

HOUSE OF LORDS #17

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

The nominations are in for Simon Billenness's (630 Victory Blvd, Apt 6F, Staten Island, NY, 10301) version of the British "Rusty Bolt" Awards. You can vote until Saturday, November 26, unless you buy him off for a longer (or shorter) deadline. Simon says this is the first (openly) corrupt poll, so why not find out how corrupt he really can be?

Kathy Caruso (29-10 164th St, Flushing, NY, 11358), Bob Olsen (6818 Winterberry Cir, Wichita, KS, 67226-1253), and Rod Walker (1273 Crest Dr, Encinitas, CA, 92024) are the new Orphan Game-Placing Triumvirate. According to Rod, these things work better in threes. I always knew you were a superstitious kinda guy, Rod. What's your Sign?

Dick Martin (you know where he *and* his mother live) is again running the PDO Census, as if he didn't have enough to do already. The deadline for publishers to send in their sub lists is open, in keeping with Hobby Tradition. Besides, you never know when he'll finally get around to finishing it up, anyway. (I'm refusing to do all the work this time.)

Pete Gaughan (3105 East Park Row Dr, #132, Arlington, TX, 76010-3710) maintains he is going to run the Marco Poll. I'm not encouraging him to do it.

the concept

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Haven't heard from you in a while. But that's natural enough. I seem to get on streaks of hearing from certain people, followed by dearths of contact. I have a lot of people who write occasional letters, but only a few people who write regularly. And those are mostly my "adoring" players, wanting to know what the hell I screwed up this time!

Funny that after a year of publishing I still haven't found "my" subject. Perhaps that's what a zeen's first year is for. Anyway, my pages upon pages of reviews last issue may have helped. I enjoyed doing the issue a little bit more than I enjoyed doing the issue before it. The problem is that a game review is somewhat closed-ended. It would be a reasonable goal for any publisher to put out the kind of zeen that he would enjoy reading. Since my interests have such a wide sweep, it could be any number of things.

The more things change...why is it that I get the feeling that everything I say was said ten years ago by somebody else?

I see there's a new novice publisher's project in the works. I must say we can use something like that. I'm wondering how and whether I should contribute. I tend to dwell more on my failings than my successes, but hopefully I can contribute something worthwhile. Some of the experiences I've had (changing systems, desktop publishing, what have you) would be helpful to potential pubbers. And I'm sure there will be a lot of other computerized publishers with their experiences.

You don't need to remind me how nasty the Bad Boys can be. For the last few months they have taken to trying to convince me that I shouldn't be "wasting" my time publishing. The impression that I can't take criticism is not necessarily a valid one, but the Bad Boys certainly seem to see it. They're bending over backwards to phrase their nasty views in nice phrases: "Is that why you're so miserable?", for example. Funny that it isn't misery in itself that they object to, so much as the idea that I try to get something done in spite of (or perhaps about) it.

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Having seen your *Inner Light* collection, I can see why Bill Salvatore was so anxious to take a peek. Great stuff.

Zeen Recommendations

Rebel, for astoundingly regular GMing of (gulp) more than 30 games!

Praxis, for lively discussions and Alan's wildly

funny commentary.

Kathy's Kornor, for lighthearted lunacy, intriguing GMing discussions, and well-run Dip games.

Vertigo, for very strong writing on music, politics, sports, cons, and life in and around the hobby.

Excitement City Unlimited, for literate liberalism, letters on politics, Simon's own special dry wit, and even a vegetarian recipe or two!

Bushwacker, for solidly-run variant games, and a healthy dollop of chat.

Not New York, for gab and whimsy, contests, and Red Sox fever.

Zeens which tend to be less timely, but which are still gems when they do appear, are *Excelsior* (plenty of relaxed chat and letters, and even Bridge commentary), *Cathy's Ramblings* (tales of Cathy's adventures, the occasional and welcome cameo by hubby Eric, and strong ties to the British hobby), *Flick of the Wrist* (wonderful off-the-wall humor, and some major-league press games), and *Costaguana* (warmth, wit, and Eric and Ross, courtesy of Uncle Connie). And if you want plenty of press and don't worry about much else, there's always *Magus* and *The Boob Report*. (Both have been known to print my stuff, but don't hold it against them!)

I'm glad you gave Michael Hopcroft a thumbs-down reaction on his "informal organization of Diplomacy publishers" idea. Publishers can easily help novices (write to them, give them addresses and names and advice) without a hierarchy. It's amazing how often people in this hobby decide Dipdom cannot function effectively unless it is run by rules of a business or an official organization, with strict bylaws and membership requirements and dues and leaders and hirings and firings and so on! Why are there people who want a hobby to be so much like work? A hobby is what one does in one's time off! And Michael is sure dreaming if he thinks that any formal hobby organization among people with such vehement disagreements as pubbers can ever be "an open and stabilizing force."

And all this segues nicely into your question: "Why should Dipdom listen to people who don't play Dip?" Don't you think that question shows a bit of organization fever in you, too? Two of the hobby's most prominent names, Bruce Linsey and John Caruso, both used to be involved more with the game itself than they are these days. For years, each ran a Dip-oriented publication which has since folded. Both have played and GMed games. Today, both run projects in which many hobby members participate—the Runestone and the PDO Auction.

Both attend gaming cons to maintain years-old ties with hobby friends. Maybe both have pretty much burned out on Diplomacy itself, but that's not unusual. I have known other people in the gaming hobby to gradually move on from Dip to variants and to other postal boardgames or role-playing games. Zeen game openings reflect just this diversity. "Dipdom" may still be called that, but it is certainly not just a hobby for Dip. I have been to cons at which *no* Dip games were played! All this goes to show that the hobby has—and certainly should have—a place for anyone who gets enjoyment out of any part of it: playing Dip and GMing it, running a chatzeen, playing and GMing other games, running projects in the hobby, writing letters and/or press to zeens, designing games, attending cons or hosting them, etc. Answer your question?

[As I told François in *Passchendaele*: First, this is not *my* question. I've heard a number of people raise this issue before, and I was wondering what "The Lords" would say. Second, I don't play Dip, either, so this was a bit of self-deprecating fun. I'm surprised you didn't get it, Linda, you usually show a fine sense of humor in your letters. Of course, you think Alan is "wildly funny" and Simon has a "dry wit," so I don't suppose you'd appreciate my humor.

[You are right that there are many ways to participate in Dipdom and have fun besides playing Dip.]

(DAVID HOOD) I agree with Dave McCrumb. I, for one, do not perceive a lack of "good zeens." There are still a lot of them out there that I would like to get, but haven't gotten around to sending off for. One reason I say this is probably due to my game-oriented approach to the hobby. There are plenty of places around to play a good game of Dip. Sometimes I wonder just how much actual *Diplomacy* is played by some of your readership.

Oh, come on Julie! You know, that game where you move little pieces around Europe...

I brought up at the "Hobby Meeting" at AtlantiCon the same issue raised by Mike Hopcroft regarding Sacks' delisting ridiculousness. There is no "Lords," just a bunch of people who happen to read the same zeen. And to be fair to Brux, the run-of-the-mill *HoL* letter writers do not an objective jury make. Sacks ought to stop looking for a Hobby Sanction for his own views—why not just do what he wants to do? If people disagree, they'll just stop reading *KGO*.

[To be fair, at last count I had 9 Martin clones, 8 Brux toadies, and 22 neutrals on my sub list.]

(KEN PEEL) Convene The Lords for a decision by a meeting of The Peers? Give me a break.

Can we have an issue with a little less Chris Carrier? ... a truly sad case... Hmm... but no matter how annoying he may be, an hour later it's impossible to remember what he had to say (sort of like bad Chinese food). Oh, what a naughty boy...

Generally, though, the zeen is sparking up nicely. I admit to having had a few trepidations about a tart remark or two last issue, but you have your own style, and I would certainly rather have an overly opinionated column than one spiced with warmed up melba toast.

Now to the real stuff. How *dare* you provide a platform for that morose (take that), grouchy (and *that*), biased and belligerent bully, Bob Olsen, who doesn't have a Peel-friendly bone in his body. He and his minions... but no! I'll not even grant him the courtesy of a reply. Suffice it to say that *Olsen is not interested in trying to improve this zeen*; he merely wants to turn it into yet another of his hotbeds for lies and hatred. Shall we stand by and let him and his ilk drive out all decent folk favorably disposed to professional baseball in Oakland? Why, if it weren't for the fact that I'm not even going to mention this dastardly and despicable Warlord of Wichita, I would go on and on (and you better believe I *could!*) about his perfidious pastimes. Let me raise one final issue, however. Has anyone stopped to wonder about the national origin of his cat? And how about that organization of his: the Kansas Gaming Board? Think about it.

(BOB OLSEN) It's so good to have a toady... but please inform Mr Geryk that he doesn't have to kill everyone in Dalton to find out what happened to me (they're in enough trouble already...)—I merely took a brief nap, that's all. Sheesh, you nod off during a Berch letter or something and the next thing you know Bruce is staking up mangled bodies like cordwood. Just an excitable boy, I guess...

Speaking of Death Threats, though, did you know I've been receiving them from Steve Clark? And they're really good ones, too—the savagery of them would curl your hair (hey, if you ever need a perm, let me know). Automatic weapons, knives, cattle prods, pig-faced Nazis, the whole bit. None of it quite reaches the blood-curdling level of "Do what Alex tells ya, or I'll kill ya, OK?" but it's surely close.

It's really hell, isn't it, to have to say, "That was a joke...you *have* heard of humor, haven't you...look it up in a book" over and over again. In the country of the blind...take good care of your eyesight. The ruling junta demands that everyone share their debilities.

[Yes, Bob, it really does get tired after a while. Another broad hint for our readers: I think *HoL* is the funniest zeen in Dipdom. Try reading it with that thought in mind and see if you don't understand it a little better and enjoy it a lot more, too.]

(ALAN STEWART) Months ago, I was printing Bad Boy letters and *House of Lords* was printing Bruce Linsey's Runestone Poll comments. Now I'm getting the latter and you're getting the former. I still can't figure out how I got ripped off like this.

After #15 I decided that it wasn't really that your comments were so obnoxious in themselves, but that the contrast between yours and Dick's was so dramatic. As Dick said in #15, it just took people some time to adjust.

Lovable (but obnoxious).

Bob Olsen is still letting his life be controlled by his reaction to some mass mailing that occurred back in 1985 or so, I see. It apparently affected him so much that at least half of what he writes about anything—letters to *HoL*, his subzeen, even press in his games—consists of obscurely vitriolic abuse against the object of his obsession (whose name he will not mention, as is common in these cases). What a psychopath. Of course, I feel the same way about the Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, so who am I to talk? I notice that Olsen has started up with Steve Hutton in his usual sneering style as well. Since Steve hasn't been writing anything in the hobby at all for at least a year, I guess he feels it's finally safe.

Nobody needs anybody's permission to quote what anybody else says about him, in a free society. I explained that to Robert Sacks when he wrote me along the lines of his quoted letter to Bruce Linsey on page 4, and he seemed to understand.

[Don't you know, Alan, it's all the rage to dredge up *ancient* hobby history and use it against people today?]

