

HOUSE OF LORDS #18

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.

"House of Lords is an excellent place for discussing problems and differences of opinion on relatively important hobby matters, as well as a place for expressing one's point of view. It is what all discussion zeens strive to be." - John Caruso

"I still get (and read) about nine zeens. The top five, based upon a totally subjective rating scheme, are: *House of Lords* (the only one that I immediately read cover to cover);..." - Steve Langley

"The most outstanding American zeen I see...." - Mark Nelson

"The Ten Favorite Zeens of Overseas Hobbyists...*HoL's* high finish on this list startles me; non-North Americans generally tend to dislike feud zeens." - Bruce Linsey

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

Custodians

Steve Heinowski (860 Colorado Ave, #2A, Lorain, OH 44052) is looking for replacement to take over his chores as BNC. Write Steve if you are interested in the aggravation of BNCship, though Melinda has volunteered to stay on as publisher of *Everything*.

Ran Ben-Israel (RR 2, 571 Sunnidale Rd, Barrie, Ontario L4M 4S4, Canada) is the new MNC without benefit of Covenant. Randy Grigsby has offered to help. Good to see that the tradition of imaginary MNCs is catching on.

Kathy Caruso (29-10 164th St, Flushing, NY 11358) and Robert Sacks (4861 Broadway 5-V, NY, NY 10034-3139) were surprised to hear about the Orphan Game-Placing "Triumvirate" since they're a duumvirate [Robt's word!]
—she handles regular Diplomacy orphans and he handles variants (including Gunboat) and other games. They are looking for an Archivist to maintain an archive of publications to aid in the detection of orphans and the retrieval of the most recent information about orphaned games. Let us now observe a few moments of silence in remembrance of the long friendship between Kathy and Bob Olsen which will now be ruined as they take opposing sides in the OGP/USOS controversy.

"Karel Alaric" (c/o Robert Sacks) is putting together *The Known Game Openings' Guide for New Publishers*. This is billed as a rival project to Bruce Linsey's Publisher's Handbook *Once Upon a Deadline*. "Cousin Charlie," as Rob't likes to call him, is soliciting articles, especially technical articles on publishing. Not an EOE: "Darksiders need not apply." You know who you are!

Pete Gaughan (3105 East Park Row Dr, #132, Arlington, TX 76010) is doing the Marco Poll. He has made the following arbitrary decisions ("You know, it's tough to be autocratic when you're a consensus-builder at heart."):

1. Polling period will be December and January. Deadline is midnight on his birthday, January 19.

2. Everybody bitched about get-out-the-vote efforts. None will be made. This letter and word in *Perelandra* will be all the announcement he'll make.

3. Simple voting mechanism: "List your choices for the five best Dip zeens of 1988, in order from first to fifth." [First being best of the best?]

4. Participation by others, say in publicizing the poll, or in discussing how it should be run, will not be encouraged or discouraged. It may, however, be noted to exist.

5. Anyone who wants to know the results needs to send a SASE to Pete, or read *Perelandra* or *House of Lords*. [Eh? I've been drafted?]

1988 PDO Census is out and available from Dick Martin (pick an address, any address) for \$1.

New Zeens

Son of Flip by George Mann (1701 NW 81st Way, Plantation, FL 33322) 75¢ per issue, monthly. Featuring wrestling and dip (in that order).

Pilot Light by Kevin Brown (100 Patton Drive, Warner Robins, GA 31093), featuring United. Drop him a line for info, as I can't seem to find the sample he sent me.

Dipadeedoodah! by Phil Reynolds (2896 Oak St, Sarasota, FL 34237) \$5/10 issues, \$5 per game, four-weekly, running dip and maybe variants, free game openings for the first 14/21 players before Jan 1 (probably).

Get Them Dots Now! by Lee Kendter, Jr (264 Spruce Ct, Bensalem, PA 19020) \$7.50/10 issues, four-weekly, running Dip and variants.

Been There, Done That by Tom Nash (5512 Pilgrim Rd, Baltimore MD 21214 CI\$ ID #73676,3310) is published both electronically and in *The Scribblerist*. Runs regular Dip, presumably via CompuServe but possibly by regular mail as well. Game fee \$5, speed not specified, though probably short deadlines.

Dark Mirror, by Audrey SF Jaxon (405 Fair Dr, #101, Costa Mesa, CA 92626-6215). 50¢ per issue with \$5 game fee for gunboat and regular dip. Will feature witty remarks (guaranteed!), social commentary, and a player's forum.

News From Bree, by Chris Gabel (PO Box 92, Madras, OR 97741) costs 50¢ an issue, and will run both Dip and a Dip variant: Downfall. Not surprisingly, this zeen will have a lot of Tolkien/LOTR stuff.

Diplomatic Contraband, by Ken Peel, will hopefully feature a diplomacy game among diplomats: State Department people at posts around the world. Issue #1 is out, and if there's enough interest there may be more.

Old Zeens

The Volcano City News, by Rory Noble (436 S 10th St, St Helens, OR 97051) seems to be back after a "short" break in service.

The Official Results for the Rusty Bolts Awards are in *Excitement City Unlimited* #15. I didn't win anything, much to my surprise. Someone must have put in the last-minute fix.

Life of Monty #88 was very good, featuring Don Del Grande's view of the *Thorazeen* scandal ("I suppose that if somebody said that there was a [quiet little] plot to give, say *Kathy's Kornor* a pile of 0s, 1s, 2s, and 3s, then all of those votes would have been thrown out as well?"), my first Dip Bowl (I got my one question wrong), and a round table discussion on his IDTR rating system which would be a good complement to our "Ratings & Scoring Systems" discussion here.

High Inertia #32 was also very good, featuring an interesting analysis of Sacks' covenant and Dipdom services in general by Thomas Manning.

Other News

Dipcon XXII, an "International Diplomacy Tournament Rating (IDTR) sanctioned event," is to be held in San Diego, CA, on July 28-30, 1989. Contact Larry Peery (PO Box 8416, San Diego, CA, 92102) for info. Voting for World Dipcon II's location in 1990 will be held, and "only those who are present will be eligible to vote." Who made that decision?

Robert Sacks is conducting discussions among some neutral and rebel publishers and officers about taking concerted action against the Dark Side. Persons interested in participating should write him. No polls allowed in the alternative hobby.

Congratulations to Sharyn McCrumb, wife of Dipdomite Dave McCrumb, on the publication of her new book *Paying the Piper*. If it's anywhere near as good as her *Bimbos of the Death Sun*, it's a winner.

the concept

(STEVE LANGLEY) I wish I could figure out just how much of Alan Stewart's tongue is in his cheek when he writes to *HoL*. Since a fair amount of my own is so planted, I know that not everyone who sends you stuff is totally serious. But with Alan, it is so hard to know whether he is serious or not. So much of what he says sounds as if it is meant to be taken in fun (or at least should be), yet he all too often isn't funny. Of course, he may be doing no more than campaigning to assure himself another well-deserved first place position in the world's most prestigious and statistically significant poll. Then again, he may be, like Michalski, giggling hysterically as he puts his outrageously formulated arguments to paper.

[I know John Michalski. He's no John Michalski.]

[You must be right about Alan's campaign to win The Sucker Poll again. Isn't it customary for the winner to take a long publishing hiatus? Bruce, ya shoulda let *Thorazeen* win.]

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) It seems I made a small goof in my "Zeen Recommendations" last time—Don Williams pointed out to me that I plugged his zeen as *Flick of the Wrist* when its current title is actually *Fiat Bellum*. Oops!

I missed your "self-deprecating" joke about playing Dip because I *didn't* realize you aren't a player. As a great philosopher from days of yore observed, "Sorry about that, Chief."

I see Ken Peel is engaged in a hot-and-heavy vendetta against poor little Olga! Is nothing sacred?! Oh well, I guess with mothers already taking flak, apple pie and Chevrolet may be due next for hobby gunfire, right?

(JOHN CARUSO) Linda Courtemanche lumps me incorrectly in the same category with Bruce Linsey. I believe in Linsey's entire hobby career (1978 to present) he has played in four, count 'em, four PBM dip games. And not at the same time. At present in my burned out state, I am playing four PBM dip/variant games. I also play in a few other types of games. I believe Linsey at present plays in zero dip games.

