freaks never cease to amaze me.

(SIMON BILLENNESS) To keep your interest in the hobby alive, it's important to know what burns you out and what arouses your enthusiasm. Personally, I find that feuding burns me out the most. I've noticed that Jim Burgess feels the same way. I've pretty much given up commenting on the Bad Boys because it's more fun to run games, write letters, and type up *Excitement City Unlimited*. (In fact, it's even more interesting to cook elaborate meals, watch movies, and read books....)

[On the other hand, some people find that feuding is what arouses their enthusiasm, and running games and zeens burns them out.]

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Since I've been churning out *High Inertia* and working with Steve to get our game results out on schedule, you might say that my recent case of burnout "hasn't come out of the closet." The people who are really conscious of it are the ones I owe letters to, and those like the Carusos who used to consider my *KK/W* submissions as regular a monthly event as mortgage payment time. With my job (newspaper reporting) demanding daily writing and nightly meetings, my mail pile has reached dismaying new heights, and I am only just now plowing through it. Family finances and spring housecleaning have eaten up huge chunks of my sparse spare time. Still, I can't ever have been a complete burnout case because I have always kept up with reading the ~~zines~~ zeens we get (perfect thing to do at 2 am after hallucinating on the drive home from School Board!)

Census

(STEVEN CLARK) Tabulate *this*.

(ROBERT SACKS) I'm all in favor of swapping Billeness for Thatcher after she retires/is retired.

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) A piece of advice for future reference: if people are still doing censuses, it would be a nice little trick if with the listings was a number showing how many sublists the individual appeared on. No need to name the individual zeens (that is confidential anyway), just how many zeens the player subs to. It would give independent hobby pollsters an idea who the best candidates for sample ballots would be. It would also help new publishers figure out who to send their initial samples to, and who is probably already overburdened with extra zeens.

[So, you think it's "confidential" who gets which zeens? I think it *should* be confidential, particularly for unpublished address lists like *Diplomacy World's*. That's the way we kept it when we ran the census. But you'll never guess who has asked Ken Peel to divulge this information to him. In fact, he demanded to know why he should *not* be entitled to this information. He even suggested that Ken give him the information, and then deny doing it!]

(BRUCE LINSEY) Ken Peel writes in with a letter that doesn't even mention me, and Julie uses it as an excuse to imply that some of the Runestone Voters are not legitimate hobbyists.

[This was from *Praxis*.

[1. "These are allegedly real people who are currently active in Dipdom. If you believe that, you might use the voter list as a foundation for your Census." I implied just as strongly that they *are* legitimate hobbyists.

[2. "If you disbelieve,...." This is relevant because Bruce himself has brought up the issue: "How would you like it if people sent in fake names to the census?" Bruce himself admits that he has a hobby data base of about 1900 names and addresses, but that he knows lots of them are people who have left the hobby.

[3. "...you might use the independently compiled Census to check the voter list." Clearly a joke, the point of which is: what real use is the census? If it's only going to be used to pick on

Bruce, or to give him addresses for mass mailings, it's not worth the effort.]

Computers & Filing Systems

(STEVEN CLARK) Do a data-base on *this*.

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) When Steve and I moved to Pennsylvania with our huge cardboard boxes filled with zeen envelopes, I insisted we buy some regulation filing cabinets. We keep the Dip one in our bedroom (that isn't kinky, is it?). It is a fairly strong four-drawer cabinet; the first drawer is our Dip letter file, which is alphabetical by correspondent. The second and third drawers contain Dip zeens, listed alphabetically (although we do indulge in bits of whimsy like filing Don Williams' zeens under "Ducky Zeens," and Jim Burgess material under "Boob Zeens"!), and the bottom drawer is mainly miscellaneous zeens—samples, occasional publications, stuff from the Zeen Bank, etc. Every couple of weeks, I take recent Dip mail from the kitchen chair we never use and file it in the cabinet.

Since Steve has been in the hobby since 1982, we have gathered quite a good collection of zeens which we could never force ourselves to discard. But Steve periodically goes through his letters and throws out those which are purely negotiational. The chatty letters he saves, as do I. But what I really want to get rid of now is a box full of Zeen Bank material which I administered for Ken Peel a year ago and have never gotten him (or anyone else) to collect since! Anyone want to take some off my hands? It's just taking up room on the floor of our master closet these days....

In our desk (which I use far more than Steve) is a smaller filing system, dealing mainly with the Dip games we have run and the raw material for *High Inertia*. As soon as a player sends in orders and press, I file it in this drawer after making sure no COA must be publicized or question answered right away. At adjudication time, Steve simply pulls out the game folder and has everything together (including all past seasons' results, addresses, and GMs Helper info). After a season is adjudicated, I transfer all orders and press to an "obsolete" folder, which I hold onto until the game ends.

I should also mention a letter-writing system we use, because we have found it to be invaluable since I instituted it around the time we got married. In a notebook, each day's mail is entered (who it's to, the date, the subject matter). It keeps us from repeating ourselves in personal letters, helps us keep

track of what we do, and gives us some way of knowing if the USPS has screwed us over (again!).

[It certainly helps a GM or a pubber to be organized, as long as the organization does not become so detailed that it's eating up a large chunk of time itself. We're equal with the filing cabinet and the Zeen Bank material. Your desk is organized—ours is a mess, which is definitely a problem, at least for me. But you lose me with the mail notebook—to me, that's over-organization. Then again, I have a very good memory, so I "file" a lot of things in my head instead of writing them down. I'm more likely to lose the notebook under a stack of papers than I am to lose my mind, eh?]

(WALLACE NICOLL) As you will see from this letter (£5000 worth of Mac pretending it's a typewriter) and my contributions in the about to go *PoW!* (#26) that I got the Apple Mac Plus and a laser printer to go with it. I ended up with the latest LaserWriter II NT—I originally intended getting an Imagewriter, but since I'd managed to get an educational discount on the deal (I got the laser+Mac for £3900 when it should have cost £5600 since I pretended I was a student and applied for the machine on University headed notepaper—the dealer knew fine well what was happening), I figure I might as well go the whole hog and get the PostScript compatible laser so that I can subcontract work for others to recoup some of the cost—it will save me time and cost when I'm doing work on David Watts' Railway Rivals boards.

I fell by some software—14 disks for now—including Ready-Set-Go! 3 and 4, Pagemaker 3, Illustrator, Image Studio, various paint and draw programs, and 3 disks of PD games. I've used PM3 mainly for this issue of *PoW!*, though I did a quick look at RSG4. Problem was that I couldn't place the text. Am I correct in thinking you have to define a text box first—I thought I had done that, but the various place commands were disabled—any suggestions? The thing I am looking for most is clip art and graphics—I'm hoping to get some scanning done locally so that I can get the Dip maps into the machine—you haven't done that already, have you? If you have, then send me a disk, and I'll send some stuff back, though I don't know what you might want. I am hopefully going to be getting more software in the near future—my friend refuses to do any more copying for me—I have to go do it myself, though with about a hundred disks to choose from, that could take a whole weekend!

Main reason for not having much time to read zeens is that I'm still getting Macintosh'd and

exploring its many facets. I have also been busy with work both daytime and in the evening for myself. At the place I work I am currently looking after/installing two small networks of four Sun Workstations at each—UNIX and Suns are totally alien to me, and I'm having to feel my forwards with all the users standing over me waiting to get their hands on the machines. I am also busy doing RR maps for David Watts, and some font designing for some software packages for a UK micro—it flopped internationally, but is big in the UK, and can be found in just about every school. Apple are trying to do the same at the moment, as well as trying to get into the lucrative business market with the team up with DEC. Sun are currently having problems delivering, and a number of companies are turning to Mac IIs instead.

Look out for the next *PoW!* Shame about Doug and Pete's stuff not being lasered—yet—must get me a modem so that their stuff can be downloaded from the Ataris....

(CHRIS CARRIER) If you're on CompuServe or MCI Mail, please give me your email address and I'll be happy to send you *HOL* mail that way.

[We have a CompuServe account, but we never log onto it.]

Costs

(STEVEN CLARK) Way out of your price range.

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) When I wrote to people telling them that *The Chocolate Factory* is a fake and that I have no intention of folding *High Inertia*, I cited as a major reason the cost of pubbing. By paying Melinda for her copying costs—which are much lower than ours would be around here—Steve and I are able to keep pubbing affordable. We would get about half the circulation for the prices charged in this area.

While we did flirt briefly with getting a desktop copier, we didn't dare take the chance of encountering major repair needs. Also, of course, going solo would put squarely in our court the collating/copying/stapling/addressing/stamping headaches! We're not quite gung-ho enough about publishing to get into all that.

(ROBERT SACKS) *Hansard* runs at a very slight surplus, if you don't count the cost of the

copying machine, pre-production supplies, and labor.

(DICK MARTIN) When the copier decides to behave (as it did this month) it runs about 30¢ an issue (of 36 pages) for copying, and the everpresent 65¢ apiece for postage (not including the foreigners). Sure beats the \$1.60 or so we were paying just for reproduction. Then again, we're stuck with the collating/stapling ourselves so we suffer on time. Putting together one *Retal* takes the better part of a weekend to copy, collate, staple, address, and stamp.

(SIMON BILLENNESS) We don't have any "Kinko's" in New York, but there is a fast-food style printing chain called "Pip." I use a no-name printer two doors from where I work. He's friendly and exceptionally reliable (three-hour turnaround) and the quality is quite high.

I aim to make a (tiny) profit on domestic subbers' copies. This is partly to keep my costs under control, and partly so that I don't get a sinking feeling whenever I receive unexpected subscriptions. Of course, my 40-odd trades and overseas subbers wipe out my marginal profits, but I expect that's the case for most publishers. I also don't charge gamefees and mail out the game reports for the independent deadline games for free.

I feel that charging printing costs and not paying them off every month is very unwise. If you have a regular income, printing your zeen is one of those constant bills, like rent, gas, electricity, food, etc, which you should cut down on if you can't pay it every month. I gather Gary Coughlan worked up a sizable debt by charging *EE's* printing costs. I hope Pete Gaughan and Stephen Dorneman don't fall into a similar "charge trap."

[We have Pip down here too, but it's quite a bit different, concentrating on offset printing (at least, it used to), and it's much more expensive than Kinko's. Kinko's is barely a step up from self-service.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Kinko's in Portland has raised their basic rates to 6 cents a copy! This is an insult. Is this the price they pay for being open 24 hours?

I got an unpleasant shock at the Post Office today when the clerk charged me 90¢ to ship a four-page zeen to Australia and the UK airmail. They told me they go by the half-ounce. What does a half-ounce add up to in sheets of regular photocopied paper? (Strangely enough, the copies to

Canada didn't double, they stayed at 30¢.) The postal rates going up is murder on those of us who publish on the cheap. I consider myself lucky to have got this issue out under \$30. The next 3¢ sale will be a major relief for me.