(MARK BERCH) I noticed that you quoted from a copyright circular and from myself and others on this general topic. It's possible that your readers might draw the wrong inference. It is indeed true that, under the new copyright law, copyright

protection "subsists" once the work is put into tangible form. But that is not enough to gain copyright protection itself, because *if it is published* you must still put on a proper copyright notice and register the material with the copyright office. I mention this because the three sentences you quoted from the USCO circular didn't cover this point. Dick Martin's "request that my stuff not be reprinted" has no significance in terms of copyright protection. Moreover, even if Sacks and Martin did do that, Linsey would still be protected under the Doctrine of Fair Use, if he were dealing with criticism of himself or his actions. For those interested, see section 107 of the new copyright law.

There's nothing unique about Linsey's stance. If someone criticizes me or what I do, I will respond in whatever forum I choose, be it the original zeen, my own zeen, or some other zeen. Since I didn't pick the original forum, I see no reason to be locked in there. And when I respond to criticism, I almost always quote what was said, rather than rely on paraphrase. I did indeed say that "it is the author and not the publisher who has the right to erect barriers to reprinting." But that right is not an unlimited one. I doubt that there would be much support in this hobby for the notion that A could criticize B, and then bar B from quoting this criticism in his response, at least in certain zeens. I and Bruce, for example, have been criticized a number of times in *KK/W*, criticisms which took the form of quoting me or him. Just think how far I'd have gotten saying that they weren't allowed to quote me. Kathy once even defended her right to quote me in *KK/W* from an off-the-record letter.

[I printed Bruce's postcard, *et al*, about his "right" to quote any letter pertaining to him, because I thought it was so funny that he was threatening me with something he does anyway, and which I am powerless to prevent. So what? say I. Let him take a chance that someone will interfere with his personal life (for a change) by bringing a lawsuit against him (which is a mondo hassle, believe me, whether you win, lose, drop it, or settle out of court).]

(ROD WALKER) I'm not sure anybody here understands beans about copyright law. The bit from Circular R1 you quoted is correct so far as it goes, but it pertains to original mss. If I send you something (this letter, for instance), it is an original ms and you can't publish it without my permission. If you have my permission and you do publish it, if you don't copyright your publication and don't publish a copyright notice next to my letter, then copyright protection is lost. *Nobody* can prevent

reprinting. There is one exception to this: if it was my intent that you copyright my material upon publication, and I can prove it, then I retain control over the material.

The problem with all this is that the intent of the law is not really to give people control over their letters and other mss just "because"; the issue is really money. A ms for a work of artistic, literary, or nonfiction creation is worth money. The private correspondence of a famous person is likewise worth money. Copyright laws are intended to protect the interests of artists/writers and their heirs. That's why, for instance, you can't print (in whole or in part) one of JRR Tolkien's letters without the permission of his estate.

It's ridiculous for Dick or Robert or anybody to complain if Linsey publishes extracts from material which has been printed in an uncopyrighted forum. Once something is in the public domain, it's fair game for anybody. I don't see that there is even an ethical issue involved here. On the other hand, there is the issue of common sense. What you have here is simply typical Linsey obtuseness and over-reaction. Dick is correct in pointing out that Linsey is just wasting space in *Praxis*. (On the other hand, I've seen very little from him that wasn't wasted space.)

By the way, here is some sub \$\$\$\$. I'm willing to have myself proved wrong with respect to my statement that arguing things in *HoL* isn't going to settle anything. Even if *HoL* is only a forum for people to vent their opinions toward a bunch of closed minds, I suppose I can vent mine as well as anyone.

[Hear me now and believe me later: having been involved in a lawsuit over copyright myself, I understand very well that the bottom line of the copyright laws is money. You can be right, right, right, or even wrong, wrong, wrong, but if there's no money involved, it really doesn't matter. (Although there are such things as punitive damages.) In the context of Dipdom, the copyright issue is a joke, folks. I printed Linsey's postcard and dredged up an old Mark Berch quote from the "Copyright Wars" of a couple years ago just to see how it would stand up in our kangaroo court today. Apparently, people have become better informed or less willing to parade their ignorance, and this is no longer the bone of contention it once was.

[On the other hand, you have reminded me of another reason to despise "not for print" letters: they're "unfannish" in that they implicitly threaten out-of-Dipdom reprisal for in-Dipdom actions. (This, of course, beside the fact that they are

generally used to cover shady MegaDipdom deals which the writer may later wish to deny.) By the way, does anybody besides Walker, Linsey, Berch, and Davis still use the "NOT FOR PRINT, NOT FOR COPYING OR REPEATING, DO NOT QUOTE," etc, labels?]

(BRUCE LINSEY) I noted with amusement your tactic of taking quotes from different places and putting them together into a single quotation. (This refers to your quote by me near the top of page 1.) I'm sure then that you won't object to others' use of the same tactic—right? (In fact, if we can do it with sentences, we can do it with words too, *n'est-ce pas?*) But you must never, never expunge your ellipses—Ed Wrobel even says so!

[Actually, since these are quotations taken from two different sources, what is missing is not ellipses, but a set of end and beginning quotation marks. I'm glad to see you are proofreading carefully. Would you like me to footnote your quotations, too?

[Of course, you realize the reason for all these rules on punctuation of quotations is to avoid misrepresentation of the speaker's word. If you think I have misrepresented your opinion of *HoL*, you are welcome to send in a corrected opinion for print.

[Please, don't bore me with threats. This is just like your "I'll quote what I want" postcard last issue; now it's "I'll make the quotes say what I want." What else is new? You play with words like other people play with cards, and you cheat. For example, you say: "I have never said that the Runestone Poll proves which zeens and GMs are the best. In fact, my opening editorial in *Cream* #3 made it quite clear that I don't feel way. You have no business misstating my position this way." Well, your article in the Spring 88 *Diplomacy World*, entitled "Diplomacy's All-Time Finest," is all about how one can use the statistics generated by your poll to determine which are the "greatest" zeens and GMs of "all time." You're right, Bruce, you never said "best," you said "greatest." Go stick it in your mass mailing.]

archives

(KEN PEEL) Julie, I wonder if you could help me out. Because of the flood of *Zeen Register* requests (*Pontevedria* requests, actually, but I am filling them with ZRs), I am also getting an echo surge of requests for The North

American Zeen Bank (I just *love* the pomposity of that thing's whole name!). I have a problem. I'm virtually out of zeens.

The way I work the ZB is that I have two boxes. One holds all the zeens I receive (most of them are trades for the *ZR*). Once I finish an issue of the *ZR* I dump that box into the other box, which is the hallowed home of TNAZB. I don't use any of the zeens in the first box for ZB requests until they properly make their way into the second box, because I need those things for info on the various zeens (descriptions, frequency, game openings, stealable snippets, etc.).

So basically, HELP! Some pubbers have sent me extras of their zeens to help me out with the Zeen Bank. I have plenty of the following: *Boob Reports/AB*, *Appalachian General*, *Retaliation*, *Perelandra*, *Excitement City*, and *Bushwacker*. There are plenty of other zeens which I really like to send out (because, frankly, they are among my favorites), though, including *Vertigo*, *Comrades in Arms*, *Cathy's Ramblings*, and *Penguin Dip*. If there are any pubbers out there with extra zeens who want to get them in the hands of novices, send them to me and I will put them to good work. If anyone also would like to send me zeens they otherwise would throw away, hey, throw them my direction!

What I do is the opposite of an Archives. I don't squirrel away zeens where generally they don't get used. I take used zeens and toss them back into circulation. A ZB mailing costs me \$2.40 for 20-30 zeens (cram full a large legal sized manila folder and you are there). Usually I get 10 or so ZB requests between *ZRs*, which hits a fairly reasonable stasis. But since the article in the *General*, I've had about 30 requests. I already plan to hit Olsen's (probably pitiful) collection when I raid his place in August. Any other help would be greatly appreciated.

(ROD WALKER) I don't know what, specifically, Larry Peery might be proposing with respect to "messy folds," but Chris Carrier's suggestion that "nothing" be done is the only practical solution. If someone folds messily and then tries to start games again, I'm sure there will naturally be a hue-and-cry around the hobby about it. The restart of François Cuerrier's publication is a good case in point, in the sense that François did quite a good job of dealing with the previous problem. Another possible case situation might be Bernard A ("Buddy") Tretick (currently playing games under the name "Bernie Oaklyn"), who has twice folded very messily. He is, in fact, the only GM known to me who was orphaning games and

starting new ones at the same time. If he made a third attempt at running games, I'm sure it would be in the face of a lot of spontaneous adverse publicity. Another, similar, case might be Dan Gorham, who has just done a second fold which appears to be rather messy (and, ironically, "Oaklyn" is one of his players). It seems to me, however, that any proposal to "institutionalize" the hobby's reaction to such events is doomed to failure due to impracticality.

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Let me have a try at answering a couple of Larry Peery's questions from issue #15.

He asks, "How should we, individually or collectively, deal with the problem of a returning GM or pubber who has had a messy fold in the past?" I find it interesting that Larry refers to a "problem" with this. It isn't necessarily one. Some pubbers, from what I hear, have a messy fold during their student days—or later—and come back eventually with a very dependable zeen. I know I was surprised recently to find that was the case with a zeen Steve and I have enjoyed for years. The pubber clearly has learned from his mistakes.

Of course, I understand that those who have been burned by a messy fold in the past don't know for sure that a born-again zeen is going to be any more of a success than it was the first time around. I understand such people don't want their friends burned either. So I guess the best way to deal with it is for pubbers to do as they have done with the recently-revived *Passchendaele*: just say the zeen folded messily in the past, but is back and is currently looking very good. Then, as the publisher continues to churn out issues and the subbers' trust increases, they can decide to resub if they like. I think the "caveat emptor" warning will keep people from investing too heavily in a zeen until it has a proven track record on its second go-round. And anyway, it isn't a bad idea at all to sub for only a few issues at a time to any zeen you get. Quite a number of our pubbers have vanished lately, and because I have not sent much money, I have not lost much money.

Larry also asks, "What, if anything, can we do to encourage people to try publishing a Dip zeen?" I don't think prospective pubbers *need* much encouragement! Those with a talent for writing and GMing do, in my experience, eventually become pubbers. If they don't it probably is just as well because they probably don't have the drive to keep going. My only partial solution would be for zeen pubbers to offer space to those wanting to run a subzeen. Subzeen pubbing is a great way for a person to see if he/she has the interest, time, and

organizational skills required to publish a full-fledged zeen.

bad boys

(STEVE LANGLEY) I'm afraid I'm not up to drawing a distinction between what I'm doing now (writing to you and *HoL*) and real life. Where does reality begin? When I put down my pen? Does the fact that I'm writing this on the back of a status report (blank, as is suitable to my status) make this more (or less) real, or is it more or less real anyway? If this is all such a waste of time, why is Steve Clark concerned about Spike? Who is Spike, anyway? Who says the Bad Boys don't NMR. If they don't NMR, why was Dick called to standby in *Magus*? Inquiring minds want to know!

Why, after years of relative wimpish silence, has Bob Olsen suddenly become such an outspoken type? Have the Bad Boys put something in the water? I told him not to drink the water.

(ALAN STEWART) Hopcroft asked whether the Bad Boys even playing in any games. Last time I bothered to open my copy of *Frobozz*, which wasn't recently, I saw that Geryk was close to a win in a game there. Another Bad Boy illusion dispelled.