I suppose to Linda, because I no longer GM dip nor publish *Whitestonia*, I am less involved. I suppose it's true—but it's only true in those two areas. I still play, standby, write in, publish a roving subzeen, provide services like Vice Registrar of

Known Game Openings and Ombudsman, and still run the PDORA for raising money.

(DAVID HOOD) My point was that *HoL* letter writers are not particularly well-balanced between Brux-bashers and Brux-defenders. You're right that the "vote" of the "Lords" altogether might be more even. Anyway, I think most people agreed that this "polling the Lords" idea was kinda silly.

[If the writers aren't well-balanced, it's not for lack of trying on my part. For example, I've asked Paul Gardner, an ardent Brux toady, to write several times, with no response. I think there's far too much Bruce Linsey in here, period. Pete Gaughan and Dick have complained several times about this. But when I try to introduce new topics, such as "Ratings Systems" and "International Subbers," which have nothing to do with him, I get a lukewarm response at best. *Two people* wrote about "International Subbers" this time. And somehow Linsey manages to pop up under topics which at first blush I would not have guessed had anything to do with him, such as the Census.]

[One reason I started the subzeen was to get most of the Linsey crap out of the regular zeen (although I've left in the stuff which I think illustrates broader, general principles). It's starting to look like the subzeen is going to turn out bigger than the regular zeen. Well?]

(MARK BERCH) You wrote, "And lest we forget, 'elitism' was the charge Berch and Linsey used to shut down *HoL* the first time, when Dick only allowed pubbers and GMs in his zeen for pubbers and GMs." That statement is absolutely false. Dick Martin, not Mark Berch, shut down *HoL*. I didn't use anything to shut down *HoL* because it was Dick. Now, Dick can give any reason *he* wants for why *he* stopped publishing, but I hope *he'll* take responsibility for what *he* did. Moreover, it doesn't even make sense. Yes, I (and Bruce) expressed the view that Dick's policy was elitist. I'm entitled to express my views if I want to, especially as I was a subber to *HoL*. I might add that, judging by what appeared in *HoL*, that was very much a minority view.

However, let's not forget that in *HoL* #5, Dick announced that the policy was reversed. Thus, as of #5, the entire issue was moot. Then #6 came out. It included a statement that the discussion of that issue was closed. There was a very long wait till #7 appeared. It's a little hard for me to see how an issue that was moot by #5 could have prevented #7 from coming out. But I shut down nothing. I

criticized *HoL*, just as Dick as criticized, for example, *Voice of Doom*. But Dick didn't shut down *VoD* with criticism any more than my criticism shut down *HoL*.

[Thank you, Mark, for yet another incredible piece of Berchian mind-wrasslin'. Dick had suggested that I run a contest to find out who could write the best mind-wrasslin' piece, but as I asked him, what's the point? You make *every* issue a mind-wrasslin' contest.]

(BRUCE LINSEY) I'm seeing less and less need these days for direct mailings in response to *HoL*.... With Julie willing to print my letters, I'll probably save future direct mailings for zeens which censor my replies (like *Kathy's Korner*.)

[You're implying that at some point we refused to print your letters for *HoL*, and I resent that (untrue) implication. We have never denied your "right to state your case" which you claim "even the most violent criminal" gets. You made that decision yourself: "Starting now, I'm just not going to bother writing letters for *HoL*," in [A Response to House of Lords #13](#). As Mark Berch would say: "Now, Bruce can give any reason *he* wants for why *he* stopped writing, but I hope *he'll* take responsibility for what *he* did." Then *you* dragged The Feud into the "fair forum" of *Praxis*, and finally you turned to mass mailings (oh, sorry, "direct mailings").

[By the way, I hope someone will see past the personal conflict here and recognize a larger issue: is "right of reply" essentially the same as "right to edit"? Should a writer be able to dictate to a publisher, "You must print my letter in your zeen"? You all are allowed to do things like that, you know, generalize from specific examples, and discuss general issues rather than concentrate on specific incidents. Hint, hint.]

(DICK MARTIN) Gee, Bob Olsen is positively current when it comes to what irritates him. The Supreme Commander is still badgering me about stuff that didn't happen in 1983, and I think his beef against Kathy is even older than that. Wish he'd just give it a rest or at least update his grudges a few years.

(MARK NELSON) One thing I did a year or two back was to try and construct an unusual Who's Who in the UK Hobby. Instead of giving a clique character description, I assigned everyone a character in *LoTR*. Didn't work because there weren't enough bad guys—I had to give Iain Bowen

all the bad parts.

Perhaps we could suggest parts for an American equivalent? I kind of figure Michael as Frodo; having read your last issue, I guess we can put Rod Walker as the Mouth of Sauron....

[Rod is merely the Mouth of Sauron? I think he'd expect to be Sauron himself, at least.

[But guess who had this idea already? Rod Walker. Reprinting from *Erewhon* #123, May 13, 1984:

"...and now, Pandemonium Video Playhouse presents:

THE WAR OF THE RING

Bilbo Baggins...Larry Peery

Gandalf the Grey...Conrad von Metzke

Thorin & Co...Mike Mills and the PDO

Elrond...Steve Langley

The Goblin King...Ed Wrobel

Gollum...Bob Sacks

Tom, Bert, & William...Mark Luedi, Bob Olsen, & Scott Hanson

Various goblins, orcs, and spiders...the NYGB

Beorn...Herb Barents

Thranduil (the Elvenking)...Pete Gaughan

Pootwaddle the Wonder Toad...John Boardman

Bard of Lake-town...Konrad Baumeister

Smaug...Terry Tallman

Dain II...Steven Wilcox

Frodo Baggins...Tro Sherwood

Lobelia Sackville-Baggins...Frauke Petersen

Lotho ('Pimple') Sackville-Baggins...John Caruso

Sam Gamgee...Eric Kane

Peregrin Took...Glenn Jaspers

Meriadoc Brandybuck...John Walker

The Nazgul...Steve Arnawoodian & the 'In-6 + 2' (the ECC)

Tom Bombadil...Don Del Grande

Aragorn...Bruce Linsey ([Bruce Linsey?????????](#))

Gimli...Ken Peel

Legolas...Eric Ozog

Boromir...Gary Coughlan

Saruman...Dick Martin

Treebeard...Rod Walker

Denethor II...James Wall

Faramir...Mike Conner

Theoden...Lee Kendter

Wormtongue...John Michalski

Eowyn...Cathy Cuning

Ghan-buri-ghan...Mark Berch

The Balrog...Kathy Byrne"

[How about a Faery Kiss for this reprint, Rod? Of course, your list today would probably be a bit different.]

archives

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) A message for Ken Peel: If you've seen *High Inertia* #32, you'll note that I am looking to get rid of quite a few of our zeens because our file cabinet is in danger of imminent collapse under the weight of seven years' worth of publications. If you are planning a trip to the Hamster Palace in Lansdale or other suburban-Philly points, please drop us a line ahead of time, and we can load you down with plenty of stuff for the NAZB! (PS: We still have your ancient-history zeens which you never collected, if you're interested in those as well—the ones from the days I served as interim custodian between Simon and you.)

(JOHN CARUSO) It's ironic that Linda Courtemanche should comment on messy folds after she just went through one. I'm referring to the new zeen she started up a few months ago called *The Chocolate Factory*. She received sub checks and folded after just one issue. Just like a woman. She can't make up her mind. Now, if I were her husband, I'd make her barefoot and pregnant to keep her out of trouble. A thorn among the roses indeed!

[I guess no "Dot Happy Award" for Lucky Lindy, eh? That's OK, she got another one made up just for her.]

bad boys

(ROBERT SACKS) I know I'm supposed to be respectful of old women, but would some please explain to old lady Walker that according to the definition of "bad boy," I don't qualify?

Re Clark's #4. [Steven Clark's Proposition 4, *HoL* #16] I'm not stable. Even my being human has been questioned. Any person, or Bad Boy, who physically attacks me is in for the fight of his life.

[Is that a death threat?]