Do you take *Diplomacy World*? I just saw my first issue this week, #50. My only complaint is that Larry should have deposited my sub check about two weeks earlier; the money came out of my account a month after I wrote a check at a particularly inopportune time just as I was assembling my printing money. Publishers and checking accounts live ill together.

Nothing annoys me more than a publisher who waits three to five weeks to deposit my check. Are they trying to decide whether they are worthy of my money? I am generally in the position that I need money right away; if not for a direct publishing expense (stamps, for example) then to offset the money I've already paid out in publishing expenses. So I generally deposit or cash checks very quickly, almost as soon as I can put the name of the new subber on my list.

["The check is in the mail"? There is some transit time, plus "float" time, and that's something that people in tight financial situations usually rely on to get by. But not everyone has such tight finances. I personally go the bank maybe once every two months, since I cash my check at work. Should I make a special trip every time I get a sub check for a few lousy bucks? Maybe you should write the publisher a note asking him to deposit/cash your check immediately, if possible.

[I believe six sheets is an ounce; therefore, three sheets would be a half-ounce.]

Custodians

(RICHARD WHEET) Over the past year, I have been amused by the charges and counter-charges concerning the alleged "death threat" upon the Martin Klan uttered at the Dipcon meeting in Baltimore by none other than the fiendish Fred Davis. What hasn't been popularly known is that there was indeed a fourth witness to this dastardly deed. That individual has finally surfaced.... ta dah...me. But first, let's set the stage for the final blood curdling moment.

Robert Sacks, you know who I mean, the one with the 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock, and 5 o'clock permanent shadow, and Fred Davis, the old guy, were well into their Miller custodian nonsense

before Dick Martin (one with little redeeming social values) and I (a hell of a guy) entered this now famous arena. After about 15 minutes, we decided to adjourn to a place of nutritional delights. Dick, being the fine host that he is, decided to feed me some of my native food, Texas Bar-BQ (Yankee style). After purchasing our gastronomical disaster, we returned to the meeting armed with a five course meal of fine pseudo-Texas cuisine. Fred and Robert were still discussing the matter as everyone with any sense left in disgust. Dick and I having nowhere else to pig out at, remained. Dick had previously mentioned that he didn't want to have anything to do with this discussion, so remained (an amazing feat) silent the entire time. He did, on the other hand, try to get me to throw an empty beer can in front of Robert hoping that instinct would take over and Robert would viciously attack Fred with the deadly can (I resisted Dick's repeated urgings, realizing that Robert might accidentally cut off his ear in the resulting frenzy).... but I regress. Fred after about 15 minutes of this, decided to leave and exited the room. Robert, on the other hand, decided that the discussion had not run it's course and pursued the retreating opponent out into the hall. Fred then verbally counterattacked, and they returned to the room. Dick, had up to this time not uttered a sound (except for a few slurp slurps and a couple of belches). Then Fred attacked Mistress Julie and the battle was joined. Julie, not being there, was championed by her loving spouse (who had that morning been abandoned by her in a strange city with no way home). Dick by this time was covered from head to foot with Bar B-Q sauce, and rib grease was dripping down his elbows (now we know what Julie has to put up with when Dick is *not* in public). Dick responded to the fact (waving a half-gnawed rib bone in the air) that if Julie was to be attacked, she should be there to defend herself. Now the stage is set, the final act is now about to unfold....

Fred in parting uttered the now infamous words. The words that fueled many a line of Dip zine gossip, and I quote "...and I will fight you to the death on that..." unquote. But what was the context of that statement? Could it be that the actual words were taken totally out of context to the entire conversation? Yes, yes, an astonishing yes. Fred was referring to the fee/no fee/long/short numbers/custodian/covenant/etc. So Fred was actually using what is commonly referred to as a "colloquial term". There was no actual death threat, just a colloquial phrase taken totally out of context.

(DICK MARTIN) So what's the big deal about BNs? I've been deemed "out of The Hobby" since I no longer use them, and it's about the best thing to have happened to my GMing. Why, all the polls I read tell me so! This is a quandary, though. Now that I'm out of The Hobby, the polls no longer apply to me, so I no longer have any idea how I'm doing. Woe is me.

I wish Robert would quit referring to your readers as "The Lords." I'm into silly, yes, but this is *very* silly.

I don't think that Linsey, Davis or Hyatt should be de-listed from anything. Theoretically they all still do whatever they're supposed to be doing. Oh yes, the High Responsibilities that The Hobby has lain heavily upon their shoulders. Whatever. I don't think that it's in the greater good to just declare them out of existence.

Linsey's "Hobby Office(s)" are publishing a novice packet for players, one for GMs, and one for publishers. I don't think that the Linsey poll has ever been listed as a service, as what service it provides escapes me.

(STEVEN CLARK) I request that you discuss the following advisory proposition for an issue or two, and then poll the Lords. I will abide by the advice given.

Proposition 4: For gross stupidity and freakish behavior, Robert Sacks should not be considered a stable human being, and should be thrashed by the Bad Boys to within an inch of his life.

(STEVE LANGLEY) In response to Robert Sacks' three questions...who cares? I have no idea if these people are axe murderers in their spare time. Since I don't use the services that they are supposedly providing, my vote shouldn't weigh very heavily, anyway.

(DAVID HOOD) I'm against Sacks' "delisting" nonsense.

[David Hood actually wrote me something?! Catch me, I think I'm going to faint.]

(CHRIS CARRIER) Yes, Sacks has tried to control hobby services. Sign an agreement with Sacks, and you sign control over your custodianship to him, for at least as long as he lives. Sacks was doing this since long before he set up his NYGB. I don't believe that nonprofit corporations have a place in this hobby; the sums of money are too small to be worth the hassle. Give the IRS their due and be done with it.

I'm not even going to dignify Sacks' propositions with a vote. Neither Linsey, Davis, or Hyatt has done anything worth kicking them out of the hobby for, if such a thing were possible, which it isn't, short of committing massive Feud Fouls. In fact, if anyone should be kicked out the hobby, it should be Sacks, for giving one of his pseudo-custodianships to an enemy of the hobby like Bruce Geryk. Now *that* is gross misconduct!!

I think it's hilarious that anti-Feud Peery proposed the Diptax, because the division of such monies would fuel a Feud that would make 1984B (Byrne-Linsey) look like a tempest in a teapot by comparison.

(BOB OLSEN) I'm really amazed by this matter concerning Mr Sacks and the IRS. Do the Gestapo leeches even want to get their slimy paws on that? Incredible. Don't they get their diseased jollies stealing from the taxpayers? Maybe Mr Sacks is being a little bit paranoid here. Then again, nothing those thugs do would shock me....

(SIMON BILLENNESS) My main question about Robert Sacks' fundraising is: why does the IRS have to be brought in at all? The PDO Auction has had hundreds of donations, but nobody expects to write off their donation against tax. Robert Sacks deals with such small amounts of money (smaller even than the amount raised by the PDO Auction). Why not forget all the tax-exempt stuff, throw the IRS guidelines in the bin, and distribute the money freely and without fear of breaking the law?

What's to stop the BNC charging \$1 a number? How about the fact that almost everyone would refuse to pay and not bother obtaining a Boardman Number. I certainly wouldn't cough up. Since the BNC needs statistics on games, he or she would have to back down or not have any statistics to play around with in the future. I can't believe that you get so worked up about such a trivial non-issue.

[Talk about the pot calling the kettle black...anyway, according to my information, this "trivial non-issue" actually happened. Supposedly, in about 1976 the BNC, then Conrad von Metzke, proclaimed a mandatory fee for the numbers, and the resulting hobby uproar drove him out of office. So fine, we can all do without the Boardman Numbers, right? But you've missed half the point, besides. You claim "almost everyone would refuse to pay" if the dollar was mandatory. Well, then, why haven't these new publishers who mistakenly thought it was mandatory refused to pay? Because, the truth is, not that many people have the guts to buck the system,

or what they think is the system.

[I hope that some future BNC does start charging a mandatory fee so we can all find out what *really* happens. I bet you'll be the first to pay, and, as spokesman for the "Hobby Establishment," the first to rationalize and defend it as well.]

(DAVE MCCRUMB) The topic of custodians is getting boring, but there was one point that you did make, that the tradition of a \$1 donation for a BN has been translated into a mandatory fee. I have had to correct this error with several GMs. Maybe a statement about this should appear in each issue of *Everything*. And *no*, I would not accept a mandatory fee for a BN, or a MN, for that matter. I would play my games without benefit of having one.

As has been the case in the past, NERDS is not above interpreting the facts as they see fit so that they can justify any action that they feel like taking. NERDS claim that the Gamemaster's University (GU) is now defunct is a lie that has no parallel in the hobby. They are trying to malign one of the most prestigious institutions in the whole Diplomacy hobby. The fact that the graduation rate under SCANDAL has dropped to barely 5% that while it was under the control of EGO is a result of the increased concern for excellence. The members of SCANDAL wish to produce GMs that the hobby can be proud of, rather than trying to meet some arbitrary quota. With the breakup of EGO in 1985, the influence that the people who eventually became NERDS was eliminated and our goals for improving GU standards became possible. And so SCANDAL continues.

In regards to the ZNC, NERDS' claims about having control over this hobby office are totally unfounded. The ZNC was originally set up by the Custodial Ordination and Preparatory Observatory for Urbane Training (COPOUT), a department of GU responsible for training new hobby custodians. According to the documents (which have been approved by the IRS, the IRA, and the IRU) drawn up at the loss of EGO, anywhere that GU is found would mean that SCANDAL would abound. Since the NERDS legally cannot claim COPOUT, they are Waging Obsessive Preemptory Sabotage (WOPS).

(BRUCE GERYK) This custodian thing has gotten completely out of hand. Gaughan actually knows the amount of money in his USOS account to the last penny, Heinowski is actually *angry* about the fact that someone isn't registering his games with the BNC, and Sacks has demonstrated once again that he has completely lost his mind. All three

of these guys make the Ten Most Bored Men on Earth list. As the Bad Boys have said time and time again: don't these idiots have anything better to do?!!?

As far as the MNC question goes, I think the only solution here is to take Davis and Sacks and beat them both senseless (DEATH THREAT). If I get enough support for this venture, I'll volunteer to do it myself.

I'm really not certain what Sacks' problem is with this "no mandatory fee for game starts" thing, but from what I've bothered to read, he is very concerned about having the hobby offices conform to the regulations for non-profit organizations so that he can get tax benefits from contributing money to them. My question is, if he is contemplating contributing enough to make get any significant benefit out of it (say, >\$10,000), why the fuck doesn't the idiot forget the hobby and use the cash to put a down payment on a Lotus Turbo or something. If Robert is seriously considering donating a lot of money to hobby services, I take this as proof that he is seriously mentally ill.

As far as I'm concerned, the only purpose custodianships serve is to boost the ego of the pathetic individual holding the office, who has nothing else in his life to make him feel important.