My feeling on the Bad Boys is that, as a conservative, I like to see them stick to their old familiar themes and not try to branch out into stuff they aren't good at (like discussing polling procedures, for example). It's sort of like politics; you have to keep reiterating your basic themes or the message and public image gets blurry.

(CHRIS CARRIER) It is clear, given the fact that Bruce Geryk dropped out of college, that I was right all along about Bad Boyishness being driven by fear of failure—only instead of it being fear of future failure, it is based on the fact that Bruce Geryk, at the very least, has failed in life by being a college dropout.

Dick stated that he didn't see many "successful" people in Dipdom. I disagree—because it takes a certain degree of Real World economic success to be a major factor in this hobby. The phone isn't cheap; neither is postage for zeens or mass mailings. Around here, a phone bill of less than \$100 is cause for sighs of relief, and the zeen sample issue of the *MegaDiplomat* is probably going to cost almost \$100 to print and mail. Poor folks can't afford to spend those kind of bucks on hobbies—I certainly couldn't have afforded this hobby before getting my permanent, civil service protected job.

[Who told you Bruce Geryk dropped out? It wouldn't happen to be Bruce Linsey, would it? I ask because Geryk mentioned at PudgeCon (well before you "broke the story" in *Praxis*) that he had taken a year off to work on his thesis, and how funny it was that Linsey had talked to his advisor (dean, whatever) who told Linsey that Geryk wasn't at school there anymore. Now you gloat about how he's "dropped out." Are you real sure on that, or have you perhaps jumped the gun in your eagerness to nail Geryk?

[By the way, I thought your question in the *MegaDiplomat*—"Do you think if Steve Clark's daddy had shoved a coathanger up his wife one fine day when he was drunk 30 years ago, we'd be better off?"—is far more disgusting and inexcusable than anything the Bad Boys have ever said or done.]

(DICK MARTIN) Gee, I so hate to disillusion Chris Carrier, but I really don't enjoy all this feuding stuff nearly as much as he would like to believe. Most of the time I can't really figure out just what the point of my involvement is, other than that I must defend what I feel is "right." Whether that's sticking up for Don Ditter when I think he's taking unfair abuse, or Kathy Caruso when every decision she makes is questioned simply because some people don't like her, or myself when all my motivations are willfully misrepresented, I just feel it's something that I *have* to do. I don't really care about my "reputation" in dipdom (a useless commodity at best), winning awards or glowing plugs don't make my day, and I'm not so insecure that I need the adulation of thousands of screaming *Retalies* to give me a sense of self-worth. Many times I've wished it would all go away and I could just have a good time again without a care in dipdom beyond the simple pleasures of playing and running games.

My advice to anyone else here just for fun, to play a game or two (there must be at least one of you out there!), is to steer clear of anything even vaguely resembling a feud. It's far too easy to get dragged in deeper than you like. Once the cycle starts, it's almost impossible to break out of—nothing short of one side leaving dipdom seems to end it. Nobody "wins" feuds any more than you can win a war—you just survive.

But the Bad Boys are still right, you know....

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) I enjoyed Dick's letter about the "lack of ambition" of hobbyists. It just goes to show that it is possible to make the Bad Boys' points more politely than they do, and of course, he and the BBs have been right

all along to a certain extent; some hobbyists *do* take things far too seriously, and some hobbyists *do* neglect job opportunities and times with family and friends to play postal games. Some also pour much too much money into the hobby.

I think that the whole Bad Boys fad has caused a few hobbyists to reevaluate what they put into the hobby, and to scale down their involvement to a more reasonable level to allow for a better career and more "quality time" with loved ones. And maybe it took as direct an attack as the Bad Boys' to make that happen, seeing as some people still haven't gotten the message. However, I do question Dick's equating "successful" careers with law alone. I can think of other hobbyists who are in fields which, admittedly, may not rake in the bucks of law, but those hobbyists seem to be using their potential and they seem to be happy. What better standard of success is there?

[I think Dick put the word "successful" in quotes to indicate a bit of irony to you—he meant successful in the conventional, middle class sense that only lawyers and doctors are successful. I'm sure he does not think successful people are limited to those professions, or high-paying professions, hence the remark about not needing an Audi to prove success.]

(JIM BURGESS) Dick forgot about me and Sludge, we're successful people. I have found most of the Bad Boy *affaire* to be amusing. It even amazes me how few people have managed to discern the appropriate behavior to take toward what they do. I guess it just goes to show they mostly were right on. Damn, Robert Sacks even made sense.

(ROD WALKER) I can't understand the amount of space being wasted by and about children such as Clark, Geryk, and Zarse. They apparently spend at least as much time on this hobby as people they call "freaks," and people spend time on them as if what they say is anything more than puerile gabble-gibble.

It always gives one a sense of severe *ennui* when Bad Boy Sacks goes on and on about whatever. I am, however, glad to see him admit that lying about people is immoral.

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) No doubt the next big controversy will be sending letters to authority figures about the hobby activities of certain people. No doubt that will fall under your "Bad Boys" segment next time. But is it a Bad Boy problem, or is everybody in potential trouble? There

was a lot of that in *Kathy's Korum* this issue, as the Carusos (never Linsey's greatest fans) really lay into Linsey for taking that fatal step. Do we all have something to worry about? What I'd like to know is how Linsey found the address of Mom and Company. It doesn't come up in the casual conversation of arch-enemies. ("I'm going to use your intestines for a jumprope! I'm going to flay you into saddle leather! And my mother, who lives at 1771 S Plymouth, Ketchikan, WA, 77654, is going to grind you into hamburger!") It doesn't generally come up in games either. ("Sure, I'll let you have Serbia. Here's my mother's signature on our treaty...") And what can a mother do anyway? Take away your Diplomacy set?

Has this sort of situation come up before? Some of the old hands are talking as though this has already happened once and Great Feuds Erupted. Now I'm not up on the history, but is writing Mom a habit of Linsey's? Funny, but when I heard about this a month ago, I wasn't so concerned. It was, after all, the Bad Boys, arch-foes of all that is decent and pure, that were the targets of this. I'm reminded of what happened when the Korean airliner was shot down and the general consensus at my college (at least of the students) was that we should nuke Moscow in retaliation. We would have regretted it then (if we'd lived long enough...), and I should probably regret what happened. I still won't defend the Bad Boys too readily; if anybody deserves to have Mom called out on them, it's them. But will the same thing happen to everybody else too? That seems to be what's bothering some people.

Now, if somebody had called in *my* mother, I'd be antagonized. And, of course, the idea that the authorities are going to be called in when things get hairy seems odd. In the unlikely (but delicious) event that Bruce Geryk finds himself in federal prison for forging the [Walker/Miller/Koning] awards ballot (using tools available to anybody who frequents copy shops and has national connections willing to do his bidding), we will wonder whether this can happen to us. After all, usually the penalty for violating somebody's copyright is substantial damages. Admittedly, most zeen-faking cases would wind up in small claims court. But you'd have to be pretty mad to do that. I can understand why somebody that upset would do something like that, but it still seems odd that they would take such drastic steps. And don't forget that this is all in public. Linsey told several people (including me) that he was doing this. No doubt this was designed to reinforce the idea that those being offended by the Bad Boys were doing something. Not necessarily something effective, but *something* nonetheless.

The strangest thing about all this is that the only people really benefiting from the exposure is the Bad Boys themselves. For once they look like victims rather than victimizers. Their attacks on others will look positively petty compared to some of the things that have been attempted against them. Mind you, I have still seen no evidence to support the conclusion that Bruce Geryk *isn't* an obnoxious little brat whose behavior could stand to be modified. And I'm not saying I wouldn't like to apply a few blunt instruments of my own to Steve Clark's enlarged cranium someday. I just wish somebody could do something effective instead of offensive.

The main problem with the Bad Boys is that their stuff is simply not funny. Being funny would excuse a great many weaknesses. It is therefore truly unfortunate that screaming incoherently at the top of your lungs about applying Uzis to everybody just doesn't cut it as humor (unless you're into Bobcat Golthwait, in which case stay well clear of me!). Obviously the Bad Boy's favorite rock song is that Dr Demento favorite "My Name is Larry." "My name is Larry/my name is Larry/I have a mother/her name is Mother. Hi, Mother!" Saying this is humor is like saying Slumber Party Nightmare Massacre on Elm Street at Friday the 13th Part 27.651 counts as horror. What kind of schooling produces this??

(DAVID HOOD) I'm a bit ambivalent about this issue. I find *Random Thought* to be extremely funny at times, though sometimes it is simply tasteless and boring. And while I agree with Sacks that trashing fellow hobbyists is not very nice, I have to admit that Geryk, Zarse, and Clark often have a good point.

I think the major problem is in how people are choosing to deal with the Bad Boys' attacks. People who quit publishing, or call Zarse's momma, etc, are being silly. The stuff the Bad Boys print is not assumed by *anybody* to be particularly true or even coherent. *Random Thought* reads more like the stream of consciousness of an irreverent child than the careful argumentation of *House of Lords*. For anyone to take it seriously enough to actually get offended by anything said is *really* acting like a freak.

Now, this does not apply to other actions which I have heard of that the Bad Boys have done. Calling innocent parties or conducting harassment is not the way to lampoon other hobbyists.

I guess the bottom line is that I am as wishy-washy as Bob Olsen. But at least I don't live in Kansas.

Oh, regarding honeymoon in Wichita—I think I would be a permanent target for abuse by Bad Boys

if I were freaky enough to go Dipping on my honeymoon. After all, I'd have to cancel our luxury accommodations at the Mayberry (NC) Town Motel and our tickets to the International Swine Wrestling Competition being held there August 14-19...

burnout

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Burnout is when you face a word processor for umpteen hours, the deadline is two days away, and not only do you have nothing to write, but you passionately wish the whole bloody thing would go away and you could hide someplace. It is truly unfortunate, therefore, that studio apartments rarely (if ever) have root cellars! I can't just shove a week's mail into the tubes and watch it ferment. (Someday somebody is bound to come up with an alcoholic beverage from distilled paper. Yuck!)

(CHRIS CARRIER) You're right, Julie...feuding does arouse my enthusiasm. I was practically out of the hobby in 1987, which should go down in hobby history as the Year of the Asskisser. 1988 is soooooo much more fun.

(JIM BURGESS) I agree that there's not much going on in terms of letter column and discussion zeens when you compare it to the early 80s, but it's much better than it was last year. *Praxis* has really hit stride. Brad Wilson has beefed up *Vertigo*, Mark Lew is back, Simon Billenness is taking up an international stance, and *HoL* seems to be getting awfully popular...in general, I see Dipdom as being on the road to recovery. A few more big feuds and we'll be off and running. Let's face it, feuds do raise people's personal interest levels. I don't have much respect for those who leave Dipdom over them.

I want to deny what Simon says about me (mostly). Also, the one sure cure for burnout is winning a postal Dip game. Too bad burnouts never win.

census

(ROD WALKER) Bruce Linsey's attempt to get Ken Peel to send him mailing lists, and to lie about having done it, was just the most blatant aspect of his attempt to bloat the "Poll's" numbers. He also tried to get lists from individual publishers and whined a lot at those who were unwilling to send them. A reminder to publishers: if you give Linsey your lists, you are condemning your players

to junk mail harassment—it appears that Linsey's typical approach is to send multiple duns to get people to vote, as many as five, at least two of them with SASE enclosed! (One wonders how he can afford a postal blitz of this sort, but suddenly can't afford to keep his promise of free issues of his publication to those GMS who made his bloated vote figures possible in the first place.) Sharing census or mailing list information with Linsey is a bad idea.