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) I was interested in Dick's comments on page 7 of #17 about how "nobody 'wins' feuds any more than you can win a war—you just survive." Of course, he's right, although I see in *The Megadiplomat* that Chris puts forward a case that some people have "won" feuds because their opponents have simply vanished from the hobby scene! But, from what I've

seen and heard, people don't delude themselves any more into thinking they can "win" the entire feud—but they do remain convinced they can win individual battles therein. And maybe they can. The question is, which battles are really *worth* fighting for?

As for his statement that "it's far too easy to get dragged in deeper than you like," I couldn't agree more. Certainly I've seen it happen to Steve and me. I think a distinction must be made between those parties who choose to feud (for whatever reason) and those parties who are dragged into a dispute for no good reason (*ie*, Michael Hopcroft, Conrad von Metzke, and so on with the Bad Boys, for example). I guess that is the MegaDip equivalent to seizing "neutral" Supply Centers to win a game. But I question Dick's choice of audience for this comment, as it seems to me that anyone reading *HoL* is being given more than a passing acquaintance with more feuds than you can shake a stick at! Perhaps *Retal* would be a more appropriate place for such comments—a zeen read by more hobby novices. Just a thought.

Score one for Michael Hopcroft. I'm referring to his observation on page 9 that the Bad Boys benefited from the whole letter-to-mother affair and "for once they look like victims rather than victimizers." I really do hope that the whole Linsey brouhaha does not make the hobby lose sight of the real character of the Bad Boys—that being, of course, none. But I should add that recent Geryk letters indicate a possible mellowing and maturing. Dare we hope?

[I believe Dick has made such comments as you suggested before in *Retaliation*.

["More feuds than you can shake a stick at"? Listen, Linda, I just took a stick and shook it at the computer, and nothing happened—I'm still here to tell about it.]

(JOHN CARUSO) I disagree with Carrier. It doesn't take a "successful" person in real life to be a major factor in Dipdom. In fact, being "successful" is a subjective view. Is an author who penned ten books over twenty years that sold 10,000 copies more successful than the person who sold 5,000 copies of his only book that took three years to write? Is a lawyer more successful than a doctor? Are two steady blue collar jobs in NYC supporting a family of five more successful than one civil service job in California supporting two people? Who's to say? Whose definition of "successful" do we use? By Bad Boy standards, nearly everyone is unsuccessful. By Carrier standards, Kathy and I

couldn't possibly be as involved as we are. NY is a financial burden for a family of five, yet we spend over \$100/month combined to participate in Dipdom. No, Dipdom isn't our real life, just a small part of our real life. We have a very full real life—Dipdom is just a relaxing, part time fun outlet. Though for some people (obviously Carrier included), Dipdom is a major part of their real life. And in one sociopath's case, Dipdom is his whole life.

["Is a lawyer more successful than a doctor?" Don't you mean, "Is an attorney more successful than a physician""]

burnout

(DAVID HOOD) I can't really ever imagine experiencing such a thing. At least, not as long as I keep playing The Game. There's just nothing like the feeling of taking that eighteenth center after one-and-a-half to two years of work. I can see how people would get burned out if all they did was publish/feud, though.

(JIM BURGESS) Following up on my statement from last time, by the time this comes out, I should be able to say I have my first postal win. The fact that only eight people know anything about it (it's in what's left of Marc Peters' *So I Lied*) doesn't hurt the rejuvenation of my Dip enjoyment. I'm playing the game with a much harder edge and having much more fun. I'm probably risking some friendships and all that, but I think I've been around long enough that I'll survive a few vicious stabs. Oh, *Sludge*, what will you do with a boob toady who won't stay in his place?

census

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Is the Census ready? If so, perhaps Dick could tell me how much a copy is. I don't know what use I'll have for the thing other than as an address list, but I'll look at it at least. Just make sure you've got my address right so Geryk and company know where to send their cyanide pills and death threats.

(DICK MARTIN) Well, I'll have to disagree with Linda, the census is not a hopeless task. Sure, lots of people move, but most of them stay in the same place long enough for the census to be very useful. I know I used the old ones for at least a year

(or until the next one came out). If somebody moves, just pencil in the new address — there's plenty of space for that sort of thing.

The primary purpose of the census is to put a lot of name and addresses of current dippers in one, easy to read place. And it does that just fine. Of course, the more address lists it is based on, the better the census will be. Without lists from all zeens, it won't be as complete as it could be. But incompleteness does not equate with uselessness.

I beg to differ with the notion that *only* the Linsey Pollster needs an updated list of addresses (or even that he especially needs one in the first place). This is the sort of thing that just about anybody would have use for, whether to track down somebody you've lost over the years, or just have all the players addresses for your games in one place. Adopted children could use it to find their unnatural parents. The FBI can use it as a list of deranged and potentially dangerous individuals to be watched carefully. The American Farming Society could use it as the base for their annual "Cattle Breeding and You" mailing. The list goes on and on....

By the way, it's done and available for \$1. Thanks much to Kenny Peel for all his help in entering data, and to all the publishers who sent in lists for inclusion. If you didn't send yours, there's always next year....

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) I confess to not being entirely clear about your does-it-take-a-census-to-run-the-poll question. All I was saying was that anyone other than the pollster attempting a comprehensive address list is going to be duplicating the pollster's efforts, so why not take advantage of the pollster's willingness to slog through all those addresses by letting him tackle the census or Xerox it as a base for some other hobbyist to serve as Census contact? Even if the contact doesn't want to use the pollster's list as the definitive information source, I would imagine it would be a terrific resource anyway. I'm a firm believer in urging consolidation of effort — more than one person doing one job is just plain silly; it's a complete waste of someone's valuable time.

[I think I confused you because I jumped the gun; I was anticipating a question that really did not come out until this issue. First, The Pollster has already demonstrated that he cannot be trusted with address lists; witness the time he conned Rod Walker into giving him the *Diplomacy World* mailing list, which he then used to put out a nasty fake of *DW*. Now Larry Peery refuses to release the

DW list to us for the Census, even though we already demonstrated we can be trusted with it when we did the last Census. Second, many pubbers will not cooperate with anything that may further expose their subbers to the ravages of polling or mass mailings. Third, there's the problem raised this issue (see "Not For Print"): Linsey asked Ken Peel to give him the zeen sub lists Ken had collected for the census. If Linsey had some legitimate need for that info, why did he say "If you want to do it and deny it, I'm certainly not going to stop you!"]

computers & filing systems

(DICK MARTIN) I doubt I'll ever log on to CompuServe again. Too expensive, when everything you do costs 25¢ or 50¢ or whatever. Taken individually that's not a lot, but it can sure add up in a hurry. Is there any similar setup on Genie (which seems to be a much more economical, not to mention Mac-friendly, system)? But maybe I'm wrong, admittedly I'm not very current on CompuServe. How much does it cost to play a game via CompuServe, counting connect time and any other charges?

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) There is yet another Diplomacy adjudication program being promoted in *DW*, but unfortunately it too used British rules. If somebody could come up with an accurate and simple adjudication program that could run to North American rules, then I'll invest in it. What is the fundamental design problem that prevents this from happening?

[There isn't any I can think of. Of course, the easiest method would be to separate all winter builds and all retreats from the Fall and Spring seasons.]

costs

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Sure, Steve and I will take on *HoL* as a sub-subzeen! And maybe also *DW* as a sub-sub-subzeen! And Barbara Bush is going to win the '89 Miss America contest!

Please don't even consider Chris C's advice to use the smallest possible type on your computer! I have yet to locate the magnifying glass I had to use when Alan Stewart was photo-reducing *The Megadiplomat* to run in *Praxis*, and the type when he runs the zeen full-sized isn't much less microscopic.

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Checks for Dipzeens has not been the best policy I could take. I plan to switch over to money orders. The cost will be a little extra (the fee on a \$5 money order must work out to 15%, which is outrageous). There are other places where the money order will be handy. For example, François Cuerrier got a postal money order from me when I picked up his copy of Source of the Nile. Also, many mail-order PC software dealers wait 10 days on personal checks! I don't have that long to sit around, not while I'm living the Fred Flintstone theory of Crisis Accounting.