Let me just state here for the record that I do not intend to do any more *KGO'ZDs* after the November issue. Two is enough for me, thanks. And I hope you guys have a great discussion about it because I sure don't have anything to add.

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I wish Sacks wouldn't keep throwing vital questions of *his* publishing responsibilities to "the Lords" as if we were some special kind of elite governing body for the hobby. We're nothing of the sort. We're just the readers of a particular zeen on publishing, there's nothing special in that. Not all of us even publish, and anybody can get on the sublist for paying the fee.

For anyone to refer his publication decisions to us to decide *for* him is ludicrous. If he doesn't want to list the services he objects to, he doesn't have to. But he's going to have to accept the responsibility for not listing them, and whatever effects that might have on his readers. Likewise, if he wants to continue to foist Bruce Geryk's opinions on the hobby at large, he can do so; or not, as *he* chooses. But he must face the consequences of that decision. He's the one who is going to lose face for doing a thing like that, and he's not getting me to shoulder any of the blame for him. I've got enough to worry about getting my zeen out on time and in good order

without having to do the same for his zeen.

If anyone wants my opinion on anything, I'll tell them. My address isn't a state secret. But it's not representative of anything in particular; it's just my opinion. If anybody wants my advice on a question of zeen policy, they can ask me, but it's only *my* advice. Don't expect me to solve all your problems for you.

Sacks didn't ask anybody for advice before hiring Geryk; he should be able to figure out what he does next now that he's received so much criticism. Stopping up his ears won't make it go away. As publisher of *KGO*, it's his responsibility to make that decision. If he can't make that decision himself, perhaps he shouldn't be publishing an "official" directory. Show me one person who's holding a gun to Sacks' head and forcing him to publish a directory. ("Your copier or your life!" Time passes. "Well?" "I'm thinking about it!") He wasn't "forced" to hire Geryk. He chose to do it himself. So what if it turned out to be a big mistake? He made it himself. He doesn't hesitate to tell *me* when *I* make a mistake. Why should I?

I was a bit surprised to see Sacks writing about schisms, although that is his subject. Do you seriously think there will be a BNC split in the near future? I know you're not exactly enamored about Heinowski's performance in the job, or the current positions of the BNC. (Have you noticed that Steve Heinowski's "D" looks deceptively like his "O"? Fooled me for a good three issues!) I just hope that, if a split does come, it comes over something less theoretical than the "guarantee against mandatory fees" issue. That idea is being talked to death, especially as I don't remember any plans to actually impose a mandatory fee for Boardman numbers. I had a copy of the Covenant at one point, but now I can't find it. I was wondering whether there was something more fundamental in that document that would inspire so much controversy, and cause people to be willing to risk a schism rather than agree to signing on with it. (I think it has something to do with extending veto powers over the appointment of new custodians to infinity....) I would like to think that any split would come in defense of something important, or in opposition to some gross offense against the postal gaming hobby.

By the way, I don't need any sort of number for a game of International Pass the Pigs, do I? Or should I drop a postcard to the Swineherd Number Custodian? (I can see it now: 1988-Oink!) Pass the Pigs players would rise in open revolt if somebody tried to impose a mandatory fee on them!

I have no objections to getting *Lord of Hosts*

as part of my trade for "Nutmeg." I use both MNCs, so that should be no real problem. I still print both numbers with the game, although my players generally use the number Fred Hyatt assigned. (Most of the time, though, they use the game's name. I'm only running one Gunboat game, so I usually know what they mean.) If you're curious, I have a couple of new variants registered with the bank that I would be happy to share with you sometime. They're called "Suicidal Dip" (the object is to be the first player eliminated) and "Pat Robertson vs The Devil Diplomacy" (two of the great powers get to use the off-boards spaces Heaven and Hell). Although they could probably be bought from Fred Davis, I have them on disk and will send them along for a SASE.

[Interesting variants. I particularly like "Suicidal Dip"—a simple rule change that changes the whole game. But what is this about buying variants from Fred Davis? Does he own them? Are you getting royalties?

[Sacks asked for volunteers to do the *KGO Zeen Directory*. As far as I know, Geryk was the only one who volunteered. Now Mr Sacks has a dilemma: he can do the thing himself, a lot of work, and in return for his efforts be criticized (again) for only funding his own project which only gives his views, or he can let Mr Geryk do it. I notice from the many cc's of feud letters I receive that everyone is criticizing *Sacks* for the *KGO'ZD*. Hey, he only published it—*Geryk* wrote it. Hobby precedent, if you care about such things, dictates that the writer/editor bears the brunt of criticism, and the publisher bears little, if any at all. (For example, do we blame the zeen pubber for the subzeen's contents?) But people are afraid to criticize Geryk, he might bite them back. And Sacks is the ever-so-convenient hobby scapegoat.

[Of course, as you say, he could not do the directory at all. But why shouldn't he? He's certainly fulfilling your requirement of "taking responsibility for his actions"; I don't see him whining about the criticism like some other "custodians" who shall be nameless. And I notice that the latest issue of the *Zeen Register* was *much* improved. So maybe a little competition between hobby services is not such a bad thing after all.

[I thought the *KGO'ZD* was hilarious. Bruce Geryk better be glad I *don't* have any balls, or I'd beat him like I was his daddy.]

(STEPHEN DORNEMAN) I have no problem with the Bad Boys in general—and at least

in the *KGO'ZD* my zeen was one of the few that you could learn something about from the "description"—but does Robert Sacks really think that this parody *Zeen Directory* is a useful, more impartial information resource than Ken Peel's *Zeen Register*? I sent a postcard saying basically this to Robert, and he told me to write to you (another strange thing, that). Personally, I'd rather send any criticisms I may have direct to the source, rather than airing them in a public forum, but if that's the way Messrs. Sacks and Geryk would prefer to have it, I'm willing to oblige them.

[I'd prefer that you write directly to them, too. I didn't volunteer to be the Complaint Department of the *KGO'ZD*. I didn't have anything to do with it. I'm printing your letter because you did write it to me. I agree with Ken Peel's description of the directory: funny and possibly useful for vets, but definitely not for novices.]

(ROBERT SACKS) As I have written Linsey, the gross misconduct is whatever the Lords decide is gross misconduct worthy of the penalty stated. The request for consideration was sent in several months ago, when Linsey told me that he wouldn't plug *KGO* as long as I plugged services he disapproved of. I figured the Linsey doctrine could be applied to Bruce Linsey as well as by him.

I have granted the Lords the power to give me authoritative advice on the three propositions. Such power has to be exercised by voting after full discussion. That is what democracy is all about.

Promotion of the variant banks is at the expense of the variant hobby, and always has been. If every organized variant bank were totally gutted, what harm would there be?

The Hobby Meeting at the Diplomatic Congress of Baltimore passed the following (Sacks not voting):

It was the sense of the meeting: that it was the obligation of hobby officers to accept hobby mail (Davis dissenting); that if there is any delisting it should not be done except for specific and provable cause; that *KGO* merely warn against selected providers of hobby services rather than delisting them; to advise *HoL* not to delist merely on personal or hobby political disagreements (Arnawoodian dissenting to make trouble); to advise *HoL* to delist on extreme sleaze, *ie*, involving non-hobbyists in hobby disputes (8-5, including Caruso, Davis, and Hood in the negative, with approximately 5 abstentions).

The hobby meeting (Davis dissenting) advised Bruce Linsey to appoint successors for his Novice

and Publisher projects, *Supernova* and *Once Upon a Deadline*.

[I thank the Hobby Meeting for its (unsolicited by me) advice; however, I have not "delisted" anyone. I merely said, "I've never considered Bruce Linsey a 'hobby officer'—he runs a poll, not a service." I was not thinking about *Supernova* and *OUID* at the time, but I do not consider the Publisher's Handbook a service either.

[I think there's a difference between a private project and a "hobby service." I don't have a clear cut definition just yet, but I think on a continuum from "Personal Gain" to "Personal Loss," the private project would tend towards gain, and the hobby service toward loss. Furthermore, a hobby service should be useful, it should have a general, hobby-wide usefulness, and, of course, it should have general, hobby-wide acceptance as a service.

[Just because Bruce says The Poll is a service, and begs you to list it as a custodianship in *KGO*, doesn't make it a "hobby service." I don't think any polls or awards are hobby services—they are run for the personal satisfaction of the pollster/awards committee and the winners, and the information they provide may be interesting, but is not really useful (even though Linsey tells us that his poll proves which are the best zeens and GMs).

[Just because Bruce says The Handbook is a service, and begs to know why it (and The Poll) should not be funded, doesn't make it a "hobby service," either, although maybe it could have been. Unfortunately, Bruce turned it into primarily a political tool, excluding a certain group of GMs/publishers from contributing, and claiming that criticism of The Handbook was really directed at him. Now, it has more the character of a personal book; so, just as Sharp's book or Peery's *DW Anthology* series are not hobby services, neither is The Handbook.

[*Supernova*, I think, is probably a service; therefore, I retract my statement that Linsey is not a hobby officer. Ha ha, the joke's on me. As I said earlier, I was only thinking about him in his capacity as Pollster.

[I still accept letters for publication from anyone in Dipdom. So just as Bruce says we can't complain about The Poll Results if we don't vote in it, I say Bruce can't complain about *HoL* being a nest of his attackers if he (and Fred) refuse to write here.]

(JOHN CARUSO) Did you hear that I'm the new Vice-*KGO* everything? I am! I know, I know, Robert isn't going to resign or anything. But finally, I've made it to the pinnacle I've striven for, for

years. My name will go down in Dipdom history, as the man who shot Liberty Valance. It's a great honor and victory to be a part of the *KGO* team. It took years to get where I am.

[And you wondered why I wanted to be Miller Number Custodian Under the Covenant. Now you understand.]

Dipcon

(STEVEN CLARK) Convene on *this*.

(PETE GAUGHAN) After an initially slow response, we're getting loads of inquiries, both from the pbm Dip hobby and from gamers in general (thanks, much, to *The General!*). We were shooting for 75 attendees; we should make it at this juncture.

(ROBERT SACKS) The Hobby Meeting at The Diplomatic Congress of Baltimore passed the following (Sacks not voting): It was the unanimous sense of the meeting in favor of investigating and conducting our own convention. Working group so far: Sacks, Arnawoodian, Bohner, Hood, Mainardi, Riley for Penn Wargamers, Swider, Wilson; second weekend or mid-July; Metro Washington-Metro NY. The convention will be conducted as apolitically as possible.

Finding New Subbers

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Easy! Just talk someone into faking your zeen! You'll immediately—if it is a good fake—get newcomers from out of the woodwork. *The Chocolate Factory* sent plenty of friendly strangers our way, and I promptly began cruising the list for standbys....

(BOB OLSEN) I didn't realize that having too many subbers could be a problem. Maybe "Getting Rid of Subbers" could be a topic for future discussion. Maybe we could get some expert opinion on this. Steve Hutton, where are you now that we finally need you?