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) In theory, this is a great idea. In practice, it's virtually hopeless. Dippers move all the time. Steve GMs a game in which only two players remain at their start-of-game addresses from two years ago. Really, Bruce Linsey is the only one in the hobby with a prayer of having a fairly up-to-date address list because he needs to update it yearly—but people move between Runestones, too!

[Are you saying the Pollster must have a "Census" in order to run The Poll?]

computers & filing systems

(JIM BURGESS) I finally found the courage to chuck much of the mid-1980s Dip stuff I gathered while being in the Orphan Service. That's a first. It felt great. Just so everyone knows, I kept the good stuff and the controversial stuff (like *Murd'ring Ministers* and Roy Henrick's *Envoy* zeens). I even organized everything else. If anyone wants anything from me, ask now, I may keep throwing.

[Ken? Oh, Ken? We have a prospect for you!]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Some of the hobby alliances that have formed lately mystify me. Sacks and Geryk getting together on a project? After all the things they've called each other? I still remember a letter I got from Sacks linking the Bad Boys to Davis and his other targets! But it happened. And all because somebody bought Bruce a Macintosh out of the goodness of their hearts. Does this mean Amos Andrew Anybody can become an Influential Publisher by investing four thousand dollars in a Mac and laser printer? (Of course, I shouldn't complain; my computer and software cost close to a grand, and "public" money yet. If you want to do damage to me, don't write my mom. Write the Social Security office, and tell them I've joined a Communist Conspiracy with their money.)

According to Iain Bowen, chief editor of

Mission From God, some 40% of the zeens in the British hobby are still done on mimeo. I have yet to see an American zeen done on mimeo, though I'm sure there must be a few out there. If there were a sudden shortage of photocopier supplies, what would happen to the American hobby, I wonder?

[Well, we still have Al Pearson's old ditto machine, so we'd still be in business. Since we run most of Dipdom's zeens and services, I guess things wouldn't fall apart completely.]

(TOM NASH) You guys have a CompuServe account but never sign on. You are missing one of the most vibrant play-of-the-game, hidden subcommunities in PBM Dip. At any CompuServe "!" prompt, enter "go gamers <enter>" to get to the Gamers' Forum. Subsection 5 is entirely devoted to electronic mail Diplomacy and variants. There is even an electronic zeen published in Data Library 5, *The Armchair Diplomat*, currently running about eight games of Dip, two Gunboat, and one Revolution. All with weekly or every other week deadlines for that crisp sense of fast play. Mail is instantaneously sent, so the diplomacy can be fast and furious.

And it is hidden from the wider hobby. I played there for two years before I found out the wider hobby existed. Two years without ever hearing one word about Brux, Bad Boys, polls, or feuds. Then one day I made my fatal mistake...I posted an open message: "Does anyone know of anything written on Diplomacy...a magazine or anything like that?" Within two weeks I had a copy of the *Zeen Register* and well...here I am.

So if you ever want to play a game without all the politics and/or anonymity (believe me, nobody's ever heard of you there), drop on by.

[Without all the politics? Sorry to disillusion you, Tom, but PBEM Dip was a hot issue in *HoL* and Dipdom about four years ago. Russell Sipe was the editor of *TAD* then (is he still around?), and he wrote quite a few letters here. The burning issue was whether or not PBEM games were regular and could receive Boardman Numbers. The decision was no, because letters and orders sent by public bulletin boards could not be guaranteed confidential. I believe that Sipe became disgusted with the PBM hobby at that point, which is perhaps why the two hobbies have become so separated. Welcome home.]

{I believe the problems were more related to a negative reaction from Avalon Hill to PBEM, but there's no doubt the "irregular" ruling didn't help.}

costs

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Reading Michael Hopcroft's letter about writing checks for Dipzeens, I can't help wondering why people in precarious financial circumstances insist on publishing. He's not the only one I know who does it. I'm sure that if I were worried about my money running out, I would take a publishing hiatus. When we first moved to Pennsylvania, I would have done exactly that because of the staggering expenses involved, had I not been a subzeen which was printed at Melinda's expense at the time. Could one of your readers explain this for me?

Steve and I have been getting a lot of flak lately from people who visit, see Melinda's cost breakdown on how much we owe her for *High Inertia*, and fall down in a dead faint. The latest issue cost us \$64.26—fourteen pages to Melinda's 135 subbers. But how many other pubbers out there can get away with paying that amount for that large a circulation? And isn't it worth something to have all xeroxing, collating, stapling, addressing, stamping, and return-addressing taken care of by someone else? What do *HoL* readers think?

[Would you be interested in taking on *HoL* as a sub-subzeen?]

(CHRIS CARRIER) One way to keep costs down is to use the smallest possible type on your computer (if you're using your computer to compose). Right now I'm projecting the next *MegaDiplomat* to be 8 pages, which would be about 13.2 pages of my normal font (standard pica 10 cpi).

I get annoyed by people who don't cash checks—they can really mess an account up. The solution is to send cash—who cares, given the low amounts spent on subs (as opposed to the phone).

custodians

(JIM BURGESS) Speaking of *Envoy*, I notice the BNC is listing the game that Dick was running there as missing. May we assume that Dick not recognizing the BNC stretched to not reporting that game finish? Moreover, wasn't that the game that Sludge came in as standby and won? Maybe Olsen hasn't won a postal dip game...

By the way, as a former custodian, can I not bother to get involved in the Custodian disputes? Don Williams was asking me why I was advising him not to take on a major hobby custodianship. I'd

show him these interminable, never-ending arguments by custodians with only as much power as they can create for themselves. Ooh, I said I wasn't going to get involved...

[No, you may not assume that Dick did not report the game. You may assume that it was "lost" in the shuffle between BNCs, just like the *Hoof & Mouth* game that Dick has reported to three different BNCs, and now Heinowski's asking about it again.]

(CHRIS CARRIER) As I see it, the Sacks problem is that the people who got the custodianships that Sacks either got hold of or created out of nothing, "The xxx Custodian under the Covenant," are required to sign documents which pledge them, *and all their successors*, to certain things. Well, the tradition in this hobby is that one custodian can anoint another, but cannot dictate after the fact how the custodian shall do his or her job. Since Sacks fails to realize that, the hobby has left him behind.

[So then what's the problem? How does this affect your life? How has it ever affected you?]

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) I'm glad Dick agrees that Bruce and The Freds should not be "de-listed." It's a pointless move, impossible to enforce. I think we all know Bruce is not about to shrivel up and die because he's taken off someone's list of anything! And I'm just as sure that Bruce isn't going to cower in his boots and hand over his projects just because someone says he should. Doesn't Robert realize by now that Bruce would never give up that easily?! And doesn't Robert realize that harping on it is only going to make Bruce dig in his heels and stick around longer than he might otherwise?

A quick correction to your comment about alternative hobby services: Bruce *does* list *Masters of Deceit* as well as *Supernova* in sending out novice packets; I've seen the listing.

[True, but Robert lists (or did at the time I applauded him for it) *all* alternative hobby services that he knows of.

[I'm sure Robert realizes all these things about Bruce because he's had the same tactics used as futilely on him, lo, these many years. But since Bruce trots out his "massive hobby support" every time he does something he knows he really shouldn't do, I suppose Robert figured he'd try to fight fire with fire.]

(ROD WALKER) This issue, as Geryk says, has gotten “out of hand,” although of course he says this for his usual crazed-wacko reasons. It’s the *pettiness* with respect to hobby services which has gotten out of hand. Dick Martin won’t send game info to Steve Heinowski. *Pure pettiness*. We have two competing Miller Number Custodians. There is no explanation for this except *sheer pettiness*. Bruce Linsey plays every trick he can think of to get a bigger vote in his “poll” each year than he got the year before, thus making the “poll” a tedious bureaucratic exercise instead of something the hobby at large can enjoy. What other explanation is there but *petty egoism*? The petty nitpicking of Robert Sacks is legendary. This list could be extended indefinitely.

It’s high time people tried to put this sort of crap behind us and concentrated on getting the hobby and its services to run smoothly. That means good will instead of pettiness, and ignoring the people who insist on being petty anyway. It’s those guys who are the hobby’s “bad boys,” and in my book, that lumps Geryk, Sacks, and Linsey into the same pot—unless it’s possible for them to change their stripes.

[What is the BNC’s office if not a petty dictatorship?]

(MARK BERCH) You write, “According to my information...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.” What information are you talking about? No such event ever occurred. Since Robert Sacks has written me something similar, I suspect you heard it from him. This is one of Sacks’ many delusions, and you’re foolish to rely on him.

First of all, von Metzke resigned in September, 1974, turning his records and job over to Doug Beyerlein. There was no issue of fees. Conrad had simply stopped doing the job. Doug was later to report that there was a six-month interval during which no BNC work at all had been done! There was some controversy at the time of the switch itself, but that had to do with the supposed reasons for von Metzke’s not giving the job to Ray Heuer (details were reprinted in *DD* #84). There was no dispute over fees and von Metzke was not driven out of office.

I realize that this whole business about fees is important to you, to the point of running an alternative MNC operation for it. *If* your being misinformed about hobby history had any role in this, then perhaps you should reconsider. Your

alternative operation is a solution to a non-existent problem. The chances of Hyatt charging a fee are about the same as you doing it—approximately 0%. If it weren’t for your alternative operation, it wouldn’t even be worthwhile to discuss the topic.

On the topic of the publishing handbook (*Once Upon a Deadline*), you say that Bruce did it “excluding a certain group of GMs/publishers from contributing.” No, he didn’t. Bruce made an announcement to the hobby that he wanted contributions to this new handbook. What contribution was excluded? Be specific, now—and refer to a contribution actually written, as no one can be expected to accept something not actually written. I might add that *OUAD* has at least four mentions of *Masters of Deceit* (by contrast, *MoD* makes no mention at all of any of Bruce’s projects). *OUAD* also mentions zeens such as *KK/W*, *Coat of Arms*, and *The Prince*. All of them were put out by people hostile to Bruce.

[I did *not* say that he “excluded their contributions”; I said he “excluded them from contributing.” Yet another instance of Berchian mind-rasslin’, eh? Set up a straw man with a misquote, then knock the stuffing out of it.

[But to clarify for the careless or uninformed reader who might be befuddled by your tactics: About the time of his general announcement that he was publishing a handbook, Bruce sent out quite a few personal invitations to GMs and pubbers asking them for specific contributions. However, he did not send such an invitation to John Caruso or Dick Martin, two of Dipdom’s longest-lived, and presumably most experienced, GMs and publishers. (Much later on, he sent a begrudging note to the effect that Dick could contribute if he really wanted to.) They were excluded from the guest list, which (before you say it) does not necessarily mean that if they had sent articles, Bruce would not have published them.]