For a long time I have been wondering what to do about Linda's question of last issue, and her description of my current financial position. Precarious? Sure, my situation is odd in that I am poor and I publish. But I wouldn't call it precarious. I have a reliable monthly income, an apartment with a fixed monthly rent, reliable food costs, and not much in the way of other obvious needs. It costs me about \$45 to publish each issue of *NUTMEG*. I keep down the costs by getting printing done on the cheap, by reducing my text on a photocopier, and by keeping my issues under 20 pages. Of course, if my circulation were to climb to the level of *Rebel's*, I'd have a few problems. I wouldn't be able to print if my pension didn't keep up with my rent. In my case, it's simply a matter of making choices. This is important to me, so I think it's worth it. I don't think Linda really meant that I shouldn't publish, though. If she really meant that, she probably would have told me long ago. Besides, nobody should allow the fate of his publication to be decided in some sort of plebiscite. If it reaches a point where I simply can't handle it anymore, I'll quit and I'll be forthright about it. But that hasn't happened yet, and I hope it won't.

The main problem a low-income publisher like me faces isn't flat-out running out of money; the money will be coming in eventually, with clockwork precision. The problem I face is the same as that faced by any wage-earner who gets their money at the start of a certain period: by the end of that period, funds tend to get scarce. My pay period is a month—every month I get an SSI check, and that's my pension for the month. If my deadline is at the beginning of the month, then I can get the issue out with little hassle, because the money is right there in my accounts or my pockets and I can easily pay for everything. It's at about the 15th or so that things get tricky. By the 20th, the chances of my being able to get an issue out before the beginning of the next month are slim, not because of anything I consciously did, but because of simple attrition. Planning helps, but doesn't cover everything that

could come up. Sub fees also help, but usually they end up being deposited or cashed right away and used for living expenses. (In my case, those are not as great as you might think. Having friends and family in town can help out in a lot of ways; if I were entirely on my own, I wouldn't even think of being able to afford to publish.)

The alternative question, for which I don't have an answer, is whether someone like me has the *right* to publish. After all, it isn't really my money; it is money that is given to me for a specific purpose, and the knowledge that somebody can do what I do while on a program like SSI gives conservatives like the Bad Boys a good argument for eliminating the program and all programs like it. At least I don't sell drugs to them.... But it is a worthwhile ethical question. At least SSI is better than welfare, which only attempts to provide bare subsistence. While I am out of the work force because of my health, it's the best I can do. But my condition has improved to the point where I'm back in school, so I am now very confident that I will eventually be able to earn a decent living and start paying taxes rather than consuming them.

None of which answers the question of why I publish anyway, does it? Or why a welfare recipient would start a zeen as I did. In a sense, I feel I have to publish, that I need that form of expression. If it wasn't Dip, it would be something else, and at least it is possible to do a Diplomacy zeen to a reasonable schedule while still including much of interest. In a sense, it is the "journal of record" for several of the activities I consider important. It also hopefully provides a place where people can enjoy playing Dip and communicating, although that has become questionable lately as the contents of my mailbox continue to shift. Want to help me write my next **ZR** blurb, people?

Has Chris Gabel sent you a sample of his new Downfall zeen *News From Bree*? If anybody knows about disposable income, it's a CPA....

[You've brought back a few memories about what it's like to be a poor college student. I put myself through school with the help of student loans—I was too determined to prove my independence to ask my family for help—and I sometimes borrowed money from one friend to pay off another, although most of my friends (like Dick) weren't much better off than I was. I can remember a few days when I had to choose between eating dinner and putting gas in the car so I could go to work. Work won, because that was the only way I could pick up another paycheck. Fortunately, we had free copying for *Retaliation*.]

(**ROBERT SACKS**) I deposit checks when I have enough to fill a deposit slip, or two months have passed, or I have a large amount in checks and nothing expected in the next week. When I had a steady job, the accounting departments spread these ugly rumors that I was rich because I'd let my pay checks accumulate. Since I still have to work, I'm not rich; money is just a way of keeping score. In that regard, I suggest deducting checks from the balance when the checks are written, not when they are paid.

Phone bills of \$100? Printing and mailing costs of \$100 for an issue? The Bad Boys are right about Carrier.

Incidental to Clark: don't worry about "poor" unemployed me. My client got tired of paying me \$500/day and is forcing me to accept \$20K for 6 months.

(**JOHN CARUSO**) The best way to keep costs down is not to publish at all. Counting labels, stamps, copying, reducing (excluding tape and staples), *KK* cost me \$74 in November for 50 copies of 32 pages. At a sub rate of \$1 per issue, I'll never get rich, will I? Yes, I still publish (and pay the extra cost out of my own pocket).

(**DAVID HOOD**) I agree with Linda Courtemanche—those with touchy financial situations should not go into publishing, a la Mike Hopcroft. Although I enjoy my issue of *NUTMEGS* as much as the next guy, Mike should really give it up if it's bankrupting him. (Of course, in his case I guess the government wouldn't let him hit rock bottom.)

Want an answer to the "costs" problem? Charge enough per issue (or charge game fees) so that you don't lost much money on your zeen. I doubt most subscribers are going to care if a zeen costs a little more per issue—it couldn't be more than a couple of dollars difference every year or so. There's no sense running a zeen at a big loss, especially if you're on a tight budget to being with.

And of course, the cynical way to look at it is that if your zeen is not worth the costs of production to your readers, then why keep pubbing anyway? Of course, part of it is for yourself; but if you're on a limited budget, then find something less expensive to do (like writing letters to *HoL*.)

(**DICK MARTIN**) Michael Hopcroft seems in danger of becoming a stereotype of "the kind of person who shouldn't be publishing." Hey, folks, he's been defying the odds for a year now, give the guy a break! It has always seemed to me that the

primary obstacle toward publishing is change: getting married, going to school, moving, changing jobs, and so on. As one of the most stable of dipdomites, I think we'll continue to see *NUTMGS* on a regular basis for quite some time. There, I've said it. Now you better not fold, Michael!

custodians

(BRUCE LINSEY) "What's the BNC's office if not a petty dictatorship?" That's a cheap shot. The BNC does a lot of hard work for the hobby, with little in the way of thanks. The office is a petty dictatorship only if its custodian makes it so. Can you name a single case in which Steve Heinowski has behaved in a petty manner?

[Where did I say "Heinowski"? I said the BNC's office is a petty dictatorship, and that's what it is. The BNC is a big fish in a small pond. He can assign numbers to games even if GMs don't want them. He can declare games irregular based solely on his own interpretation of the rules. He can use his official custodial zeen to declare people out of the hobby. It is very difficult to remove him even if he is not doing his job. He has "power," but what he has power over is really quite unimportant. Hence, a petty dictatorship. You used the word "dictatorship" yourself once, referring to the BNC.]

(DICK MARTIN) I largely agree with Mark when it comes to his analysis of power, though I'd include some other positions as well. Those who give things out are the only ones who hold any "real" power. With that in mind, could you print the PDO auction allocations in *HOL*, and maybe a listing of orphan games placed?

[I might print the PDO auction allocations if Mr Caruso would be kind enough to send me that information. I think he put it in one issue of *Foot In Mouth*, his roving subzeen, but I don't remember in which zeen that issue appeared. I can tell you I received \$2.22 for my fine work as MNC/UC.]

(MARK NELSON) Read with interest in *Passchendaele* that the NYGB meetings consist of only Robert Sacks. Should the IRS be told?

I haven't been sent a copy of *Lord of Hosts* which I thought all traders were to be sent. Of course, since the MNCUC business is merely an attempt to disrupt the American Variant Hobby and

~~has nothing to do with the welfare of the Variant Hobby—and certainly nothing to do with the question of Miller Numbers on a world-wide basis—I didn't expect to be sent one.~~ Tact and diplomacy suggested I delete this!!

[Maybe next time you will cross out with a better pen so I can't read what's underneath.

[Are you sure you haven't received a *LoH*? The last one was in June. (The next should be out in January.) I guess you probably have not; if you had, I think you might have a slightly different opinion on whether the MNC/UC has anything to do with the welfare of the Variant Hobby. I have received favorable comments in some surprising places.

[In any case, I will make sure my publisher, Robert Sacks, sends you a copy of the January issue.]

(ROBERT SACKS) Billeness is breaking the law. He should be filing information returns (if not taxes) to the IRS, NY State, and NY City (Unincorporated Business Tax).