GMinG Procedure

(STEVEN CLARK) Adjudicate *this*. How did Hopcroft call up Cathy Ozog when he doesn't even have a goddamn phone?

(BRUCE GERYK) I don't understand what is so difficult about good GMinG—if the hobby is as full of intellectual giants as the hobby masses would like to believe, it is inconceivable that so many GMs can't even adjudicate a game correctly. It's hardly a taxing mental exercise. Of course, if it's a question of just getting the results out quickly, then the answer is obvious—the less a person has to do, the better a GM he is. By this definition, Gary Coughlan should be the best GM in the world.

[And so, many said, he was.]

(ROBERT SACKS) The Returning GM with the messy fold: If the GM abandoned more than two or three games, and is starting more than three games at unreasonable rates, I think we have an obligation to discourage prospective players. I would appreciate a short list of GMs to watch out for, so that I can note the problems if I list them in *KGO*, if I even list them in *KGO*.

(CHRIS CARRIER) We ought to have more North American games which have civil disorder rules instead of standbys, just to offer a choice.

[Quite a few players would like this rule.]

(BOB OLSEN) Last minute sets of orders are the bane of my existence as a GM. As Dicko will tell you, I'm not...what shall we say...obsessively perfectionistic as a GM, and one of the reasons is that I never get a chance to look over the adjudication before deadline. Two, three, four sets of orders arrive on deadline day every month. I'd be much more accurate (really!) if the players would give me a break and mail early. So basically, it's not all my fault (really!).

[But Bob, at least this way you don't have to deal with *changes* of orders. I really don't think you could handle that, do you?]

(STEVE LANGLEY) General comment...it's too bad that Mark Berch takes up so many pages with his stuff. I confess that I don't have the fortitude to read through what he has to say at that length. He may even have had something worth reading in there, but I'll never know. Bottom line on the WAP is that we will all have to wait until someone actually plays with the rule before we will find out if it is any good or not. All the rest that we can say about it now is opinion and theory and worth no more than opinion and theory is usually worth.

And now, some opinion and theory on WAP. I don't think it will have a lot of impact on the players until comes the day that the GM tries to use it and screws it up. Given that GMs never make adjudication errors, my worry is not to be bothered about. Personally, I don't want to have to dig back into prior adjudications to generate moves for NMRs. That's just one more task to deal with come adjudication, and one more chance to screw up. So, I'll probably never run a WAP-ruled game. Some people thrive on lots of detail and notes and conditions and rules. Perhaps they are the ones for whom WAP is intended.

[Alan Stewart is already running with WAP, and Dick's next game will be. Alan may be a perfect GM, but Dick is certainly not, so we will probably soon see your greatest fears come to pass. I, for one, predict total nuclear annihilation.]

(DAVE MCCRUMB) I find all the discussions about how different GMs handle game reporting and standby positions ludicrous. Who cares how it is done, as long as it is consistent. There are some systems I would not like to play under, but the variation is what makes playing interesting. Besides, someone that plays good using my procedures might have trouble with Boardman or Sacks.

There are people that would declare F GoB-StP invalid. These are usually the type of people that would declare GoB-StP or GoB-StP(sc) invalid. I think we can all come up with two or three people that GM that way.

[Who cares? Probably the same kind of people who care about ratings systems. Some people will always play "the system," be it the ratings system or the houserules, which tends to piss off other people who want to play "the game," whatever their idea of the game is.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I was surprised at Larry Peery's comment that GMs are born and not made. It raises the whole question of who should run Diplomacy games, and what GMs who find themselves having rough periods should do. I considered dropping GMing for a while after a string of errors, but my players all wanted me to stick with it (the advantages of not being an obnoxious boor!). I have even broached the idea of rehousing the games if things got really bad, and nobody offered to take me up on it. GMing is like playing: you have to start somewhere, and the only way you can learn it is by doing it. Believe me, the

rules are tougher than they look! It would be nice if there were an effective novice GM training course, starting with the basics and moving up through typical adjudications. The problem with that is, for the potential GM to get the most out of it, somebody would have to grade their work and offer corrections or advice. I can't think of any hobbyists who would have the time or inclination for that sort of task. (Now watch; somebody may decide to set up a "professional" GMing school now, charging ten or twenty bucks a pop for lessons.) Makes me kind of glad I'm not running 3R or Advanced Squad Leader.

A little on the subject of game fees. Who should charge them and for what? I didn't start out with a game fee because I was an inexperienced GM. Given the errors that have occurred in the last few turns, I was probably justified in taking such a dim view of my abilities. So I got some cybernetic help, in the form of a copy of CompuDip. Could I reasonably ask for donations from my players to offset the cost (about \$40; on my income, \$40 is a large sum to plunk down at one time when I've got to publish later in the month)? I am beginning to think publishing a DipZeen is like buying a new car: if you have to ask how much it costs, you can't afford it. My experience is that most of the things I would like to have had when starting, I had to get en route, like my copy of CompuDip and my desktop publishing software. It's too late to back out now, of course. Not that I would want to right now.

CompuDip has brought me a few other problems as well. I wish I could go over to the British houserules, because then it would be a lot easier on me to GM with this software. Why don't I? Because I don't think it would be quite fair. I haven't seen Dan Gorham's zeen *The Vortex* in a long time; what do his houserules look like? There is something that doesn't seem quite right about changing houserules in midgame; Melinda Holley informs me that it is simply not done. And I still don't know exactly how it would work if I did change over to the British system. It would certainly change the game!

[Professional GMing school, eh? That sounds like a job for Elmer Hinton.

[Now who's asking for help with vital questions of his publishing responsibilities? I think you should use your new software, run your games prophetically, and everybody have a good time learning the new system together and enjoying better-run games. That would be the ideal. If it doesn't work out that way, you will have to work out your own priorities and make your decision

based on the following questions:

[In what order of importance do I place the approval of the following: the BNC? my players? me?

[Is running a "regular" game important to me? Is it important to my players? Will changing from one "regular" method of running a game to another make the game "irregular"? Do I want to be a guinea pig and find out?

[Will the players accept the new method of order-writing? Will they resign? Will I be able to find replacements if they resign? Will they report me to the BNC? Do I care?

[Should I accept wasting \$40 on a piece of software I can hardly use? Should I give away my old games and start new prophetic ones to avoid changing the rules? Will somebody take my old games?

[Of course, you've already made your decision anyway, by now.]

(DICK MARTIN) Mark Lew makes a good point: "what's wrong with 'gm interference' anyway?" Over the years, I've come to much the same conclusion. Oh, I'm still about as strict as I ever was in most things, but I'll happily interfere if I think it'll help the game. No, I don't mean "improving" a favorite player's moves, but rather encouraging the players to get moves in, or trying to drum up a little interest on the part of marginal players. I'm all for it. I do what I can to make the games fun to *play*, though maybe a bit tougher to *win*.

(JAC WORDSMITH) When is the use of pseudonyms morally acceptable? If there is no intention of cheating, should use of a pseudonym be considered deception of the GM? Bruce Linsey seems to be interested in this topic, possibly because he believes that Bill Salvatore, who got into trouble with Andy Lischett over this, is a member the "Martin clique" (rather than, as actually, universally a pariah). Is there ever any reason for playing a Gunboat game under a pseudonym?

[Gee, I don't know, "Jac."]

Letter Columns

(STEVEN CLARK) Write home about *this*.

(BRUCE GERYK) Larry Peery doesn't participate in letter columns, just like he doesn't participate in the letter column in *HoL*. Sure. I'll bet

he doesn't have phone sex with Steve Hutton, either.

(SIMON BILLENNESS) I would argue that the secret of a good letter column is editorial response. When I pick up a zeen, I'm not so much looking for other people's contributions as the editor's *response* to those contributions. For example, I could read Rod Walker's opinion of the Nuclear Winter theory anywhere (maybe even *Erewhon*) but, if I read his letter in *Praxis*, I'd be curious to read Alan Stewart's opposing argument.

[This came from *Excitement City Unlimited* #10, but I thought it was a good point that no one else had expressed.]

(CHRIS CARRIER) Lettercols and reader feedback are essential to keep reader interest high, and for the pubber to know what his readers want. They are also lots of fun to read. In *The MegaDiplomat*, my subzeen formerly of *NFA* and now of *Praxis*, I go out of my way to stimulate discussion in the lettercol; in the last issue reader contributions were specifically solicited *in re* political topics and copies of my conservative political views were sent to some liberals and leftists in the hobby in the hope they will respond, for print.

I, too, have noticed the continued timeliness of Dip letters. My famous Seven Page Letter, dated 1986 April 21 and published one week later in the final *The Not For Hire*, is strikingly relevant today, and I predict it will be just as relevant ten years from now. For example, a quote: "I enjoy Feuding and I admit it. This puts me on a slightly higher moral level than the rest of the hobby, which also enjoys Feuding, but doesn't admit it...." and I then go on to give half a page of examples. A letter from John Kelley in mid-1985 which was printed in *NFA* #34 is also strikingly relevant even today when discussing the motivation of the pro- and anti-Linsey sides.

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I have run into a dearth of challenging letters, especially since Sacks and I had our little parting of the ways. My lettercol attempts to be a dialogue, but there has been so little input on general topics that next issue will have a one-page letter column devoted mainly to baseball! For a publisher who started with my high ideals to turn to baseball for a topic around which to build a lettercol just doesn't seem right. I hope it's temporary. By contrast, last issue I got a flood of printable letters on one topic which had been

addressed by one of my letter writers, not coincidentally as the situation being discussed exploded. So it ebbs and flows among topics.

I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that a living lettercol and a small sublist cannot coexist peacefully. For a living discussion of real-world or hobby topics, there must be a variety of presentable views, with articulate people on all sides of the political and hobby spectrum. Before I can get back to the kind of lettercol I wanted, I may have a few fences to mend.

[Part of your problem may be your standards for "printable" letters. I notice that the terms "printable" and "non-printable" have become sort of personal catch phrases for you. What do you think makes a letter printable or non-printable? Are you being too censorious?

[Two approaches to that problem: the "everything is printable" policy, which was epitomized by *Brutus Bulletin* (current example: *House of Lords*), or the "print everything in the mailbox" policy, which was epitomized by *Voice of Doom* (current example: *High Inertia*). The first style tends to a volatile, controversial column, and best serves people who get off on arguing; the second is sometimes bland and boring because too many of the letters are personal between the writer and the publisher, or self-congratulatory, and serves people who get off on seeing their name in print. *High Inertia* also suffers from the artificial vanilla "topics" used to generate the reader's response. (However, it is nice to have Linda Courtemanche in this zeen to mellow things out a bit.)