{It was clear to me that my contribution would be an unwelcome one. The “invitation” form letter I received, late as it was, was sent solely for megadip purposes.}

(ALAN STEWART) “Not that many people have the guts to buck the system,” you say? Come on, that’s entirely the opposite of the truth. The Hobby is so anarchic that it tolerates no organization. People attack systems just because they are there. People can even opt out of essential game registration systems, putting their players to a lot of unnecessary trouble, and not get criticized for it. If the BNC had no other way to fund his

operations, then he should set a mandatory fee. So long as the Hobby considers to extend its generous support, that won't be necessary. And by the way, I am willing to bet \$10, knowing nothing about US law, that Sacks would not risk his tax-whatever privileges by donating to a BNC who exacts mandatory fees-for-service. Since I expect Sacks to deny this, and it will take me a certain amount of time and trouble to prove him wrong, it might be interesting, if I am forced to research the issue, to go a little farther and find out just what representations Sacks *did* make in order to get his tax status. Anything in there about having authority to "register" or decide the legitimacy of hobby services, for example? Was it made clear to the IRS that Sacks' organizations are just fronts for his factional warfare?

Are you enjoying being the true sovereign of the Hobby? Sacks claims the right to run everything, but is willing to defer to "the Lords"; you have the ultimate authority over who is entitled to be in "the Lords" by controlling the sub list; therefore you are the ultimate Hobby authority. Queen Julie I.

I hesitate to intervene in the Linsey-Martin-Martin feud as Bruce can take care of himself, but who did Mr Linsey exclude from contributing to the Handbook? You know, I am becoming convinced that you and Dick intentionally say a lot of things you know aren't true just to a) get Bruce's goat, and b) ensure that you will get a response from Bruce and thereby keep the thing going.

[No, that's Woody's job.

["The Hobby is so anarchic that it tolerates no organization." This from the man who coined the term "the Hobby Establishment"? Then again, the man who was previously extolling the virtues of "a free society" seems to think that people should *have* to register their games (what are they, handguns?), and if the BNC should decide to charge a mandatory fee, well then, they should have to pay that too! Get a consistent viewpoint, Alan!]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I'm mulling over the idea of applying to edit the *KGO Zeen Directory* for 1989. Don't sign me up on the nomination list just yet, but I'm thinking about it. I think I could do a decent job, but I may not have the time or energy for such a project (school and all). Besides, for me to sign up would be to finally pin me down in several areas I've been trying to remain neutral in. A lot of people with stakes in the matter of that project's destruction would stop speaking to me. And so on. I wish the atmosphere were less

charged, because if it weren't I'd have no hesitation about going after the job. As it is, I'm mulling it over.

dipcon

(DAVID HOOD) I think Sacks' idea for another East Coast con is a good one. I just hope he doesn't bury it in mounds of bureaucracy and tax-exempt organizations...

finding new subbers

(CHRIS CARRIER) Get people you know out of the hobby to sub—if they're interested, they'll branch out and discover all of Dipdom.

(JIM BURGESS) I find myself getting rather nasty about getting rid of subbers. I return checks and cut people off at whim. I'm determined to keep my "sub" (nobody pays) list around 50. It can be done.

[We don't cut people at whim, but there's a few for whom the least excuse would do. On the other hand, there are some people who never have to write or send us money again—they have "lifetime" subscriptions, or at least until they move with no forwarding address.]

gming procedure

(BOB OLSEN) Well, Gary Coughlan was an excellent GM of the old (almost antebellum...hyork) school, but he could never compete with New Age GMs like Don Williams or me. The old way of GMing was just one guy sitting down and writing up the season, and that was that. Williams-Olsen style GMing, on the other hand, is a continuing process of investigation and discovery, a collaborative effort on the part of both players and GM to discover Truth, *ie*, the correct adjudication. How much more satisfying it must be to the players to thus have a hand in the entire proceeding...

As to the question of whether I would be (even more) confused by revised orders, this will probably never come up. In most cases, revised orders are the result of the process of negotiation. As far as I can tell, none of my players indulge in that kind of thing!

(CHRIS CARRIER) If a game was run under civil disorder rules by a North American GM,

would it be considered regular? Or a variant?

[When Mark Larzelere ran it, it was regular.]

(MARK BERCH) On the subject of WAP, Steve Langley says, "Personally, I don't want to have to dig back into prior adjudications to generate moves for NMRs" Oh, what a dreadful burden! All you have to do is repeat the exact same moves from the previous move season. How hard can that be? Sure, the day will inevitably come when a GM "screws it up." If the possibility of screwups were enough to hold us back, no one would undertake GMing in the first place. Incidentally, Tom Nash writes me that in his game in *The Armchair Diplomat*, the WAP rule has been used, and it has made a difference.

[Was the difference good, bad, or indifferent?]

(DAVID HOOD) I don't think I'll ever WAP my players. Seems like keeping up with what your neighbors will do if they NMR would be more difficult than if you assume their units will hold. And I don't think I would set up a game that makes life harder for those who *do* send in moves.

Again, as Dave McCrumb said, it's all a matter of personal preference. But just saying that does *not* mean that a constructive discussion of WAP's merits/flaws cannot be undertaken.

[This is the first look at WAP I've seen from the *player's* point of view.]

(ROD WALKER) David McCrumb makes a semi-good point, that actual procedures are less important than consistent application. To that should be added: telling players what procedures and rulings will be followed *in advance*, insofar as possible. However, discussion of these things is valuable, even so. For one thing, even an experienced GM might pick up a good idea now and then. For another, as new GMs enter the arena, they're going to have to learn the tricks of the trade. Mark Berch, it must be confessed, does tend to specialize in speculating about things that will never (or almost never) happen—but these are often quite interesting puzzlers.

I have to disagree with Dick only on this point: who says encouraging players to play the game is "GM interference"? In my opinion, "encouraging the players to get moves in, or trying to drum up a little interest on the part of marginal players" is almost a GM duty. Naturally, (petty) people who are more interested in winning a game rather than in playing

it, will object to this. And perhaps some GMs really don't have time or energy to spend on it. However, I think it's a hell of a good idea if the GM can do these things, and if Dick "interferes" with his games in that way, that makes him a better GM.

(JIM BURGESS) I admit to all the same things Dick does. I even do it for standby selection. I always choose the standby who I think will be most excited about the game. It works. Look at my Press Game! I do hope the BNC isn't listening, but c'mon, put your cards on the table. How do *you* choose standbys?

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) A brief cautionary tale for those who pick up a copy of *Computer Diplomacy* and expect it to solve their GMing problems. It doesn't always work the way it's supposed to. The documentation is also confusing at times, particularly when dealing with supports and convoys. It's all too easy to get the rules for supporting convoys mixed up. I know because it's happened to me quite often. There is also one other little quirk in the software, which is that it is only possible to save a game *before* a complete turn begins; that is, before Spring orders and before Fall orders. It would be a lot more helpful if you could save before retreats or builds to match American postal standards.

(ALAN STEWART) Re Hopcroft's GMing letter: a game has already been declared irregular for switching over to a "prophetic retreat" (British-type) system mid-way through, without consent of the players, so the GM could computer-adjudicate it. It happened to what's-his-name—former BNC, the guy whose wife did all the work—Dennis Agosta, on the complaint of Stan Johnson, is it?—an old-timer. I know the hard way—I eventually got a three-way draw in the game after it was transferred to *Graustark* when *Command* folded and was cheated out of my valuable Calhamer points.

letter columns

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) All along in *High Inertia*, I have urged readers (and *Rebel* now has about 150!) repeatedly to send along letters on any topic of their choice, although admittedly until now I have soft-pedaled feuding. Some fascinating letters on topics like religion and animal rights have come into our mailbox and I have run them in *HI*. But, to a large extent, I have only been able to prod people to write when I suggest a topic,

and those topics have ranged from the intense to the frivolous. Anyone who doesn't want to see a "bland and boring" subzeen should get off their duffs and write *HI* a letter about anything!

I should add that I see an advantage to the "print everything in the mailbox" style of publishing. When I spend time and thought on a letter, I like to see at least part of it appear, and it sours me a bit on a zeen which never gets around to printing anything I send. Mind you, I have never believed that everything I write is worthy of printing, but I'd like to see some of it anyway. Since I feel that way, I like to extend that same courtesy to my readers by printing their letters. Unless I'm mistaken, they appreciate it.

Larry Peery's "innovative" (quotes mine!) idea of a hobby-controversy debate in a lettercol sounds to me just like another *HoL* or *The Not For Hire* or *Praxis!* Except that, as Larry proposes it, it would *never come out!* Since he says, "Each participant would see the responses of the other (and have right of reply) before each publication." The combatants would be replying to each other till doomsday, and not a word of it would ever see print...

[Looks like Larry has fallen prey to Xeno's paradox (ar, ar, ar).

[I have gotten the impression that Alan Stewart does occasionally let some people see and respond to other people's letters before publication. For example, I recall Bruce Geryk saying, "I agree with Dick," on a new point which only had come out in Dick's letter *in that issue*. This handling makes for a more condensed, easier to follow debate, but it gives an advantage to the respondent in that he gets the last word for the next few months, at least. Of course, this is an advantage which the pubber has always had, and he can delegate it to anyone he wants to, but it biases the discussion more.

[It's no surprise you prefer a "print the mailbox" type zeen, but you have just underscored my original point. You admit you want to see your stuff in print, even if it's no good. I don't consider that an "advantage." However, you're in good company with your *HI* topics; Barbara Walters asks people what kind of tree they would like to be.]

(JIM BURGESS) One great way to kill a letter column is not to print people's letters. I'd rather run the Press Game. I'll take guest press from any of you. Hop in, the water's treacherous, but warm. My one requirement is *all* the press gets printed, every season. And the *Brutus Bulletin* approach to it has been essential.

out of dipdom

(ALAN STEWART) Bruce Geryk's point about the hobby being so ridiculous that normal people wouldn't be seen with you in public if they knew you were in it was funny and contained more than a kernel or truth, as usual. I wonder how many people advertise their publishing activities to "normal" non-gamers. I know I sure as Hell don't.

(CHRIS CARRIER) When I discovered Bruce Geryk was a dropout, the first person I told wasn't a hobbyist, but one of my coworkers who has been following this thing...the lady at work who thinks Geryk is a brain-damage case because of the open letter to Linsey. We danced a jig in the hallway after she heard...and those of my coworkers who follow the Feud (quite a few) came up to congratulate me on my discovery. That made my whole week!

polls & awards

(STEVE LANGLEY) I've seen both Dick and Mark Berch state that the Marco Poll favors or is slanted toward or in some way or other gives an advantage to large circulation zeens. Since two such opposite poles of opinion agree, you'd think the opinion would have to be good (valid, true, pick a positive adjective).

Thing is, I've got a bit of my ego on the line here. *Magus* won the Marco Poll twice and placed quite well another time. If there were more than three polls, I claim a failing memory. Anyway, *Magus* at its highest had 58 subbers. Usually the count ran 52 or 53. I know I never considered it a high circulation zeen. Have I been in self-delusion all this time? Is 50-60 really a high circulation? What a disappointment if it is, I've been kidding myself that *Magus* won because it was a quality zeen.

{ True, but if *Magus* had a hundred subbers it would have won by such a huge margin every time that we'd now have a Steve Langley Award for Popularity.... }

(JIM BURGESS) One nice thing about the Marco Poll format is that you can't cast negative votes. That's why it works. People vote for what they like and what people like wins. Funny how that doesn't happen in the Runestone.

An aside to Dick: funny how it works, but the zeens people like also tend to build up high circulations. Small zeens like mine are nice, but they

don't win polls, no matter how you manipulate them. And that's fine.