My brother (and his wife) dislike my spending money on the hobby and preparing my will to establish trust funds for various hobby services. They also dislike my parents spending money on cruises. My parents and I appreciate each others' spending preferences. It's *our money*. As for not wasting money as down payment on an expensive deathtrap, that should be proof of my sanity.

I did ask a number of people their opinion (and the hobby at large through *KGO*) before appointing Geryk.

Hopcroft is mistaken. The Covenant with the veto power over the appointment of new custodians in perpetuity was *Walker's Covenant* with the BNC, which Kendter broke when he rescued the office.

The schism over the BNs that I suggested might occur was not over fees, but over the larger heresy that the BNC can control the hobby. I notice that the schism is already starting.

I don't think there will be much support for Hood's proposition that I can just delist people from the *KGO* Directory of Hobby Services without some basis or hobby sanction. The point was that listing people in such a directory is a recommendation to contact them. Since Linsey is now listed with a warning not to deal with him, that problem is now "solved."

Stewart may be right about what can be done in a free society, but in Canada the government of Pierre Trudeau tried to arrest an opposition member of Parliament in the very Halls of Parliament for "espionage" because he had documents revealing

government misconduct.

The issue is not free speech or copyright, but my right to pick my advisors: my staff and colleagues (John Caruso, Bruce Geryk, Karel Alaric, Julie Martin, Kathy Caruso, Dick Martin, Ken Peel), the Hobby Meeting of the Diplomatic Congress, and "House of Lords." I did not select "Praxis" as a forum of advisors, and I reject Linsey's attempt to coerce my choice of advisors, just as I reject Walker's previous attempts to coerce my choice of advisors.

Berch misses the point—there is no question of fair use; indeed the question may be privileged, and therefore not subject to discussion in other forums.

It is so nice to see Chris Carrier voicing the opinions of his masters, but the verdict of hobby tradition is still out. Insofar as any tradition is involved, if tradition has any force, then it follows that a hobby officer can establish a tradition binding on his office. If a tradition cannot be established to bind a hobby officer, then the tradition Carrier claims cannot be binding either. Can a BNC reverse a past BNC's decision?

The explanation for two competing Miller Number Custodians rests not in pettiness but in Rod Walker's monumental ego and our refusal to submit to it, just as we refuse to submit to Linsey's ego, or Berch's ego, or Hinton's ego.

A custodian who charged mandatory fees would not receive any NYGB funds. The IRS will neither require nor permit a tax-exempt organization to transfer funds to an entity that does not meet its funding requirements, and all this "factional warfare" amounts to is our refusal to defraud the IRS.

"Karel Alaric" and Brad Wilson have each applied to edit the 1989 *KGO Zeen Directory*. I'm leaning toward Wilson because I have to do all Charlie's typing.

Linsey is correct in that Dark Siders are excluded from contributing to the *KGO' GNP*—this is a matter of public record. He is incorrect in that he is not the only one being excluded, and he certainly wasn't being insulted. He is lying when he says he doesn't exclude anyone from his projects: last year's *Cream* excluded the MNC under the Covenant and *KGO*; this year's excluded Boardman, the Carusos, the Martins, and myself. Perhaps he is using a convenient definition of "exclude." When someone "excludes" me and my colleagues the way Linsey and the other Dark Siders have, they forfeit any privilege of participating in our projects.

Does Walker actually have a hobby service listing in *Pontevedria*? This is the opposite of Walker's propaganda. Is Walker lying, or Linsey?

Or has Linsey confused me with Walker?

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I understand from the last *KGO* that Brad Wilson wants to do the *KGO Zeen Directory*. More power to him if he can get the job. I sent Sacks a letter about three weeks ago saying what I think he should be doing with this project, not that I expect him to listen with anything more than the vague tolerance he usually gives me. Now if only we could convince him that the publisher's package needs a real editor and not this "Karel Alaric" person who appears to have emerged fully-formed out of Sacks' imagination.

(JOHN CARUSO) I think Michael Hopcroft doing the *KGO'ZD* would be a great idea. No one is trying to "destroy" the *KGO'ZD*, though I'm sure some people wish there was only one directory instead of two. Furthermore, no one will see Michael as supporting all of Robert Sacks' issues. He's just doing a job—pubbing *KGO'ZD*.

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Michael Hopcroft mentioned a "new novice publisher's project in the works." Who is tackling that? Is this a Pentagram Publication? When is it due out? Am I asking too many questions?

[See the "Announcements."]

dipcon

(ROBERT SACKS) The Diplomatic Congress wasn't my idea. Hood seems to think that a working group with an administrator responsible for abiding by all the regulations is too much organization. Wait until we get organized!

(PETE GAUGHAN) A word to those who are asking about the Dipcon Souvenir Booklet: it's almost ready, but I can't publish it until I get some money from Greg Ellis, who has been so busy that he hasn't returned my calls for two months now. Rest assured that the Booklet will be produced, but Ghod knows when.

finding new subbers

(DAVID HOOD) Most of the material has been about *squashing* new subbers! I wonder how many zeens *want* new subbers versus how many would rather get rid of them. Perhaps those who have too many inquiries could refer people to those

zens that are starving. Of course, many of the latter are probably low quality.

(**DICK MARTIN**) I can only agree with Jim Burgess a little bit on the "good zeens lead to large subber lists." From my experience, the best way to build a large subber base is to run lots of games. With the exception of zeens that run no games at all (*DW, DD, HoL, Supreme Commander Mass Mailings*), subber list size correlates pretty closely with the number of games going. Some of my favorite zeens ever weren't exactly high-circulation jobs (*Inner Light, Brutus Bulletin, Diplomacy by Moonlight*).

gming procedure

(**MICHAEL HOPCROFT**) Orphaning games and starting new ones at the same time? Strange that I hadn't heard about that. The only thing new in the hobby is the history I don't know. In my case, that's just about the entire history of the postal Diplomacy hobby. Maybe if somebody could put together "A Brief History of Postal Dip"—assuming the historian was willing to be fair. And when have Dip players been accused of being fair.

(**JOHN CARUSO**) I currently play under the Olsen-Williams GMing method and I must say it's incompetence at its peak. GMing errors every season. Even the correction notices contain errors. I never played under (or on top of, for that matter) Gary Coughlan, but he once explained to me how he GMed. Set up the board for every game and moved every piece, and he rechecked the turn two or three times. That was each month, every game. It must have taken him a full day to do five games. Remarkable! I give him credit—he tried to give the players perfection—unlike the Olsen-Williams style which tries to give the players ulcers (and succeeds).

I agree with David Hood. Let's have a constructive conversation about WAP and its merits/flaws. And Rod Walker is right, by the way. Mark Berch does have a knack of creating exceptional hypothetical problems to solve. (Sadly, they almost never occur in actuality.)

(**MARK LARZELERE**) Games run under Civil Disorder rules are regular. Not only the game I ran, but also all the games in the 1980 Postal Diplomacy Tournament (remember that? That's where I met Dick) received Boardman Numbers. And why shouldn't they? The Rulebook has nothing about requiring replacement players. The Rulebook

has CD rules.

(**MARK NELSON**) The only problem following precedents is that you need to know what precedents have been set. Perhaps you should take on the role of Precedent Custodian (Under the Covenant, of course). For example, over 80 games of dip have been declared "regular" by previous BNC's which have used CD rules. Hence the regular/irregular question doesn't arise.

[Generally, the regular/irregular question doesn't arise until somebody complains about a game, and then it's really too late, isn't it?]

(**JIM BURGESS**) I hope people answered my question of last time: how do you choose standbys? Most of my best Diplomacy games have come as a standby. I enjoy it. You come into a game without the excess baggage and can shake up the alliance structure based on a long-term strategy. Most players don't or won't reassess long-term strategy as a game progresses. They get personally attached to their allies and plans as well as being lazy about writing. The result is the all too common stagnant postal dip game. A good standby (and I always try to be one) shakes things up. Seldom are the two- and three-center positions as hopeless as they seem, and the last thing you want as a GM is a standby whose support orders are little better than CD.