[I think you've given your readers the impression that you can't handle much criticism or conflict, even when it's not directed at you. A lettercol doesn't have to be a transcription of an all-out war, but at least it needs to have different opinions interacting. But what's wrong with baseball as a topic? Everyone loves to put in their own two cents worth about politics and sports! You don't need a big sublist for a big debate about baseball. Let's Go Mets!]

Out of Dipdom

(STEVEN CLARK) Some of us have a real life, and we term it not, "Out of Dipdom," but the real world where we spend 99% of our time.

(CHRIS CARRIER) I enjoy discussing The Feud with non-hobby members...there is this one lady at work who used to work in a mental

institution who is convinced that Geryk is insane and teetering on the brink of major violence because I showed her a copy of the letter that Geryk sent Linsey, containing the magic words which can get you twenty years in the slammer, "*This Is A Death Threat!*"

Anyhow, The Feud with the Bad Boys has raised my social status at work quite a bit, as they see me as a defender of the working middle class adult against spoiled rich party children.

(ROBERT SACKS) Boardman publishes his filksongs in *Anacreon*, published quarterly in APA-Filk.

(STEPHEN DORNEMAN) I find my Diplomacy experience helping me out of Dipdom not (as perhaps you might expect) in negotiations at work or in other games, but in playing Trivial Pursuit™ and similar games that involve recalling facts and factoids. Penny (my wife) still trashes me in the geography categories, but familiarity with the Diplomacy map gives me a fighting chance if European geography is involved.

Polls & Awards

(STEVEN CLARK) Give me a fucking break.

[You said it.]

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Olsen laments the loss of the Freshie Poll, and I do too, actually. It's interesting that pollsters haven't set up an elaborate succession bureaucracy like that for custodians. I hear that Alan Stewart and Larry Peery are planning to assemble the stats for the fake Miller/Walker/Koning awards! (Gee, the *real* awards only get *one* publicist...) Should someone like Daf choose her own successor for the Freshie, or should interested applicants send her résumés, cover letters, and references from at least three pollsters?

[Oh, *please!* I'm sure you're joking, but jokes in *HoL* have a way of turning into realities. Let's just have people who want to do polls do them for fun. If you want to redo the Freshman Poll, it might be polite to ask Daf if she minds or is planning to restart it herself, but I think it's safe to say that someone who drops a poll without finding an immediate successor isn't *too* worried about what happens to it, anyway.

[I find it interesting that you, too, distinguish

between pollsters and custodians. You mean polls are not hobby services?

[You mention the Walker awards...one thing I've wondered about...the year this award debuted, it was touted as an award for the "Best Writer" in Dipdom. That was it, just best writer, overall. The second year, for some reason, it suddenly became an award for a particular piece of writing, as it has been ever since. Was there ever or is there now an explanation for this change? Larry? Anyone?]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Just got Linsey's Runestone ballot a few weeks ago. When is yours coming out? Mark Nelson wondered in a letter to me whether you were serious about running your poll. I told him you probably are, given past experience. But I'd like confirmation sometime, if you have an opportunity. For the record, a second poll may not be that unhealthy a development probably. Is it fair for the same hobbyist to vote in both polls? (Or is said hobbyist just a shameless mugwump who shouldn't be allowed to vote in either?)

Really, is printing Linsey's ballot that great a crime? I'd print your ballot if you submitted one. Nor did I get anyone asking me not to print the ballot. (Sacks possibly might have asked, but I haven't heard from him in a while; rough edges and all that. Just got a letter to him in the post, so I'm working on it.) Heck, I expect that most of my eligible readership have voted already if they're going to be voting. I know I voted very early (and will probably get slapped on the hand for doing so, not to mention adding to the amount of anti-Linsey material you will be printing in *HoL*. And no, I don't remember whether I voted on *HoL* or not). I got the *real* hobby awards ballot too late to put it in, and I don't vote on them myself (I don't really consider myself qualified, because I don't get out in the general hobby enough to determine who the year's best Diplomacy player was.) Again, interested readers can probably find the ballots elsewhere.

How about a poll asking people to list their ten favorite zeens in order? Points would be handed out in much a similar way to how the Games People Play poll worked. And the results sheet could be filled out on one page, which could be printed directly for the publishers participating in the exercise. It would certainly be a lot less work, although the statistical rigor would be lacking (not the the Poll is especially rigorous now). It would certainly be a lot less work for the voter, and would probably get a fairly honest ballot from the voters.

[Congratulations, Michael, you have just

reinvented the Marco Poll. This was always the preferred poll of the In-Six, and we generally found that the zeens we liked did better in it (surprise, surprise!). Pete Gaughan is planning to restart the Marco Poll. And so the wheel turns, taking us forward? back? to the days when people felt there were *too many* polls and were sick of filling out ballots.

[You may be surprised to learn that, for many years, The Poll was run perfectly well without any preprinted ballots at all! People were just instructed to vote for the zeens they knew well enough to be able to give an informed opinion. This was probably a better system. Although it may have meant that some people forgot to vote for a zeen that folded early the year before, who cared? It was history anyway. On the other hand, it made it less likely for people to vote for zeens they really didn't know (or know anymore) and had no business voting for.

[As I understand it, The Runestone Poll under the Covenant is an adjunct to The Poll; therefore, I assume it would use the same ballot. After all, Bruce promised me a free milkshake if I collected more ballots than he did. But I don't like the title "Runestone Pollster under the Covenant." How about "The Anti-Poll Custodian," maybe Auntie Pollster for short?]

(MARK BERCH) [This is the two pages held over from last issue.]

Turning to Larzelere's letter, I'll do him the courtesy of dealing with precisely what he said, which is more than he was willing to do for me: "...Instead, I'm criticized for 'dumping on the Runestone Poll.' Never mind that I voted in the poll—if I don't recognize the Poll as being perfect in every way [*sic*], I'm 'dumping' on it. Never mind that comparing very different zeens is a legitimate issue—any criticism of the poll is a personal attack on Bruce Linsey." Now let's see what Berch *really* had to say: "If Larzelere wants to dump on the Runestone Poll, the least thing he could do is get his facts right." Now, for specifics:

A. I did *not* criticize Larzelere for dumping on the Poll. So far as I'm concerned, he can devote the rest of his waking days on this earth to dumping on the poll. I criticized Larzelere for getting his facts wrong.

B. Yes, I'm pleased you voted, but that really wasn't the point, and the rest of the sentence is unfair. There is nothing at all in my letter which remotely implies that the Runestone Poll ought to be considered perfect. I myself don't consider it perfect (for example, I think scoring should be done solely by means of the preference matrix). Linsey has said

repeatedly that the Poll is not perfect.

C. There is absolutely nothing in my letter which remotely implies that criticism of the poll is just a personal attack on Linsey. In fact, I've never tried to equate them in anything that I have written. In fact, in terms of the zeens that I get, personal attacks on Bruce Linsey are rare and usually rather half-hearted. I know of no case where I have labeled a criticism of the poll as really being a personal attack on Bruce Linsey. My letter made no reference to personal attacks at all. In fact, the year that *DipiMaster* "topped the poll," Bruce wasn't even running it. There is nothing in my letter which even discusses how Bruce ran the poll.

In short, I consider his criticism as completely inaccurate.

Now, to get to Larzelere's agenda, he says: "Typically, Berch [*sic*] won't discuss the real issue of the legitimacy of comparing a zeen like *EE* with a one-page warehouse zeen." Yes, this is a "legitimate issue," although not one of any great interest to me, and so, yes, it's true that I didn't previously discuss it. However, since for some reason, it's extremely important to Mark Larzelere that I in particular address this issue, I will.

In *The Beginning*, there was just one category. In the second year, Leeder provided a separate category for GMing. This worked fine for some years, but then with the explosion of subzeens in the early 80s, a third category was created. These changes were made with little or no controversy.

But three categories is not nearly enough for some people, no, no. And there's no general agreement as to what the basis of these new categories should be. To Mark Larzelere, it's the size of the zeen which ought to be the controlling factor; to compare zeens of different sizes is somehow not legitimate. On the other hand, to Conrad von Metzke, it was the circulation that counts, and he proposed separate categories (below 40, 41-60, etc) so that zeens could be compared to those of like circulation. Dick Martin, in *HoL* #13, writes, "Why not break the poll into 'game zeens' and 'non-game zeens'?" And I seem to recall someone suggesting that zeens which appear at least 12 times a year be in a separate category from those which didn't manage to come out that often.

In my opinion, these various categorization schemes (and surely there will be others) will introduce far more problems than they would solve, especially as I don't think the current set up is unsatisfactory. One is the problem of zeens which switch categories. This can occur with the zeen/subzeen division too, though such switches are fairly uncommon. But zeens can fluctuate quite a bit

in size. Zeens can go through phases where nothing but games appear for a while, then things get back to normal. And how do you make a division on size? If X pages is the line, a distinction is made between a zeen of Z pages and one of X1/4 pages, regardless of the value of X. Do you use the average? The median? The smallest? And just what constitutes a "warehouse zeen"? Dick Martin says that he considers *Retaliation* to be a warehouse zeen, and that most people would not agree with him. So what do you do? And what do you count as reading matter? If a zeen is nothing but the game results and about ten pages of press each issue—is that warehouse? Suppose the same stuff had been packaged as humor items? Do photocopied articles from newspapers count? A distinction between game zeens and non-game zeens also seems arbitrary. What's the problem with comparing a zeen like *DD* with a zeen that runs a few games? Although Dick Martin says, "That way some of the more ridiculous comparisons would be avoided, though not all," I don't see that as a ridiculous comparison. And what counts as running games? Suppose they go out essentially on flyers and are reprinted in the zeen, as has traditionally been done in, *eg*, *Diplomacy World*? Would non-diplomatic games such as Monopoly or extended quizzes, etc, count? No system is perfect, but all of the schemes I've seen appear to open up endless possibilities for arbitrary lines and meaningless distinctions.

Now, turning to Larzelere's specific dilemma of how to possibly compare *EE* to a warehouse zeen: Why stop there? I mean, how could one possibly compare *DD*, which has humor and letters to the editor both on only an occasional basis, with *KK/W* which is chock full of both? Yup, ridiculous. And *DD* has a pretty steady diet of play-of-game essays, whereas *KK/W* has this rarely if ever. And let's not forget the most important category of all: *DD* mentions Bruce Linsey, and *KK/W* doesn't. Gosh, how can such radically different zeens be compared?

It's really not that complicated. People decide what is important to them, and what isn't, and vote accordingly. If size, or the presence/absence of games or humor, or frequency of appearance, or whatever, is important, they will take it into consideration. If not, the voters won't. It's up to the voters, not the pollster, to decide what the crucial considerations are. One of my subbers sent me a note last summer, saying that he would have given me a notch higher, but he was sick and tired of my whining about Steve Langley. Fine; that was important to him.