(DICK MARTIN) Pete Gaughan's wish is my command: my lips are sealed. Besides, I've only got repetitive redundancies to add anyways....

So let's have some more details on the Marco Poll for 88. Time's a-wasting if it's going to be run in November/December of this year. Set a deadline and let's get on with it! Hey, I'll plug it (for you, Pete, anything).

I think a straight 5-4-3-2-1 scale should work just fine, but why bother with the GM category? While I can't say for sure, I'd guess that most players aren't even eligible to vote for five different GMs. Three maybe? Ditto the subzeens.

Past poll winners were declared on the basis of total points, and there's no compelling reason to switch this year. Besides, anything else would just add needless complexity. So stick with tradition. But as long as the decision is arbitrary, it's ok by me.

And it would sure be nice if Bob would quit whining about the Yawner Poll. I've voted seventeen times already, you'd think that would be enough. But noooo, he has to extend the deadline by another year, just to rack up more votes. Disgusting. Well, he won't talk me into it more than five or six more times, no sir!

Too bad about the Rusty Bolts. With those nominations, Simon seems to have captured most of the meanness of the originals without any of the humor. At least the vote-buying is above the table, though (wish I'd have thought of that first!).

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) No, I'm not really about to redo the Freshman Poll—no time—but I would be happy to vote if someone else takes it up, as I will vote if Pops Gaughan sends me a Marco Poll.

Your question was interesting about polls being hobby services. I'm not quite sure how to answer that, simply because I don't think there is *anything* which *everyone* in the hobby sees as a service! Some people see the BNC as a service; others, like Dick and Brad Wilson, don't seem to. Some see the Runestone Poll as a service, some see it as optional but fun, and some see it as unnecessary. I guess anything offered in the hobby is only going to be considered a "service" by those who get something useful out of it—the GM who gets the BNC to play ombudsman, the publisher who desires to know how subbers regard his/her zeen. I guess that's why even Bruce doesn't consider the Runestone a "service."

About my being mentioned twice in the latest Linsey mailing: Since my name is cropping up, I guess I should put my two cents' worth in about Bruce's comments.

First, if memory serves, I not only told Bruce that people would object to the poll's deadline being extended, I also attempted to talk Bruce into keeping to his original deadline. At the very least, if the decision was already a *fait accompli*, I informed him I disagreed with it. (And Steve agreed with me on this.) I believe that, barring extraordinary circumstances (*ie*, a prolonged mail strike during the polling period), Bruce should have stuck to his original deadline. I base this on the ethics stipulation that a person should not only avoid doing wrong, he should also avoid doing anything which *can appear* wrong.

As I recall, Bruce told me that he had originally ceded the point, made by at least Brad Wilson, that the polling period should be shorter. he shortened it, he said, and then found that the new deadline did not allow time for several major zeens to even print the ballot in time. As Steve and I predicted, his lengthening of the polling period opened him up to criticism of his action—and his motivation. Whether he told me the truth and is getting heat unjustly, or whether he actually did want secretly to break his own record number of voters, I cannot say because I am not a mind-reader. But I don't think Bruce is correct in terming this a "weak" case. It is to be expected because he did not keep, for whatever reason, to his own rules. That should put his comments about me in context.

Second, Bruce refers to my comment from a letter to *Excelsior* that "controversy helps the Poll." To put that comment, too, into context, let me quote briefly from what I wrote in *Excelsior*: "You ((Bruce McIntyre)) made a good point about the Runestone discussion forum—for a poll that the minority considers a waste of time, it is astounding how much time that minority wastes arguing about it! Whatever happened to 'live and let live'? The Poll itself is not really a waste of time—not essential to the survival of man, certainly, but it is interesting in a hobby which feeds on competition and favorable public opinion—but the endless rules debates carry the whole thing to absurd proportions. I'm for having the Poll, printing the results, and adjourning till the next spring! You'd think the enemies of the Poll would be for that too, but instead they gab about it until it is puffed up bigger than life—something which could only benefit Bruce, right? Go figure!"

One last, tiny observation before I destroy my own point about the poll by belaboring discussion

about it. My observation is that you shouldn't knock having Bruce send out mass-mailings. Think how much postage it saves *you!*

[Yes, but then, the more I knock them, the more he'll do them, and the *more* money it will cost him!

[If Bruce doesn't consider The Poll a service, he shouldn't ask for a portion of the funds earmarked for hobby services to be given to him for the purpose of running The Poll. Of course, I understand now that he's thinking of asking for half the funds of the charity pledge drive to fund The Poll!]

(DAVID HOOD) Oh, why not? Of course the Runestone Poll isn't perfect—but I see little harm in it. I concur that its results are not statistically reliable enough to proclaim them the "Voice of Dipdom," but that is hardly how I think of it anyway.

Americans love "horse-race" activities, where they can see competition rear its ugly head. And I must confess to the same weakness. Our presidential primary seasons is basically just a big horse race—with the attention focused more on who's ahead or who's behind without much sophisticated policy discussion. It may not necessarily pick the "best" candidate, but at least it is lots of fun.

The same can be said of the Poll. While I would support any publisher's right to exclude consideration of their zeens, I cannot agree with you that such things as "Give-Retal-a-zero" campaigns are justified. If hundreds of people in the Hobby think it is fun to vote in some silly poll, then why not just let them do it in peace?

And I do think there is some validity to the last results I saw. Most of the top zeens (in my opinion) were near the top of the list, and vice versa. But I hardly consider it to be definitive—it's just a little harmless fun, that's all.

[Back in the mists of time, when I actually paid a *little* bit of attention to the results, I almost always found the zeens I liked best at the bottom and those I liked least at the top. A few years of this were enough to persuade me that the Runestone Poll was Not For Me. All I care about is if a zeen is funny, a concern which apparently is shared by very few other "voting members" of Dipdom.

[When the poll was for fun, it didn't have hundreds of Dipdomites voting. The hundreds that vote now are certainly not doing so in peace; how do you think Linsey gets so many people to vote?]

(ROD WALKER) Regarding the "Walker Award": I objected from the first, and still object, to

attaching my name to this award. My reasoning is that naming an award of this sort for a person still alive and active in the hobby is inappropriate. I told Larry at the time that there was a much better name available anyway; namely, John Koning (who, for instance, wrote the funniest article ever written in hobby literature and who was then deceased). John's name has since been attached to the "Best Player" award, although in fact his talents in that regard were about medium. A better candidate for that award's name would be John Smythe or Edi Birsan (even though Smythe may well still be alive, and Edi is—or at least was recently—active in the hobby). If you want to honor the best writer ever in the hobby, then the award should be (based on professional sales, at least) named for Jack Chalker or Jerry Pournelle (depending on your taste). But, for the record, I still object to using my name, although I've never made a big (petty) case over it.

The real problem with the Linsey Poll is methodology. This consists of the moral equivalent of ballot-box stuffing (although in this case it doesn't appear that the object is to get any particular winner, but instead to bloat the vote). In this case we've got: harassing letters and phone calls, manipulation of novices, drastic lowering of voting standards, questionable extensions of deadlines, and questionable inducements to undecided voters. In the last category might be cited a list of people who have already vote, all prominent names, as "proof" that it's "OK" to vote. All of these little nasties (and the business with Ken Peel) are being mentioned via hobby grapevine: what we need to do is to investigate them and find out exactly what Bruce has been up to and with how many people.

Although John Caruso greatly exaggerates what Bruce has been doing, he isn't far off the mark in one way—Bruce has been beating the bushes with great determination and is getting people to vote (a) whether they want to or not and (b) for zeens that they've barely seen. There can be only one purpose behind all this frantic activity: to make the Pollster look good.

Limits must be set as to how votes for this (or any) poll are solicited. Robert Sacks makes a typically elitist proposal which can't be taken seriously. The principle, that anyone who wants to vote in the poll should be allowed to, is important. But the operative word is "wants."

It's fine to have preprinted ballots; it's a nice convenience and makes voting easier (thus encouraging people who want to vote). Having the poll publicized by all (or nearly all) the hobby's GMs is fine; this gets the information out to everybody. But once that is done, that should be it.

There should be no continuous and repeated solicitation; no dragging in of people whose total experience of the hobby has been limited to a few days; no deadline extensions without real cause; no hype attached to poll announcements (unless a particular GM wants to encourage his own readers to vote in it).

If this poll is allowed to run itself, it really makes no difference who does the work. It seems to me that the following are the essential principles on which that can happen:

1. Bruce must agree to refrain from the vote-bloating activities listed just above.
 2. Other people in the hobby must refrain from trying to undermine the poll.
 3. GMs who don't want to go to the expense of printing a ballot should at least tell their players about the poll and tell them they can write to Bruce for a preprinted ballot if they wish one.
 4. Bruce must refrain from any manipulation of the votes (that is, throwing out votes he thinks are too high or too low or otherwise don't conform to some arbitrary standard of legitimacy).
 5. Bruce must also set some reasonable standard for eligibility (for instance, having subscribed to or at least read regularly a given publication for, say, six months or more). We'd all have to accept the fact that there is no way to enforce this sort of thing and the voters would be on their honor to observe that limitation. Encouraging somebody to vote for something he or she has only seen one or two issues of is ridiculous.
 6. The results of the poll must be announced hobby-wide (sent to every publication that publicized the poll in the first place) in a simple, easy-to-reprint format. The encyclopedic result tabulation could also be offered for a fee if Bruce wishes, but people must not be required to pay for that sort of thing just to get the basic results directly.
- If Bruce can't agree to reasonable limitations on how his poll is conducted, then people in the hobby at large should consider taking some action which will register tangible disapproval of what he's been doing. Offering a truly effective alternative poll, one that's fun and informative at the same time, is one plan that occurs to me right away. (And I don't mean just "another" poll, but one which is clearly and explicitly offered as an alternative to the Linsey Poll.)

[Let's call your six points "The Walker Covenant," shall we? Just for fun. That way Bruce can be the Runestone Pollster Under the Covenant as he's always dreamed.

[Interesting how someone who has used forms

of the word "petty" nine times in one letter can call someone else's proposal "elitist." One man's "elitist clique" is another man's "informed council." And lest we forget, "elitism" was the charge Berch and Linsey used to shut down *HoL* the first time around, when Dick only allowed pubbers and GMs in his zeen for pubbers and GMs.

[John Koning must have been *some* writer to write the funniest article ever while he was dead.]

(CHRIS CARRIER) Sacks's "special jury" idea proves what we all know about Sacks... that he is an elitist. The whole point of a *poll* is to get the *hobby's* opinion, not the opinion of a bunch of Sacks toads.

Dick has a very valid point when he says, "Since when does an election have an open-ended deadline?" I have advocated strict Poll deadlines, all the more because the Pollster, when a GM, was known to be the archetype of deadline-strict GMS. Since the polling period is about four months, I would suggest closing the Poll at the moment of the north-hemisphere summer solstice and opening it exactly one-third of a tropical year (365.242216 days divided by 3, or 121.74740533 days) earlier. In 1989, this means the poll would open on February 19 at 10:56:49 am EST and close on June 21 at 5:53:05 am EDT, minus whatever leap seconds we have between now and then. Or, alternatively, the poll could open when the sun's right ascension is exactly 22 hours, and end when the RA of the sun is exactly 6 hours (the same as summer solstice) to get a four-month poll period.