Not only that, but people vary in their standby effectiveness over time. For instance, Jeff Zarse is on my standby list at present, but I would be hesitant to call him at the moment, though a year ago I would have called him. You also look at the game and players. I'd be much more likely to call Zarse in my Press Game where he and his colleagues have been addressed in the press and a concession to Jeff's mom very nearly passed. To do this effectively, you need to keep in touch with your standbys. One other thing I do is to use LIFO (Last In, First Out) since people are most interested when they first ask to be on the list.

(**MARK NELSON**) Having run a game of Finchley Pass the Pigs, I have come up with another great press game. Set in a party, the players must get sloshed, get laid, and take loads of drugs; interesting press possibilities here....

international subbers

(**DICK MARTIN**) International subbers are not worth the trouble when it comes to playing

games. The logistics are just too great a barrier — when it takes a minimum of a week for a letter to cross the border, there's just no way to write timely negotiation letters. I can't recall the last time I played in a game where a Canadian player out-wrote any of the Americans. (Never having played with any non-Amurricans besides Canadians, mind you, that's the only reason I bring this up. No, this is not another vicious attack on the Canadian race. Some of my best friends have been to Canada. Neil Young is wonderful. Now leave me alone, already!) There's really no exposure to different playing styles, since there's so little communication done.

For a zeen like *HoL* though, internationals are great, and the more the merrier. As this should be a forum for the exchange of ideas (perhaps been a little bit slow in that regard lately, alas), the wider variety of contributions really improves the discussions. Wish you could get more of them, and maybe an Australian or two would be nice....

(MARK NELSON) How are foreign readers worth the trouble? I suppose this depends on who you are and what you're interested in.

And why shouldn't people take part in different dipdoms? Should we have a number of different national dipdoms with no contact between them? Since diplomacy is a *postal game*, why should we stop at national mailings? The European Hobby exists as a whole; the individual nations do not.

For me, pubbing is not just about games, it is also about *people*. If somebody is an OK interesting person who has some interesting things to say, why let where the letter is mailed from prevent him from writing?

International contacts can also break down misconceptions about different countries and can be educating.

International contacts do require a little more work than national subbers, and I can understand why some people are quite content merely playing to a national audience. Personally, I prefer to know what's happening in the world.

As ever, my henchmen get my name mentioned without me writing to *HoL*, but I think Michael has got the quote wrong (as usual!). I remember saying that people who are active internationally tend to club together. Not that they should.

[You say, "The European Hobby exists as a whole," but isn't the British hobby somewhat separate from the continental European hobby?

[I'm wondering why the "different national dipdoms" should be considered separate and not all part of the same Dipdom. I get the feeling people

want to keep their national dipdoms separate. For example, are you aware of the current Canadian separatist (hobby) movement spearheaded by Ronald Brown and François Cuerrier? Apparently the Canadians feel the Americans are messing up *their* hobby, either telling them how to run it or trying to run it for them. As Brown says in *Hagalil Hamaarvi* #14: "My position is that it is time for the Canadian hobby to stop acting like a branch of the American hobby. We have a stronger and more viable organization than they do. We certainly don't need the Americans to run our affairs—and they have demonstrated time and time again that they will do so unless we act in an aggressive and forceful manner to repel their forays into our internal affairs...if the Americans do not cooperate with us in recognizing our border, then I believe we should do so on our own."

[And how about Richard Walkerdine's comment about World Dipcon: "If the Americans do cock it up, and I certainly hope they don't, then I would guess that the rest of the world, like me, will see it as proof that our worst fears about the American hobby have proved correct. Namely that it really does comprise various little cliques of people who are more interested in continuing old arguments and feuds about long forgotten irrelevancies than in pulling together and playing the game that we are all supposed to like so much."

[My impression is that the Canadian and British hobbies view the Americans as a disease they don't want to catch. Of course, Brown's and Walkerdine's opinions may not be representative of their respective dipdoms. How about a Nelson's Eye view?]

letter columns

(JOHN CARUSO) I'm not one of those that likes to see every word in print, or even my words. I don't mind if my words do, but I'm not usually upset if my words don't see print, the exceptions being *HoL*, *KGO*, *KK*, *FIM*, right of replies, replies to mass mailings, the short story I wrote sixteen years ago, *MOD*, *PDORA*, United Heart fund drive announcements, the brotherhood of man flyer I put out, and many, many other important things I write daily.

Why doesn't someone come up with a topic realistic to write about. A topic like what kind of bug you'd like to be? Or would you rather be horse shit, bull shit, pig slop, or whatever? These are important questions for a letter column to address. Hear me, Linda?

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Like wow, what a neat-o idea, asking, "What kind of a tree would you like to be?" I will just have to seize pen in hand and scamper right over to my *HI* folder to write that down—I'd simply hate to forget such inspirational material when the time comes to type the next issue of *HI*. But, unfortunately, till then our subbers are going to have to make do with Robert Acheson's fluffy, frivolous questions ("Do you feel comfortable with Dan Quayle as vice president?" and "What is the most important issue facing mankind today?"). But don't worry/be happy, folks, the real meaty stuff like trees will be back soon!

[Been taking a few sarcasm lessons from the master? Yes, you have had much meatier topics *lately*.]

(ROBERT SACKS) I wasn't aware that I had parted ways with Hopcroft, but then we were never on the same path to start with.

(ALAN STEWART) To clear up one thing—I never circulate letters to other parties for their comments. The example you gave—Geryk's responding to a letter of Dick's—in that case, Bruce was actually responding to a different letter of Dick's from two issues before. Just want to make it clear—I wouldn't want you or Dick to think that your letters were "circulated" to, say, Bruce Linsey before publication. They are not.

[Sorry, Alan, I must have confused you with John Michalski. I think he did do this sometimes. Besides, I wasn't necessarily condemning the practice. It has the advantage of condensing the debate and presenting both sides at the same time where they can be easily compared, without extensive re quoting and reprinting. It has the disadvantage that it biases the discussion in favor of whomever gets the last word.

[I guess all my example proved was how often Dick ends up having to repeat himself.]

(STEVE LANGLEY) Letter columns are best when they have fast turn around and print short letters. There is nothing like a fifty-page droner to kill an interesting exchange. Back in the 50s, I helped Wallace Wastebasket Weber edit the "Cry of the Nameless" letter column. "Cry" was credited with the best letter column in all of fandom for the several years that Wally ran it. His technique was simple. He printed everything that came in on a monthly bases, so long as it didn't run over two

pages. My job was to count the pages. His job was to type the letters and add in the one-liners. Once it was made known that any letter over two pages in length wouldn't see print, the letters that came in were short and interesting. There were some who could not express even the simplest idea in under two pages (Larry Peery is not unique), but the loss was hardly noticed.

Even so, the letter column grew until the rest of the zeen was diminished to nearly nothing. That is the chief drawback of a letter column. To have a good one, you have to allow it more room than you may be able to afford. With "Cry" it wasn't all that much of a problem, since it was edited and published by committee, with no one person (other than Wally) being on the committee for more than a month or so at a time. With a Dipzeen, the games and the editor's stuff, and the press, and articles, and whatever, usually account for nearly as many pages as your average pubber has time or money to support. A good letter column can easily fill that many pages again.

What is the solution? Either run a letterzeen, or chop up the letters so that some of every letter sees publication, or run an all-letter issue once every few months, or run a round table discussion with specific topics, or print only a few letters at a time, or forget the whole thing. We've seen successful examples of each style.

out of dipdom

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Something must cause me to be magnetically attracted to weirdness. I spent two whole weekends away from the hobby, and what was I doing? Helping run a science fiction convention, that's what! You think you get weird things in the mail? The things that happened to me were sometimes disturbing. A pretty girl in a fur bikini and nothing else walked by my flyer table at least five times, but while my mind noticed, a certain sensitive portion of my anatomy which one would expect to react to such events utterly failed to do anything. This would be taken by the Bad Boys as yet another evidence of my fundamental failure as a human being, along with my failure to get drunk on keg upon keg of free ale.

I enjoy these things, actually. They give me a chance to get my bearing again. Some of my science fiction correspondents have been getting more active as well. What would people think of fan fiction based on Phantom of the Opera? Is that too weird for people to get connected to?

Not all of my projects have been that odd. Now

that I'm back in school, I've gotten to do some serious work as well. But I've done papers on filking, and papers on Paranoia. So even serious has its limits, and I do get to have some fun too. I'm also taking a course on satire, which is something every hobbyist should know. It is comforting to think that Bruce Geryk would be what Juvenal was if Juvenal took LSD; he hated everybody already, so why not?