Finally, if these categories are important to you,

the data is all there, break it down however you see fit. If you think that warehouse zeens, or Canadian zeens, or don't-run-games zeens ought not to be compared, then just make your list of how warehouse, etc, zeens did in their own little category. If you are not a publisher, I'm sure you can find someone who will run such a list. Or you can try to persuade Bruce to run such a sublist in *The Cream Shall Rise*; he's run other sublists. But I don't think such categories should be imposed on the Poll as a whole.

[Yes, I like this idea of someone else to do a separate analysis of The Poll Results. Don Del Grande does a bit of this anyway; I think he'd be perfect for the job.

[You misquoted Mark Larzelere. He said: "...if I don't recognize the Poll as being perfect *the way it is...*" not "...*in every way...*" (emphasis mine). He also said: "Berch, typically,..." not "Typically, Berch..." You are the one who is so concerned about being quoted correctly, remember?

[Since you are such good buddies with Bruce, mind telling him about part C? It would be a real favor to all of us. You seem to enjoy *HoL* and find it a good forum for discussion, though your opinions are often hotly contested. He has labeled *HoL* "a hotbed of lies and hatred," refuses to write in to this zeen, and apparently thinks the zeen exists only to attack him and his projects.

[There was, in fact, a huge controversy about the addition of the "subzeen" category. Don't you remember?—it revolved around Mark Larzelere's *DipiMaster*. Randolph Smyth was running the Runestone Poll, and there were only two categories: GMs and zeens. Then, shockingly, *DM* won, beating out one of Smyth and Linsey's self-declared favorite zeens, *Europa Express*. As I recall, when Smyth published the results, he listed *DM* in the #1 slot. But when you and Bruce printed the poll results in your zeens, you two created a separate listing for the subzeens, declared that *DM* was a subzeen, and that it had won that poll, while *EE* had won the regular zeen poll. Next year when Linsey took over The Poll from Smyth, he "kept the new category." And somehow, over the years, *DipiMaster* has mysteriously disappeared from the records.

[You can't have forgotten, Mark—this is really what you and Mark Larzelere have been arguing about for lo, these many years!]

(MARK BERCH) In replying to Mark Nelson, you wrote, "Did you know that before Linsey grabbed the poll, he was rejected as an

applicant for the BNC because he was too controversial?" I am astounded that you would write such a thing. *When* was Bruce an applicant for the BNC? I have never known Bruce to express any interest in applying for the job of BNC. I have never known any BNC to say that Bruce had been an applicant for the BNC job. Don't give me any wiggle or waggle, just answer: *When* was he an applicant (in what year, or to which BNC)?

In addition to that grossly inaccurate statement, other statements are misleading. You write, "Before Linsey grabbed the poll..." Linsey did not "grab" the poll, at least, not in the sense that this word is normally used. Linsey was appointed by the previous pollster. This is the exact same mechanism by which every BNC, MNC, and Runestone Pollster has been picked (except the people who started these projects, of course). He didn't grab it any more than any other successor grabbed his or her appointed post.

As for Linsey's response to #14, you write, "...I object to his use of my logo which implies that I sanction his mailing." Oh, come off it. Nobody is going to infer that you sanction anything Linsey puts out. His flyer was clearly labeled as his personal response to what appeared in #14. I personally think he ought to have sent it in for #15, but nobody is going to think that you sanctioned it. People have copied logos for fakes, hoaxes, etc, for many years, and there's no implied sanction there either.

When I pointed out to you that quotes you attributed to me were not exactly what I said, you replied, "Mark, I would like to introduce you to a new use of the quotation punctuation mark: to indicate irony." I am perfectly well aware of the use of quotation marks to indicate irony, but that's not a fair reading of your sentence. You said, "...people (such as you in this letter) who are promulgating the idea that the poll is in any way 'statistically significant' or 'representative of Dipdom's opinion' or 'meaningful' are wrong." I think the ordinary reader is going to assume that this is something which I have actually said, not something that you have altered for the purpose of indicating irony.

And as for the issue itself, you say, "It is quite a recent change of position on the part of the Pollster to admit that The Poll is only just a question of personal preferences, but furthermore, only the preferences of a certain segment of Dipdom, not the whole bunch." [*sic*] Since we're talking about me here, I'll deny it insofar as I'm concerned. I haven't changed my position one bit on this matter. I have, for example, always taken the view that the more voters the Runestone Poll has, the more valid the results are, and I have encouraged people to vote on

that basis. The more who vote, the more (collected) views the Runestone Poll represents.

As for Linsey, looking at the front cover of *The Cream Shall Rise*, #3, I see the headline, "Postal Diplomacy's Championship Journals as selected by 441 citizens of the Diplomatic community in the 1987 Runestone Poll." That clearly expresses the idea that these are the views of those 441 people who were voters in the 87 Runestone Poll.

[Who me, wiggle waggle? Only when I walk, Mark. I note that the first two paragraphs of your letter are a close paraphrase to the beginning of Bruce's mass mailing. Great minds think *so* much alike.

[I was told by BNC Don Ditter at the ByrneCon where he announced that Kathy Byrne was the new BNC that Bruce Linsey has applied for the BNCship, but that he had rejected Bruce because he felt Bruce was too controversial a figure in Dipdom. (He apparently did not think that Kathy was too controversial, and as I recall, she really wasn't at the time—it was after she became BNC that she became controversial.) I was told by former BNC Lee Kendter, Sr at a WoodyCon about a year later that Bruce Linsey had applied for the BNCship when he stepped down, but that he had rejected Linsey because Bruce was "an asshole" (direct quote).

[Now maybe Don Ditter and Lee Kendter lied to me, but I can't imagine why. As for myself, I have no need or inclination to "make up stories" about Bruce—the truth is sufficient. You will print a retraction in *Diplomacy Digest*, won't you, Mark?

[Besides, if the BNCship is such a prestigious Hobby Position, why should Bruce be so insulted that I said he applied for it?

[As for my remark about "grabbing" the poll...you, Linsey, Caruso, and Sacks have all complained about my using the word "grab." Such a consensus should be recorded in the annals of Dipdom, but I stick by my word. At the time (around 1983), Bruce had held no Hobby Position other than publisher of *Supernova*, and, in my perception, he was making a power grab for any other Hobby Position he could get. He was rejected for the BNCship, but soon after, Randy Smyth announced that he was giving up the Leeder (now Runestone) Poll. Linsey's master stroke of diabolical genius was realizing that the insignificant "fun" poll could be blown up into a monster political tool. He grabbed that sucker and ran with it.

[It was my distinct impression that Mark Nelson inferred I sanctioned Linsey's mailing. Yes, people have copied logos for fakes. So I make joke about

"fake *HoL* #14" in Announcements section. You read, yes? You get joke, no? Ha ha!

[You misquoted me above. I said, "...the pollster and The Poll's supporters..." I *could* use typical Berchian mind-wrasslin' techniques and argue on the basis of the misquote: "I deny talking about you here, since you are obviously not the Pollster, etc." And maybe I should, since almost your whole argument here has turned into a mere argument over semantics, anyway. You don't like the word "grab," you don't like the way I use quotation marks, you apparently don't understand the use of the plural "you" (in the "change of position" case, I was referring to Bruce Linsey, Mark Berch, and Alan Stewart, not just Mark Berch), and you can't tell the difference between "it is a recent change of position *to admit* (something)" and "it is a recent change of position *about* (something)."]

(JOHN CARUSO) I feel a need to "correct" something you said in the last *HoL* that was a wee bit inaccurate. I don't think Linsey "grabbed" the poll. In fact, I think Randolph Smyth publicly searched for a successor. Bruce Linsey was the one (and possibly the only one) respondent to Randy's request. The truth, be it known, is that I myself was going to volunteer to do the poll, even though I was already doing the *Diplomacy Players Poll*. However, at the time, I had Linsey attempting, and succeeding) in starting a feud with me. I decided, correctly I might add, that it wasn't in the best interest of The Poll or Dipdom in general for someone involved in a feud to take on the entrusted responsibilities of being a fair and impartial pollster. If people complained afterward, the poll results would always be in doubt (as they now are, under Linsey). And if there were complaints ahead of time, especially of a possible boycott, I'd not have been so arrogant as to say "it's their problem, I'm doing the poll come hell or high water." So I didn't volunteer, I didn't want the poll to suffer, and that first poll became a reality, when the results of the first poll under Linsey were released and, true to everyone's suspicions, his zeens finished #1 with 100 votes cast for it. Plus all of his friends' zeens finished higher, while the zeens of his "former" friends finished at the bottom, with one exception. A very tainted result, the feuding has indeed influenced the results.

Despite the flaws in the poll, we have to give the dog his due. Linsey has gotten more people to participate in the poll than any of his predecessors. I must honestly say that if I had been selected to run the poll (if I'd volunteered), I doubt I could have

encouraged as many people as Linsey did to vote in the poll. Then again, I wouldn't call people up and badger them on the phone to vote. I wouldn't make sure all of my friends, relatives, and neighbors voted either. Nor would I be handing out ballots at conventions, in supermarkets, or on street corners. I must also state that I wouldn't subject "the populace" to hundreds of pages of "statistically significant," useless data. I would think that a simple listing of the results should suffice.

(ROBERT SACKS) Linsey did not *grab* the poll. The previous pollster gave it to him voluntarily, over vociferous objections.

I should like to congratulate Bruce Linsey on his *HoL* #14 post-mailing. It was very well done, perhaps his best contribution to the on-going debate, perhaps his only reputable contribution to the debate. It requires serious consideration and discussion, not only for what it said, but for what it omitted. I would strongly suggest that there is absolutely nothing wrong with his conducting an unabusive post-mailing.

Second, I should like to affirm the validity of including preference matrix scores in the ranking, especially since they are now weighted one-half as much as the modified mean *assuming you grant any validity to the poll itself and the polling methodology*. It is pointless to attack Mr Linsey where he is correct, his mathematical calculations, instead of addressing the essential worthlessness of the poll, the pollster's bias, and the methodological errors.

Now, let us consider what a valid poll or survey would have to be. First, there would have to be a special jury of experts, past winners, notables, or grantors' representatives, or some combination thereof, or a large and significant sample of the community of peers (in this case, other GMs and publishers), or a significant sample of the community of consumers (in this case, players, subscribers, and traders). Second, the process has to be free from deliberate bias. Third, the entire body of work judged must be evaluated. Note that with large juries from the community of peers or consumers, it is sufficient that any bias or unfamiliarity not affect the results.

(Note that even if Linsey polled a significant sample of the community of consumers, and even if the serious charges of bias are ignored, the pollster allowed and encouraged people to vote on zeens where they had only seen two, one, or even no issues, and even two or three such voters could have a wild effect on the results.)

The methodology of the Runestone Poll is fatally

flawed when you note that as few as 10 voters out of over 400 voting can determine the standing of a GM or zeen. Even if 400 is a significant sample of the community of consumers, 10 isn't. Indeed, there is no way so large a body can render a meaningful standing based on familiarity in those cases where the total circulation is not significant compared to the number of total voters. Either the Runestone Poll has to be limited to those GMs or zeens which have substantially more voters (25-40), a method has to be invented where every voter can see every copy of every zeen, or we have to set up a special jury.