You are right, the purpose of any hobby service is to gain status in the great game of MegaDip. But let's face it: your goal isn't to be "disassociated from the Poll completely, not be in it in any way, not talk about it anymore"—no, your goal (which everybody knows) is to either destroy the Poll or (preferably) get it out of Linsey's custodianship and into the hands of a friendlier custodian.

There is nothing immoral in this, any more than a Dip move is or is not moral, so I do not bash you for it—I enjoy watching the show. What the fuck—I enjoy my bread and circuses. *Long Live The Feud!*

[How many rounds of "No, I don't—yes, you do" would you like to go? I don't care who runs The Poll—as I've said before, *all* the Pollsters have done things with it which were at least questionable—and I don't care enough about it to want to destroy it.

[I just love this "elitist" argument. Come on, Chris, in the American presidential election, who actually elects the president? Not Joe American voters! It's the electoral college!]

(ALAN STEWART) You mentioned the Walker Awards. I'm glad they shifted away from "Best Writer" to honoring one specific piece of writing, because "Best Writer" is too vague, while best piece of writing requires one to focus the mind. It doesn't amount to much as an award now, mostly because Larry won't impose any sensible standards for nomination. Last year the winner was cartoons; this year, a catalog. A *catalog*, for God's sake. One change which I propose to make, if Larry hands the thing over to me (I have offered to take it off his hand, as he always says he is looking for people to do, but it's clear he does not actually want to let it go) is to change the name of the award from "Prize for Literary Merit" to "Prize for Best Writing." "Literary merit" (or "literary achievement"; I don't remember the exact wording) is too pompous and opens the thing up to easy attack from the Bad Boys and like-minded folks. "Best Writing" is better because we're looking to honor a piece that gives people pleasure (as a lot of Hobby writing does, so why not recognize the fact?). Sometimes there will be something genuinely of literary merit published, but not more than one year in five. (Oh, by the way, tied with the catalog for top honors was an issue of a zeen. Mark Berch won the prize for this, even though the zeen was a compilation of answers to questions submitted by a bunch of GMs, and all Mark did was string the thing together and add a few comments. Neither nomination should have been accepted—in addition to the fact that the issue wasn't even published in 1987, the year for which the prize was given. Yes, the whole thing has "Larry Peery" written all over it. Bruce Linsey also managed to get a piece on the ballot that a) was only Diplomacy-related under an extremely loose definition, and b) wasn't published in 1987. That nomination shouldn't have been accepted either.)

I don't think Pete Gaughan has the resoluteness to run a Poll, even a methodologically flawed and unprepossessing one like the Marco Poll, which is revived only to allow a few people to convince themselves that their personal preferences are widely shared. I say this about Pete because in GMing an orphaned game, he recently gave in to pressure from Elmer Hinton and reversed a GMing decision, even though it was on the same point that Elmer had already created a stink about under the original GM, so that the rules for the game had already been definitively established. Since polls come under a lot of pressure from a certain segment of people is the zeens they like best don't win them, I think the Marco Poll person should be someone with a little more intestinal fortitude than Pete has.

You seem to have me as one of those who have

changed their position on the poll by saying that is a matter of personal preferences and those of only part of the Hobby. That's no change of position for me; I've always said the latter and never said anything inconsistent with the former in my own zeen.

One interesting question is: how many more people would vote in the poll if Bruce Linsey wasn't running it (for the purpose of the discussion, we would assume a pollster who was equally energetic and competent but uncontroversial) and how would the results change? Bruce, of course, answers a) maybe ten or fifteen more, and b) not appreciably. (I have talked to him on these matters.) I consider his answers humorously far-fetched, but then, because the non-voters have no excuses but their own prejudices and love of vendettas, he's kind of in a moral position to make whatever assumptions he wants about the matter. Bruce approaches the question by asking how many people are boycotting the poll just because he's running it, and I would guess he is right to say that there aren't very many. But the real point is how many people would vote if the Poll were promoted in *KK/W* and *Magus* and so on as a good, or at least tolerable, thing to participate in. My guess is that 50-75 more people would vote, with 100 being the absolute maximum.

How would the results change? I once started to construct a little test to estimate this, but it involved so many "judgment calls" that it would have been much better than pure guesswork. (If anybody is interested, I would recommend doing it this way: obtain the sub lists of *Costaguana*, the winner, a good reliably pro-Linsey zeen (substitute the old *Blunt Instruments* if you want, or *Praxis* if you think it falls into that category), and *Kathy's Kornor/Whitestonia*, or preferably *Magus* because it is a better comparison to *Costaguana*. If you can't get the sub lists, make a list of subscribers from the names of players and letter writers therein. Compare the percentage of subbers voting in the poll, make an assumption about how many more of the *KK/W* or *Magus* subscribers would have voted under other conditions, *assume* a certain average vote from these people, and try to calculate what the effect of these higher votes would be on the preference on the average score and the pref matrix.) My opinion is that *KK/W* would rise dramatically, but there would be no other dramatic changes. Anti-Linsey zeens in the 30-39 rank in the Poll might rise five to ten places, zeens in the 20-29 would rise four or five. In the top ten, *Magus* might have risen three-four places. I doubt that *Retal* and *House of Lords* would have been affected at all; perhaps they would have risen a place or so each. When you get up to the top, the extra

votes aren't going to dislodge the most preferred zeens—remember, the extra 75 or so people who would be voting aren't all, or even in the majority, confirmed, crazed-wacko, glazed-eyes-and-drooling Linsey-haters like Bob Olsen, but mostly just people with doubts or who get most of their what-is-acceptable-behavior cues from anti-Linsey zeens. Favor us with your opinion, please, Julie.

That's the hobby, as some see it, all right. Kathy Caruso, Steve Heinowski, Julie Martin, Bob Olsen, Ken Peel, Robert Sacks, and D S Palter. What more representative group than that could be imagined? It's nice that Robert's there to put into words things that other like to pretend are true but are too smart to put their name on for publication. Yes, the opinions of 441 people are obviously phony, but these people's would be the real thing.

Liked Dick's comment, "It's likely to degenerate further without a responsible editor to ride herd on it." Thank God for *HoL*—nobody's gonna get away with an irresponsible or downright untrue criticism of the Poll while Julie's there whipping them into shape. Not more than seven or eight on one page, anyway. Ride 'em, cowgirl!

Dick notes that the logical technical improvement of doubling the weight of the average will have a minimal effect. Exactly so. Demonstrating that there was nothing radically wrong with the way it was done before, and that whatever further changes can be made are being adopted simply because Bruce is a perfectionist and would like to have the Poll run absolutely perfectly if possible.

You're quite right that Chris Carrier's sample-to-election argument was completely wrong. I didn't say that the Poll was an election, but that it contains elements of a "contest"-type poll, of which an election is a perfect example. No mind 'rasslin' intended, but there is a big difference to me, even if to nobody else. It's not an election—there's no prize of importance, no office, no power. I think you're right that Bruce should have set a definite date when he extended the deadline. How did you know that Bruce was going to announce the results at a con? You know, I think that from all these years of hating, you and Dick and Bruce really are operating on the same brain wave-lengths now.

[Izzatso? How come he claims I never understand his motivations, then? I knew he was going to announce the results at a con because he said so in *NUTMEG*.

[You asked my opinion of how The Poll would change if someone else ran it. First, I think the number of people who vote in the poll would *drop* dramatically if anyone other than Linsey ran it. Your

hypothetical non-controversial pollster would have no reason to go to the extraordinary lengths Linsey does to garner votes and demonstrate his "massive hobby support." Sure, you'd get a few more people from the anti-Linsey zeens, but they wouldn't be the neutrals—I think they're already being badgered into voting. You'd get about 20 hardcore types. Overall, I think you'd end up with about 100-200 voters, but they would be a much better informed group that saw more and a wider variety of zeens, not just one or two.

[Second, I think it necessarily follows that such a different voter base would change the results. How much, in what way, I don't know. But even in your example, you seem to be forgetting that for all those zeens that move up, others are being pushed down. This reminds me of the time that Linsey gave his personal assessment of the top ten or twenty zeens and for almost every one he said, "This one really should have done better." Unfortunately, within the reductionist limitations of The Poll, only one zeen can be on top. I prefer a more *gestalt* view.

[I preferred the Walker Award to be for the "Best Writer" because I feel anyone can be occasionally inspired to produce something good, but it takes real talent to write well consistently.]

(MARK BERCH) Is this business about "grab," etc, an "argument over semantics"? I tend to think not. A semantic argument arises when people basically agree what's going on, but disagree over the appropriate word to describe it. If you say, "A zeen's title should be underscored," and I say, "No, a zeen's title should be underlined," then we are having a semantic argument. But when I (and others) disagree with your "Before Linsey grabbed the poll..." I think it reflects different views on what actually happened. In my view, Bruce asked for the Poll, and it was handed to him. There was no sort of seizure involved. In your reformulated view, you say, "...in my perception, he was making a power grab for any other Hobby Position he could get." As is so often the case in matters relating to Bruce Linsey, your perception is unrelated to reality. Aside from projects he started himself, the Runestone Poll is the *only* Hobby Position he ever applied for.

Moreover, the notion that there is power available to be gotten in the hobby is very questionable. This is a decentralized and somewhat anarchic hobby, which doesn't make for real power. Giving out goodies is always power, so in that sense, the people who decide where the PDO's money goes have power. People who distribute Orphan games have that power too, but that would be meaningful only when the demand for orphans

exceeds the supply, which isn't always true. I suppose the BNC has the power to set standards for what is or isn't irregular, although whether that's real power is debatable, since any ratingsmaster is free to ignore such a designation. The Runestone Poll? It's highly visible, but I don't think it qualifies as power any more than publishing a hobby census.

[This is an interesting analysis of "power" in the hobby. (There's yet another use of quotes to indicate irony. Fortunately for all those bored with the punctuation argument, it also happens to be Berch's exact word.)]

(BOB OLSEN) Yes, the Yawner Poll is the most important and prestigious poll in all Dipdom, let alone the entire universe. After all, 452,947 voters can't be wrong, especially when they shout with one voice, "Don Williams is the most obnoxious person in the hobby!!!" Ever on the lookout for new and innovative polling methods, and having observed the Alice-In-Wonderland "The rules are what I say they are" policies which are so very popular, I have decide that rather than run the 1988 Yawner Poll, what I will do is simply extend the deadline for the 1987 Yawner Poll to give people extra time to get their ballots in. This will allow me to surpass the current turnout of 504, 289 votes and set an important all-time record. So once again I issue the call, you hobbyists, you 1980 dropouts, you men on the street and fff tournament players, you toadies' girlfriends—you are now Hobbyists because I say so! Vote!!

Gee, looks like the name of Lee Kendter, Sr, goes on that very long list containing but a few (doubt it not) names of people who think the Supreme Commander is a horse's patootie. Do you think somebody should tattle to Lee Junior?

[I like the idea of extending the 87 poll deadline into 88; that way, you won't look like such a dweeb when you dredge up three pages of quotes supporting your 1987 effort and try to reuse them this year.]

ratings & scoring systems

(JIM BURGESS) I finally got around to sending in the results of that game (1983AY) that Dan Stafford had called irregular to the BNC. It'll be in the next *Everything*, so why don't we discuss it again. Should Ron (Canada) Brown's win be rated?

[Can a BNC reverse a past BNCs decision?]