(JIM BURGESS) I agree with Alan on explaining Dipdom to outsiders. My parents and brothers know about it (in fact, one brother may be joining us soon), but they've all played the game (the six of us almost make a board). My wife doesn't really understand at all, but she has talked to people like Tallman and Williams and can see why I like them (and she though Gary Coughlan's accent was funny when he used to call a lot).

On the other hand, she doesn't understand why I don't just quit from what she knows of the feuding (mostly overhearing me talk about it). Sometimes I wonder to, but one thing I will say is that it has sharpened my people-handling skills. I can spot "potential feuds" out of Dipdom a mile away, and I usually handle them quite adroitly. Enough so that people comment on it. Yes, I really do believe that Dipdom represents the best microcosm of real life of any game. I'm still here even though I seldom talk about it to others.

I hope Chris Carrier has learned a lesson in accusing Geryk of being a "dropout." If he knew anything about Chicago's undergraduate program, he would know that "taking a year off to work on one's thesis" is SOP. The idea is that they try to blur the line between graduate and undergraduate studies so that undergraduates can assess better what academia is really all about—writing, not teaching. I much prefer to lecture less and supervise research more. Chicago puts that into practice. Eating your words? Swallowing your jig yet, Chris?

[Well, no, Chris is sticking to his version; he elaborates in *The Megadiplomat* #9. He says his discovery was from "a non-hobby primary source," and that it was published in *Praxis* before Pudgecon (although sorry Chris, I didn't get mine till well after). You blow out his one point: "Since a 'thesis' is something required to get a graduate degree, and he does not even have an undergraduate degree, he obviously is not working on a thesis." But he further claims Geryk dropped out after Spring '87 and has not been enrolled since, and "if he was working on a thesis, he would still be listed as 'enrolled.'" Interesting. Sounds like Carrier has

taken a page out of the master's book and conducted a "personal life strike" of his own. How do you get this kind of information about someone anyway, Chris? Can I just call up any college and ask about any student there, or do I have to pose as a prospective employer, or what?

[What unlucky person got to be the seventh when your family played Dip? Sounds like Del Grande's "Stab of the Century."]

(JOHN CARUSO) It's the smallest things that turn on Carrier. Geryk drops out of school, and Carrier and his co-workers dance a jig in the hallway all week (rather than working, of course). Lazy people will always find an excuse not to work, usually at someone else's expense. Instead of feeling compassion for Geryk's problems, they celebrate it. You tell me who has the "brain damage."

(STEVE LANGLEY) Did you wonder at all, when you read the Chris Carrier letter about how he and his ever-so-wise office mate danced a jig over Bruce Geryk's supposed dropping out of college, just who is supposed to be sane? This lady, based upon what was obviously (to me) a facetious death threat, has diagnosed Geryk as mentally ill. Just how much sanity is involved in celebrating a misfortune happening to one you consider unsound? Of course, the mental image of Carrier dancing a jig is one to truly astound. Picture Tweedledum as an adult without the funny hat and you have Carrier. I wonder if Sacramento recorded seismic activity just then.

(LINDA COURTEMANCHE) Thanks for thinking of me with that Chocolatier insert. I have picked up that magazine in stores from time to time; the glossy pictures of fudgy concoctions are so suggestive that I think just reading the thing is a 2,000 calorie experience! Maybe the "Pentagram challenge" recipe should be sent to them? (That's my "forum for those with experience to share the wealth" suggestion for the month.)

polls & awards

(BRUCE LINSEY) The 508 voters in this year's Poll voted on an average of almost exactly six zeens apiece.

[When you say 508 voters voted for an average of six zeens, which "average" are you referring to: the mean, the median, or the mode? Just curious,

because no matter which you're using, I think your "average" is skewed. I think you have a few people who see and vote for a large number of zeens, and a lot who only see and vote for a few. For example, take a population of 10 voters. They vote for the following number of zeens: 20, 8, 8, 6, 6, 6, 2, 2, 1, 1. The "average," however you take it, is six zeens, but four out of ten voters only saw one or two zeens. This distribution might even fairly approximate The Poll's. How about some better information? How many people out of 508 did vote for only one or two zeens? That would be a much more meaningful statistic than this "average."]

(DON WILLIAMS)

RE: "Lucky Ducky" Award

Ref: Your letter of 9/28/88, and enclosures

Dear Bruce: Received your letter and the copy of page 86 of *Cream* several weeks ago and have been pondering an appropriate response since then.

While I suppose I should be honored, and while I further suppose that your intentions are good, I ultimately feel that, given my views on your actions and my several courteous requests in the past not to be contacted about the Runestone Poll, the decision to name the award after me (half of it, anyway) was not made with good judgment.

As I've said before, I am utterly neutral about the existence of the Runestone Poll, and I wish to remain that way. I do not plug it or denounce it. I don't vote in it, and I don't ask for or get copies of the results. Neutral. That stated, I feel as if I am being co-opted by this most recent action, and I would ask you to reconsider and change the award's name to exclude any reference to me. I won't make an issue of this over and above what I've stated here. I am basically doing this "for the record" as I can see where a "no comment" response on my part might be construed as acceptance of your decision at some future time. I think that the award name would be admirably served by using Lindy's moniker alone, or some other subzeen/subpubber's added to it. So, please, drop the reference to me and *Fiat Bellum*.

I believe this to be a reasonable request and one you should act on as soon as possible. Regarding the award certificates for *FB*'s finish this year: please do with them as I have asked you to do in the previous two (three?) years...I didn't want them in '86, I didn't want them in '87, and I don't want them now. Thanks for asking, again.

(JIM BURGESS) Just a comment: I find it unfortunately typical that when Linsey quoted from

me in the *HoL* mass mailing (I should say the Oct, 1988 mass mailing), he took only my first paragraph and not my second where I make the biases of the Marco Poll toward large circulation zeens very clear and that I had no expectations of doing well in either format. I still maintain that the essential aspect of the Runestone format that lends itself to feuding is the presence of negative voting. I'm fairly sure *Praxis*, with its large circulation, would also win in a Marco Poll format. When Linsey says he prefers the Runestone format, I must assume (and I think this is clear to all of us) that Linsey likes it because of its two essential differences: (a) it allows negative voting, and (b) it allows for voluminous quasi-statistical analysis.

My personal opinion is that negative voting is inappropriate in a hobby and that voluminous quasi-statistical analysis fools some people into attaching greater weight to the results than is justified. I fully expect to be the target of a mass mailing over these statements, but in an attempt to quiet Bruce and save him some money, I would like to say that these are my opinions, and I hope we could agree to disagree. I have no illusions that I will change Bruce's opinions, just that I could focus issues for the rest of you.

[I hardly think Linsey can disagree with your part (a). He himself has said: "This year ((1983)) there was a restriction that people should not vote for a zeen based on feuds or disagreements with editorial policies. Poppycok. Not only is this unenforceable, it's unrealistic....How do you distinguish a 'feud' from *legitimate* reasons for voting someone low? I think *Retaliation* is a dreadful zeen due to the slander Dick prints. Should I be banned from voting it low because I'm 'feuding' with him?" Of course, this is the same man who tells us he *can* distinguish between legitimate votes and votes which are intended to "destroy the Poll."]

(PETE GAUGHAN) And as we proceed through the file, we come upon *HoL*, where I need to point out Conrad Minshall's classic theorem: The only poll that counts is circulation. (A simple, clear restatement of what Jim-Bob was trying to say.)

(DICK MARTIN) When it comes to running a poll, I value common sense more highly than intestinal fortitude. The Marco Poll should be just fine, though there apparently won't be much of a polling period (less than a month is way too short!).

The "technical improvement" of doubling the weight of the average scores for the Linsey Poll is,

as I've tried to say before, no improvement at all. It is merely a show designed to delude the average voter into thinking that the poll standings aren't based primarily on the preference scores. It's like a car salesman, using "comes with a FREE tank of gas!" as a major selling point for a \$15,000 car. Big deal.

[I don't know, I think intestinal fortitude is pretty important. There's nothing worse than a pollster who shits on the poll.]