There is a simple and straightforward method to allow every voter to see every copy of every zeen: publish them all in a book. Ignoring for the moment the insurmountable cost and copyright problems, one need only include any special details about color and quality of paper, and color of inks in addition to the zeens. And it should be relatively easy to get a single copy of each zeen to copy, even if the publisher doesn't cooperate (or, as in my case, only keeps the worst copies for the file copies): a handful of hobby officers, companies, and clubs between them receive effectively all the zeens in the hobby. Even a relative hermit like myself sends courtesy copies to Avalon Hill, the BNC, and the Martins, with player copies going to West End Games and a WARTHOG member, and I would also send copies to the OGP Archivist, if there was one, and the Director of Orphan Games and the *Zeen Directory* Editor, if I wasn't serving in those last two capacities myself.

The special jury method is far more practical: select that handful of hobby officers, companies, and clubs which between them receive effectively all the zeens in the hobby. Copy for each other only the zeens missed (with color and paper quality noted). Indeed, if the composition of the special jury is known and stable, some publishers will add the members to their distribution list. Each member of the special jury would have to be barred from voting on his own GMing and on any zeens he or a close relative publishes, edits, GMs in, or contributes to on a regular basis (other than press or letter columns), merely to avoid the bias or self-interest problem. Let me suggest such a special jury: an Archivist, an Avalon Hill representative, Kathy Caruso, the Director of Orphan Games (once named), Steve Heinowski as BNC, Julie Martin as MNC and *House of Lords* publisher, Robert Olsen as Novice Project editor, Dan Palter for West End Games, Ken Peel as *Zeen Register* editor and WARTHOG representative, Robert Sacks as *KGO* Registrar, and the *ZD* editor (once named). Other people will have other suggestions, but it is

important that each juror receive a large number of zeens ordinarily, if only to keep copying costs down.

(**DICK MARTIN**) I thought Andy Lischett was going to revive the Marco Poll? Now I see that Pete wants to give it a shot. Well, why not, even though it's hopelessly biased in favor of large circulation zeens. About the only way to compensate would be to factor in the size of the various sub lists, and then it starts to get too complicated. Well, I'm all for it.

Bruce Linsey cleverly notes that "THIS IS NOT A FORUM DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE POLL." Very astute. May I point out that it never *was* such a thing? The *HoL* polls discussion is merely a place to comment on whichever poll the writer wishes to talk about. If improvements happen to come to a poll as a result, that's fine. If not, well, it gets any complaints or compliments out into the public eye.

Why the innocent and unsuspecting subbers to *Praxis* should be burdened with this poll discussion is beyond me, especially since there doesn't seem to be any interest from the non-*HoL* segment of the *Praxis* readership. Since Linsey has never gotten anything less than totally fair treatment with his writings here (I didn't say friendly, now), why should he leave? If Linsey's arguments have any merit, their crystal clarity should shine as well here as there.

Not that I'll miss it so much, actually, as the discussion was becoming almost as tedious as the poll itself. Just that it's likely to degenerate further without a responsible editor to ride herd on it.

Some comments on "improvements" made this year. First, weighting the average score to be double the preference matrix. If this year's results turn out anything like last year, the effect will be minimal. Of the top 20 zeens, only two would have moved more than one position in the final rankings (*HoL*, interestingly enough, loses three places, and *DD* two). That change verges on the trivial. Second, the shortened polling period won't be shortened after all, just rearranged so thousands of novices will have enough time to visit a con, pass around two copies of every zeen in existence, and thereby become discriminating voters. I can't wait.

I recall being told by no fewer than three former BNCs that Linsey had applied for the position of BNC at least twice. Perhaps they lied to us, though I can think of no reason to do so. Perhaps they were mistaken, and they were referring to a different "Bruce Linsey." Perhaps there is a subtle nuance in Linsey's denial that I'm missing. All supposition, I

suppose.

I enjoyed the Games People Play Poll, and would like to see it enhanced next year. How about printing the results, at least in some abbreviated form? I don't know how widely Tom distributed them, but every little bit helps. And this may be a good way to tap into new gaming areas without just taking a shot in the dark.

Can I volunteer to write the anonymous zeen reviews? I don't get many anonymous zeens though, so the series will be quite short lived.

(**BRUCE GERYK**) I knew it would happen sooner or later. Alan Stewart makes his first truly Dumb Quote (congrats, Al-babe) by saying, "much confusion arises in Runestone Poll argumentation because of a failure to recognize the character and purpose of the poll." This seems to imply that the poll actually has a purpose. Guess what? IT DOESN'T HAVE ONE YOU STUPID BONEHEAD!!! HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IT IF I CAME UP TO T-TOWN WITH SOME MACE AND JUST MACED THE SHIT OUT OF YOU?!!

Oops—got a bit out of control, there. Anyway, Alan goes on for another twelve pages about the nature of polls, statistical samples, and his relationship with his mother. He goes to a lot of trouble to refute Paul Milewski's interpretation of the relative importance assigned to the 0-10 scoring scale without once considering that instead of a 5 just meaning "blah", as Alan put it, it means that you want your ribs to be thrashed with a rubber truncheon while a vote of 10 means that you would prefer to have your skull split with a ball-peen hammer. Alan, why do you waste your time? The poll is inherently stupid because it does nothing but a) give a sense of power to the pollster who can't find anything worthwhile into which to channel his energies, and; b) reward a bunch of people for wasting their time which could be better used for personal or professional advancement. The whole thing says, "God, we wish the hobby were important, so let's pretend it is and give each other awards even though if any normal people were to find out about how ridiculous the hobby is they would probably avoid being seen with us in public." OH MY GOD DEATH THREATS EVERYWHERE!!!

Sorry about that. It's amazing how much effort Berch and Co put into the defense of the poll and the rationalization for thinking it actually matters. Makes me want to drop some acid into the Silver Spring water supply. Of course, I'd get Peel (hardly an innocent bystander) but who knows, he might actually like the Soviet Union better if he were to go

there while he were balls trippin'. Hey Ken—census *this* action. Right.

(CHRIS CARRIER) I voted in the Poll for *HoL*, so please be sure to print the page of vicious personal attacks you promised.

Some comments about polls in general. I like polls. I like having people call me up to ask my opinion on this or that—it makes me feel important. I got two phone calls from pollsters during the last statewide election campaign concerning an extremely controversial measure on the local ballot *in re* our nuclear power plant, and I am on a list of people that is contacted by a local market research firm when they want to do samples and statistical studies, and I expect to be called by them at least twice a year, especially because I listed my political affiliation as “Independent” on their long questionnaire and told them that I voted for Reagan in 1980 and 1984 (and proud of it). Since the 1980-84 Reagan Democrats and Independents are who gave Ronnie his two landslides, and who will decide the winner of 1988, I imagine I’ll have my electoral motivations analyzed.

Alan is right when he mentions that there are two types of poll: first, a public opinion poll, which attempts to create a statistical sample representative of the entire, much larger total population in question. A Gallup Poll is this type of poll: for example, a Gallup Poll taken in May of this year gave Dukakis a lead over Bush of 54-38% with a statistical error of 4%. What Gallup is saying, in other words, is that if the election were today, Dukakis would get anywhere between 50% and 58% of the total vote, and Bush, between 34 and 42%. That’s not saying Dukakis will win in November, it is saying that this is how the election would look if it were held today. Usually these polls are more or less accurate, unless there is a tendency to lie to the pollster. But if the election was today, it is reasonably certain that it would come out more or less as predicted.

Then there is another type of poll, where the poll itself is the contest: the Presidential election is the perfect example. These “polls” have much higher samples (a typical Gallup poll will sample about 1,200 voters, while the 1980 Presidential election had 85,100,120 votes cast for the top three candidates, which was 52.6% of a sample of 163,027,050 persons eligible to register and vote, and was also only 37.6% a total 1980 census population of 226,545,805. It is possible that if some of those 80 million nonvoters had shown up, the election might have been different—but hey, too bad, tough shit, if you don’t like it then why weren’t

you there on election day? (In fact, I don’t think the election would have been any different. The Left and The Right get their people out to vote; moderates stay home. The best example of this was in Alaska, where presidential caucuses held in the dead of winter, 1988, resulted in the victory of two crazed wackos—Jackson and Robertson.)

Now what does this have to do with the Runestone? Taking a look at voter turnout statistics, we see that in the first years of The Poll, turnout was quite low compared to the total size of the population eligible to vote, which would be anyone who had seen at least two issues on one seen during the polling period: an unknown number, but most estimates I have seen are about 1,000. During the final three years of Leeder’s custodianship, the turnout was 126, 99, and 76 votes, respectively, which would clearly indicate that the Runestone was, in those years, a “sampling” type of poll.

During Bruce Linsey’s three-year tenure as Pollster, though, the number of votes cast has been 265, 211, and 441. That last number is very interesting; it means that The Poll received some forty to fifty percent of the total eligible to vote population, which means that by now, thanks to all the voters that turned out, the Runestone is no longer a “sampling” type of poll but is an “election” type of poll; the contest itself is now the real thing, by virtue of the number of people who vote. While it is true that there are people who specifically refrain from voting, there is no difference between that and certain holy roller sects such as Jehovah’s Witnesses which prohibits its members from voting.

Now, as to campaigns to “destroy” or “bash” The Poll. I do not condemn such campaigns as immoral, though the Pollster does. Attempts to bash The Poll, and Linsey’s attempts to defend The Poll, are Feud Actions. Nothing more, nothing less. Sending in a fake ballot, or alternatively using a hobby service publication to blast somebody in an ongoing Feud, are nothing more immoral or moral than F Lon-Nor. Both of them are merely moves in the game of MegaDiplomacy, a game of Diplomacy played on the board of Real Life. I believe the goal of your campaign is to get the Pollster to turn it over to someone else, or failing that, to reduce the Poll’s influence to that it had in the Leeder era by encouraging people to boycott it, as the smaller the number of voters, the less influential The Poll is.

Alternatively, another way to discredit The Poll would be what was attempted in 1985, namely start up a counter-poll. Of course, you would have to have as many voters as, and adhere to the same scientific data management standards (or better) that Linsey does. Which means that you have to find

someone with tons of energy like Linsey—and *unlike* Terry Tallman—to run it.

[What kind of bogus reasoning was that earlier? Just because a small number of people voted in Leeder's poll didn't automatically make it a "sampling" poll. Just because a greater number of people voted in Linsey's Poll doesn't make it an "election." Where did you get the idea that the eligible-to-vote population has remained constant? Since friends and relatives of hobby members are also allowed to vote in The Poll, *anyone* who claims to have seen two issues of one zeen, the eligible-to-vote population is theoretically infinite, practically probably around 5,000.