(DICK MARTIN) I thought up a tournament scoring system once upon a time, based upon my philosophy of the game. The system commonly in use at the time was based on duplicate bridge. An interesting idea, rating all the German players against each other, but extremely prone to cross-gaming. Incentive to win was approximately zero. So mine was based primarily on winning, or at least being the most powerful player when time expired (as it often will in tournament settings). Winning one game would be a guarantee of a good overall finish no matter how poorly you do in the rest of the tournament, but winning *is* the point of the game after all.

Three things I don't like in a scoring system are rewards for "strong second" play, "center averaging" and mere survival. If you haven't won (or got in on a draw), you've lost. Doesn't make any difference if you've been eliminated in 02 or ended up with 16 centers to your opponent's 18—you've lost. And if you were stuck at 15 dots for five game years and still lost you should have points deducted for blowing an opportunity like that, not rewarded with a high "average score!"

Postal ratings are mildly entertaining. I like to see how many of my games have slipped past the ratingsmasters. Uncle Dan hasn't missed one yet, but the rest of you....

(BILL SALVATORE) First, you need to figure out what the object of the game is. (This may not be so easy—just reading the rulebook looking for victory conditions may mislead you. For instance, let's stipulate that I am in a Gunboat game in a magazine named *Psycho* (or some such Hitchcock title). At the 1988 AtlantiClone convention, I meet the publisher of *Psycho*, Vlad Swillsome, and Tough Shwider, the publisher of *Freaky Brotherhood Ill-Armed* (or some such familiar three-letter acronym). Tough tells me that he has seen a postcard from me to Vlad which reveals that I am in this game, and that he, too, is in the game. He then asks which country I am playing. I turn to Vlad and say, "Talk about sleaze!" (as, in fact, everyone about us at the moment *is* doing, eg, Mr K Byrne, Dr Bush Mensa, and Mr Nyg B Baggies). "This guy is trying to cheat in your Gunboat game!" My next issue of *FBI* has a personal note from Tough: "The object of Gunboat is to discover who the other players are." I keep telling your dearly beloved (Mr Housemartin) that the rules of Diplomacy are too difficult for me to understand, and here's evidence. Eighteen supply centers? Clearly a superficial attempt to lead the undiplomatic astray.) Well, as I read the rules, the

object is to gain 18 SC; failing that, to prevent every other player from gaining 18 SC, and simultaneously to be a part of a final draw, preferably the strongest country in it. If my interpretation is correct, then perhaps the following rating system is appropriate:

(A) in case of a solo win:

Winner: 40 pts (1 for each SC, 1 for each country beaten);

Others: negative the greatest number of SC ever owned by that country.

(B) in case of an n-player draw:

Participants: 1 pt for each SC owned at end of game, and 1 pt for each original country not participating in the draw;

Others: negative the greatest number of SC ever owned by that country.

[Whew, that's a tough system! I love it! I think it really carries out the letter and spirit of the rules of Dip. There might be one problem: if a player is *sure* he will be eliminated or kept out of a draw no matter what he does (say he's in a game with all his feud enemies), he will try to stay as small as possible, to get a better negative score, instead of trying to grow and challenge the others.]

(DAVID HOOD) *Everybody* plays a "system" of some kind—whether it is based on winning, surviving, or some sort of non-outcome motivation. The goal of a scoring system is simply to try to standardize the motivations of the players by offering incentives to certain methods of playing The Game. People who get pissed at other people for "playing the system" are missing the point—there is no single, objective, *true* way to play Diplomacy. Players simply maximize their self-interest, hopefully in a rational manner. By giving incentives for *all* players to move their pieces in a purposeful manner (even those with three centers or less), one can cut down on the insanity and irrationality of certain players when they realize they have no chance of winning the game.

This is why I support systems which put emphasis on strong survivals rather than solely on wins/draws. The game runs much more smoothly when the little players are going for more centers rather than playing for blind revenge or some other emotional purpose. This has been our experience in Carolina Amateur Diplomats games—players are much more interested in a particular game if they have some sort of egotistic reason to do so. Having a system which has what I call "middle range"

incentives clearly defined supplies that rational motivation to keep on playing.

In addition, it is clearly a good idea to tabulate overall rankings based upon a series of games, rather than just playing a bunch of unconnected games. Again, this is due to incentives. If I am down to two units in an unconnected game, I may just decide to order my guys to Timbuktu rather than try to move my position in the game from 6th to 5th. If I am playing in a *set* of games, however, I will seek to maximize my standing at the end of *each* game, due to its importance in the long-term. I think that encouraging rational play like this is extremely important—and I wish there was some way to link all our FTF cons together into one scoring framework (much like the chess hobby) so that the play of the participants who are not in contention for awards would become more purposeful.

I think Don Del Grande has tried something of this nature, although it has not been well-publicized.

[Is it fair to "connect" games which were played under different scoring systems or different house rules? That's comparing apples to oranges, wouldn't you say?]

(ALAN STEWART) I think "playing the system" at a tournament is a logical move. At Dipcon, Gary Behnen suggested a certain line of conduct to me and another player in the final round because of the scoring system. I agreed entirely, but the third person was offended at the suggestion, and so I pretended to be disgusted too and ended up allying with him against Gary. I have in mind, half-formed, a system that would "weight" the Calhamerian and wimpish approaches to the game equally—half "win only" and half "Gee, I'd just like to get as many centers as possible and have a nice friendly game, I like everybody" approaches to the game equally. I usually look over the top of ratings lists to see who's good or hot. I would possibly be a ratings player if I were good enough to be in a position where it made a difference.

why?

(ALAN STEWART) No pseudonym is going to disguise Bill Salvatore's writings. Except maybe "Bob Olsen."

(BILL SALVATORE) Thank you for your kind comment re my writing, but it's a *non sequitur*. You see, Steven Clark's letter-carrier is a person of extremely good judgment and discerning taste.

Therefore, before delivering a "House of Lourdes" to Mr Supply Center, he carefully defecates upon it so as to cover anything with my by-line. Hence, SC's *actual* question.

[And that would seem to exhaust the topic, so it will now be discontinued.]

nut'n'honey

[This is supposed to be the New Blood listing, but I have no new entries this month, and whose fault is that?]

(BOB OLSEN) Imponderable question of the month: if John Caruso eats Wheaties as he claims, why is he such a wimp?

[I've never seen John eat Wheaties, only pancakes.]

(DAVID HOOD) Captain Crunch or nothing at all.

topics, current and passé

Announcements ★★★ The news, as we see it.

Archives ★★★ Do we need an organized archives of dipdom materials, and if so how do we go about it. And should we keep it away from large trucks.

Bad Boys ★★★ The Bad Boys isn't just about Geryk, Clark, and Zarse, it's a whole state of mind. Does Dipdom take itself too seriously, or are the Boys seriously bad?

Burnout ★★★ What happens when you just can't take it anymore, and why.

Census ★★★ Organizational stuff for the census.

Computers & Filing Systems ★★★ How do you keep track of all the paperwork, orders, addresses, etc. How a computer can be used to produce and manage a zeen.

The Concept ★★★ A catch-all category for stuff that doesn't seem to fit anywhere else.

Costs ★★★ How much does it cost to put out your zeen, run your games, or whatever. Suggestions on how to save money.

Custodians ★★★ Never formally "New Business," but it grew out of other discussions. Hobby services and the people who run them.

Dipcon ★★★ The care and feeding of Dipcon, lately featuring an international angle.

Diptax ★★★ Methods of raising money for

dipdom services, including the now-infamous "diptax" proposal, and whether fund-raising is a good idea in the first place. Now included in Custodians.

Ethics ★★★ Was never intended to address the particular ethics of certain individuals, but rather general sorts of things that every GM faces. We stopped getting that sort of stuff, so the category was discontinued.

Finding New Subbers ★★★ Ways to recruit new players and subbers, both to a particular zeen and for dipdom in general.

Gming Procedures ★★★ How you adjudicate games, manage standby lists, organize houserules, and report games.

Irregular Games ★★★ What makes a game "irregular," and why. Also discontinued.

International Subbers ★★★ Yet to be seen where the discussion will lead.

Letter Columns ★★★ How to get and keep people involved.

New Blood Lists ★★★ May have various names, so you have to look carefully for this one.

Old Guard ★★★ A dwindling list of zeens in publication since 1982.

Out Of Dipdom Experiences ★★★ How did you find your way into postal Dipdom in the first place? Also experiences in other hobbies besides postal Dip, including chess and Irish ceili dancing. My personal favorite category.

PBEM ★★★ Electronic mail Diplomacy, long discontinued.

Polls ★★★ Discussing the merits and demerits of the various polls, and publisher reaction to them.

Publisher's Handbook ★★★ Comments on the handbook, *Once Upon A Deadline*. Discontinued.

Ratings & Scoring Systems ★★★ The search for the perfect system, and how to beat it.

Why? ★★★ What makes you spend your time at a typewriter or computer terminal when you could be out on a nice day like this?

[What should I put here? I guess the traditional plugs might be in order. OK, be sure and get *Retaliation*, *Thorazeen*, *Schizophrenic*, *Politesse*, The 1988 *PDO Census*, *Lord of Hosts*, and *One Page of Personal Attacks on Bruce Linsey*. You already get *House of Lords*...or do you? I see you reading someone else's copy! Cut that out, right now!]

new business: international subbers

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) John Caruso sent me a *Foot in Mouth* in response to some of what he read in *HoL*. It arrived too late for me to print it, which in a way was fortunate. Its being late saved me a great deal of trouble. John was apparently asking whether foreign readers are worth the trouble. Personally, I think they are. For me, a zeen isn't the end in itself (although obviously putting out the best zeen I can is very important to me, for reasons of personal pride if nothing else). As always, it's people that are important. (Geryk has yet to reach the mental leap that lists other people as worthwhile; no doubt his "sheltered" upbringing had something to do with that.) And I've run into some interesting people on my little run through the hobby. Some of them can be annoying at times, but that's true of everything (academia, science fiction fandom, professional baseball players, sumo wrestling, whatever...)

Before I leave the subject of international players, Mark Nelson dropped me a line the other day asking whether international players should be more clubby than players who stick to "domestic" postal games. I only play in one international game, so I don't know whether I would qualify. It's rather in the same vein as asking whether publishers

should be clubby. Every hobby needs its Diogenes Club (Mycroft Holmes' "club for unclubbable men"). By the way, Mark has brought his own brand of weirdness into this country, and plans to demonstrate his impeccable peccary form in a demonstration of pig-tossing prowess in my zeen! He says he is bring Britain's premier pig-passer along for the ride.

[Mycroft Holmes...wasn't he Sherlock's younger brother? Oh yes, now I remember—he was in *Diogenes*—that murder mystery where he knew whodunit but he couldn't figure out with what. The murder weapon turned out to be...

[So, here's our hot new topic (one you won't see on Geraldo): international subbers and players...are they worth the trouble? Is it worth *their* trouble? I'm sure we've all seen cases before where the only European player in an American game gets wiped out first, simply because the other players don't want to take the trouble to negotiate with him. I've heard a bunch of squabbling lately between Canadians and Americans over currency problems: American banks refusing to cash Canadian checks, and vice versa. We've got an International Subscription Exchange run by Simon Billenness, but how much business does it really do? Let's hear about how things really work, or don't, not just how they idealistically should be.]

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first class