[If Linsey's Poll *is* an election, as you and Alan claim, since when does an election have an open-ended deadline? "Oh, we'll just count the ballots when we think we have enough." Which day is chosen as the cutoff could have a big influence on the outcome. Who knows when those moderates might get off their duffs and swing the vote?

[And if it is an election, since when are "Mickey Mouse" votes thrown out? They are always tabulated right along with the other valid votes, even though they may be votes on the system itself.

[But of course, who cares about these questions, since as you know, this bit about running a valid poll, of whatever type, is just a pretext, a facade for the real game of MegaDip. And my primary goal in this particular game is for me and mine to be disassociated from The Poll completely, not be in it in any way, not talk about it anymore.]

(BOB OLSEN) How come there's all this talk about polling, and no discussion of the most prestigious and important poll in the hobby—the Yawner Poll which I did such a great job doing? For 1987, I was proud to report a total turnout of 304,782 votes, and next year's vote will be larger and more statistically significant still since the Yawner (which seeks to determine with total accuracy the Most Obnoxious Hobby Member, *ie*, Don Williams) will be combined, by order of Terry Tallman, with the Soap Stone Poll (rating hobby Titan zinnies). Anyone who would like to discuss this matter and say what a great job I'm doing should write in to *HoL*. And if anybody criticizes, I'll attack Don Williams.

Speaking of Tallman, though *Magus* has dwindled as you noted, Steve an Daf seem to have had an electrifying effect on the Toadfather. Tallman has already published more pages just this year than in his entire previous career. Pretty heavy stuff, some of it, but enlightening.

I would like to thank you for performing an important educational service in pointing out the use of quotation marks to indicate "irony." It's nice to know that my understanding of common English usage isn't unique in all the world after all. I would have pointed this out myself, but didn't want to insult anybody's intelligence (well, there's a first time for everything...). Of course, it is in a sense unfair to deploy such stylistic flourishes against someone whose oafish and subliterate style doesn't encompass them....

Didn't Dan Stafford run the Marco Poll for a year, or propose to run it, or something?

[I doubt it, unless he thought he would win it that year. You know what a ratings player he is. Is he still at the top of his own "Influential Player Rankings"?

[Say, isn't the Yawner the most prestidigious poll?]

(PETE GAUGHAN) I wish you and Dick would stop beating up on Linsey. You have told people often enough how much you dislike him and things he has done—why not assume that we're all intelligent enough to remember this and quit pounding us over the head with it? Let the past lie—I don't see a lot of usefulness in the excesses of the Runestone Poll, but so what? It serves a purpose desired by many others.

In connection with this, at the end of this year I will run the Marco Poll. I expect a voting period of all of November and December; suggestions on format are welcome. Of course, the basic system of the old Marco Poll will continue: vote for your five favorite zeens/GMs/subzeens, in order of preference. Should this be ten? three? Should points be awarded on a flat basis (5-4-3-2-1), or staggered so first place on a ballot is worth more (say, 10-7-4-2-1)? Should the winner be declared on an average or total point score? See, if we try hard enough, we can make even a simple project complex. I'll probably just decide these things arbitrarily.

Oh, and anybody who can send old copies of Marco Poll results, I'd be interested in seeing them.

I enjoy the open forum you provide in *HoL*, even if a few writers are monotonously repetitive and redundant.

[At the risk of being repetitive and redundant, as well as obnoxious (but lovable), I'll say again: I will be glad to drop the topic of Polls as soon as people quit writing in about it. I have no hidden agenda.

[Good luck with the Marco Poll.]

(STEVE LANGLEY) I doubt that I will be voting in any but the Marco Poll, and only that if it happens soon enough that I will still have an opinion worth registering. Burnout is upon me. I'm burning out slowly, but the level of interest and the amount of time spent is way down from even a year ago.

Since I skip over all the parts that have to do with the Supreme Commander, if they extend beyond what I have to read to recognize that he's the subject, I was not aware that The Poll is being redesigned. I don't really care, of course. It's his toy and he can play with it in any way he chooses. Since I don't want to play with him, I also don't want to play with any of his toys, no matter how fancy they get. I think the plan I overheard...but why ruin a good surprise?

[But you *will* tell us after it's all over, pretty please?]

(SIMON BILLENNESS) I'd agree with you that we need more satire of the hobby. As an experiment, I'm proposing to steal another idea from Britain: the Rusty Bolt Awards. I proposed fifteen categories in the last *ECU*. The vote-buying arrangement is my own invention. After all, if polls are corrupt, why not let everyone in on the fun? Vote early and vote often!

Why?

(STEVEN CLARK) Why do you print Bill Salvatore's (aka SS "Spike" van Robart) shit?

[I find his writing very amusing.]

Friday the 13th, Part VII

New Blood listing of recent inquiries from *General* plug received by Ken Peel as of April 30.
...all these folks are rabidly champing at the bit to get into their first postal game!

Antolak, Joe, 7251 Lawrence Ave, Harwood Hts, IL 60656
Ball, Tom 1350 Garrison Chapel Rd, Bloomington, IN 47401
Banozic, Robert, 2256 N Cleveland, Apt 107, Chicago, IL 60614
Billet, Christopher, RD #3, Box 141, Danville, PA 17821
Brocha, Art, 2336 11th Ave E, Seattle, WA 98102
Chin, Meldon, 2885 SW 129 Ave, Miami, FL 33175
Chinnery, Paul, 409 N Rath, #3, Ludington, MI 49431
Combs, Kevin, 15121 Kalmia Dr, Laurel, MD 20707
Fisher, John, 781D Shiloh St, Ft Devens, MA 01433

Glass, Lindsay, 915 Inverhouse Dr, #18, Mississauga, Ont., L5J 4B2 CANADA

Gray, David, Rt 1, Box 130, Hillman, MN 56338

Green, Hugh, 58 Holly Ave, Pennel, PA 19047

Greene, Tim, PO Box 3315, Morristown, TN 37813

Grinnell, Dan, 2135 N88th St, Seattle, WA 98103

Gross, Jeffrey, 550 Memorial Dr, #10E3, Cambridge, MA 02139

Hamilton, Riley III, 7811 Harwood Pl, Springfield, VA 22152

Hoffman, Karl, Box 1613 Seegers Union, Muhlenberg, PA 18104

Hogan, Brian, PO Box 41-22, Kykotsmovi, AZ 86039

Johnson, Bob, 7208 Heathermore, Dallas, TX 75248

Kazzimir, Edward, 114 129th St S, #20, Tacoma, WA 98444

Klien, Eric, 1 Sinai Circle B10, Chelmsford, MA 01824

Maynard, Greg, 3820 Red Arrow Rd, Flint, MI 48507

McDougel, Logan, 5161 Keane Dr, Carmichael, CA 95608

McNally, Thomas, 1109 Wagar Rd, Rocky River, OH 44116

Mulka, Mike, 505 E State St, Cheboygan, MI 49721

Neiger, Gilbert, 412 N Cayuga St, Ithaca, NY 14850

Niechwiadowicz, DJ, 136 Lyon St, Newtown, Southampton S02 0LZ, England

Norton, James PFC, A Battery, 2/59 ADA, PO Box 198, APO New York, NY 09142

Pagano, Chris, 1218 Main St, #34, Coventry, CT 06238

Palmer, Dave, 16025 E Oxford Dr, Aurora, CO 80013

Pierce, Rickey, 2305 Spanish Trail, Irving, TX 75060

Pitt, Tom, 666 Ridgewood Rd, Maplewood, NJ 07040

Rahenkamp, Creigh, 6 Dakota Trail, Medford, NJ 08054

Reiff, Bruce, 36 S Main St, Rittman, OH 44270

Romer, Richard, 637 Sedgwick Dr, Syracuse, NY 13203

Rought, Jr, Kenneth, 7 Summit Rd, Stratford, NJ 08084

Scharpf, Jeff, 543 N Main St, Hartford, WI 53027

Smith, Russ, 1961 E Sylvan Ave, Salt Lake City, UT 84108

Toher, Chris, 156 Fernwood Dr, Old Tappan, NJ 07675

Tsuk, Michael, 145 Robbins Rd, Arlington, MA 02174

Turner, Mike, 412 Moser Rd, Louisville, KY 40223

Wang, Dennis, 2200 Huntington Ave, Alexandria, VA 22303

Wiggers, Earl, 2855 Henderson Mill Rd, Suite B, Atlanta, GA 30341

Ybarrondo, Paul, 10130 Woodpark Dr, Santee, CA 92071

(JOHN CARUSO) I seem to like most non-sugar-coated, non-raisin, non-bran cereals. In other words, corn flakes, Wheaties, Cheerios, Shredded Wheat, Special K, and Product 69. I used to like Team Flakes and Total, until I found out what is in them. Boy, was I shocked.

[Product 19!]

{I tend to munch on a lot of old fashioned granola these days. You know, pop into work, scarf down a Welchade and a dozen spoonfuls of coconut almond granola and I am good to go until lunch! }

New Business: Ratings & Scoring Systems

(DAVE MCCRUMB) I have seen quite a lot of talk about how people that make ratings systems for games are only interested in how to make themselves appear a better player by designing the system to fit their playing style. I think there is a basic misunderstanding of these type of people. Personally, I enjoy doing a ratings system because I love to play with numbers. I don't care what position I come out in. (Actually, I'll probably come out rather low since I am not very good at Gunboat.) I get more fun out of finding out how each country fares, but since I have already figured out the numbers, it is easy to do a player ranking. Besides, limiting it to a ranking of only seven would get stale, especially after I had a couple of hundred games on file and very little movement would occur.

[C'mon, Dave, you have to wonder about a guy who comes up with a new ratings system, with some apparently arbitrary rules, and ends up ranked number one in his own system. Like Dan Stafford and his "Influential Player Rankings." He said that the Calhamer and Dragonstooth Rating Systems were no good because they used stats for games people played many years ago, people who have

long since dropped out of the hobby. He decided that only "influential" players mattered, *ie*, players over the last three (or was it four?) years. The actual number doesn't matter, because it was an arbitrary number anyway. Or maybe it wasn't so arbitrary—maybe he picked the number of years to exclude, for example, Dave Crockett, who had an incredibly high Calhamer ranking but had left Dipdom; maybe he picked the number of years that just covered the time when he started to win games, and left out the years when he was learning to play and did not do so well. There is no question that Stafford is a ratings player—he proved as much when he made a big stink over a game in *Murd'ring Ministers* which was declared irregular by the BNC.

[So, here we have the elements of a fine discussion. "Ratings systems" refers to PBM, "scoring systems" to tournament play. What are some of the rating systems/scoring systems? How are they calculated? What are their advantages? their weaknesses? How much better is a win than a draw? Are players who "play the system" cheating, or is the system really part of the game? Can players be prevented from playing the system? Should ratings masters acknowledge "irregular" rulings from the BNC or MNC? or ignore them? And who pays attention to ratings, anyway?]

✉ *return address* ✉

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first class