(JOHN CARUSO) I tend to support Steve Langley's position. *Whitestonia* finished high in all three Marco Polls, too (higher than in any Runestone-Leeder-Linsey Poll). That last time, I had only 50-60 subbers, which isn't a high circulation number.

I don't think the Linsey Poll would get more voters if Linsey passed on. But I do feel it would get different voters (50-100 present non-voters). What would be lost are the hundreds that Linsey might badger, harass, or solicit on street corners.

Do I think the results would be more accurate? Accuracy is in the eye of the beholder. What would be lifted for the most part would be a majority of the controversy and the specter of the Linsey dishonesty associated with the poll. What dishonesty, you might ask? Offering poll results for free, then saying the results will cost \$5. Offering to send all pledged money to a charity, then deciding to keep some money for costs (probably to change his mind back again when adverse opinions flood in). Voting himself for zeens he doesn't sub to. Arbitrarily deciding which votes are grudge or joke votes. (Let's face it, if *Thorazeen* wasn't a legitimate zeen, how did Linsey see it to vote it a "2"? And if it's publisher wants to get people to vote it a "10," that's part of the process. Why are the "10"s phony from *TZ* subbers, but the "2" is legitimate from a non-subber? How many other zeens does Linsey throw out "10"s?) These are just some salient points and only from this year. But the key to these points is that Linsey admitted to them.

The specter of his dishonesty lies heavily in two areas—his lack of common sense and his very poor judgment. Even I don't think he deliberately set out to lie about the Linsey Poll. Nor do I believe he set out to conduct mail fraud. (Hope I'm not wrong on both of these accounts). But this has been the story from Day One with Linsey and The Poll. Sure he gets more voters than I or anyone else might. Sure he does a lot of work, spends a lot of time and money, and puts out a very thorough results booklet. But does all of this make the results any

more accurate? Of course not. All of the above positive points are just exterior sugar coating (to cover up the real guts) to make himself look good and honest.

Take *Thorazeen*, for example. Where does he come off deciding which votes are legal "10"s and which aren't? And why is his "2" for a variant zeen he doesn't play in or sub to legal? Linsey obviously recognizes *TZ* as legitimate, otherwise he wouldn't have tried to vote. Yet he disallows other votes. We have to take his word for it that those "10"s deserved to be excluded. Just like we have to take his word for it that the deadline is so and so, and then it's extended. Or that the results would be free. Or take the reimbursement idea he's had. That's mail fraud. He can't use donated funds to offset his costs without first telling people. I'm surprised he hasn't used the defense that charities and fund raisers do this. What Linsey might miss here is that contributors to those drives are informed beforehand that expenses will be deducted. How many decisions similar to these does he make with the poll that don't become public? Things like throwing out votes, determining phonies and grudge votes. Things for which we have to take him on his word and judgment. His friends have all the faith in the world in his judgment, and why not? He won't hurt them as long as they remain his friends. Neutrals have no negative feeling, so trust him too. It's those Linsey dislikes or perceives as a threat that have to be concerned.

[And who are those people? Why, a lot of them are Linsey's former friends.]

[I don't know about mail fraud, but isn't it a federal offense to conduct gambling through the mails? How about Linsey's "Diplomacy Presidential Contest" where, through the mails, Linsey ran a pool asking people to fill a ballot guessing which candidate would carry each state at \$1 per entry. Tsk, tsk. I guess Larry Peery will be contacting the postal inspectors any day now.]

{I believe that the proposed use of income to offset expenses was to take effect with the next poll, not the one just passed. I also believe that he has dropped this idea after universal condemnation. -DM}

(STEVE LANGLEY) My personal opinion (watch Mark Berch figure out a way to try to make me prove it) is that the moved deadline was not an attempt to gather more votes but was merely a way to generate controversy. A trap set by "the great man" for his detractors, to try to get them to condemn him for something that is not all important,

so that he can defend himself successfully against their "unjust" attacks.

[Oh, you mean like at Marycon when he ordered "F Bla cuts support in Sevastopol" so that whichever way Dick (the GM) ruled, he could complain? That kind of trap.]

(DAVID HOOD) I don't want to sound like a Brux-hack, but I don't really understand why everybody is so pissed off about his attempts to increase voter turnout. He's just being thorough, as I see it. If somebody doesn't want to vote, they can throw away his letters or tell him "no" over the phone. Or soak the stamps off the SASE's and use them for something else...

I'd like to comment on Rod Walker's six-point plan for Runestone:

1) Avoid vote-bloating—I don't think Bruce's activities to increase voter turnout are bad, for the most part; although I stand ready to be convinced. After all, I *may* not know all the facts.

2) Don't undermine—Good idea.

3) GMs tell about Poll—If they want. I see no problem with pubbers excluding their own zeens from consideration if they so desire.

4) Don't Manipulate Votes—I agree with Rod that the only way to be objective is to allow *all* otherwise legitimate votes, regardless of the numerical score given any particular zeen.

5) Eligibility Standards—Again, Rod has a good point, that person's having read only one or two issues of a zeen probably should not vote on it. However, I think a six-month period is too long. How about *three* issues as a requirement? I would also limit voters to those who subscribe to a zeen or receive complimentary issues, since that is the most objective way to prevent fraudulent votes. Each pubber could send Bruce a sub list or something to check names with.

6) Easy Results Format—Another good idea, although I can usually get all the results I need from looking at the Poll write-up in another zeen.

I think that the turnout would likely go *down* dramatically if Brux gave it up, simply because his successor would not likely try to generate voter turnout nearly as much. I also fail to see the problem with Bruce's deadline extension—the effective polling period ended up being about the same as it was last year.

[He made his own little rule and he broke it.

["Just the facts, ma'am." When does "being thorough" become harassment? Presented for your edification, the strange case of Larry Botimer, *et al*,

as reported to me at PudgeCon 88.

[Larry said he received four SASE's from Linsey to be used to mail in a Sucker Poll ballot. He used them otherwise, as you suggest, but David, have you been paying attention? Linsey has asked for money earmarked for hobby services to help fund The Sucker Poll. When you paid your registration fee at AtlantiCon, part of that fee was supposed to go for hobby services. Did you really intend for Larry Botimer to use your money to send a couple of his own private letters? Starting next year, Linsey was considering using part of the money collected by the charity drive to fund the poll. (He has since decided not to.) If you donate money for medical research, do you want it diverted to pay Linsey's long distance phone bill?

[On to the phone calls: Larry lives in Washington state. He said Linsey called him (from Massachusetts) and kept him on the phone for an hour and ten minutes trying to persuade him to vote in The Sucker Poll. Is that a reasonable amount of long distance time to spend trying to get one person to vote? He said he started out giving him polite refusals, such as, "I really don't think I'm informed enough to vote." And Linsey replied, "Well, I've got your file right here, and you're playing in this game here under this GM in this zeen, and that game there under that GM in that zeen...so you must be informed enough to vote." Would you feel a bit creepy if you found out someone was keeping such a file on you? Certainly it's public information, but why should anyone go to the trouble of culling and cross-referencing and filing such data? How would you feel about it in light of the fact (see "Recipe Ready") that Linsey asked Ken Peel to give him the zeen sub lists Ken had collected for the census? Some of those are most definitely private. Furthermore, if Linsey intended to use them in some legitimate way to help him run The Poll, why did he say "If you want to do it and deny it, I'm certainly not going to stop you!"?

[Getting back to the phone calls: Larry said after a while he ran out of polite ways to "Just Say No" to Linsey, and (I think) finally had to hang up on him. How many times should someone have to say "No, I don't want to vote in your poll?" But Larry managed to stick to his guns. Gary Behnen, on the other hand, admitted he finally broke down and voted just to "get Linsey off my back."

[I also heard Linsey demanded that Matt Kazur produce a birth certificate to prove he was a real person, and therefore eligible to vote in The Sucker Poll. Did you have to provide your birth certificate to vote? Has any other Dipdom "service" or "project" or GM or anyone ever required a birth

certificate? We're doing a census, and we don't card people, although Linsey has pointed out several times how he could screw it up by sending in fake names.

[Linsey also threw out legitimate "10" votes for Dick's *Thorazeen*, threw out legitimate "0" votes for his own zeen *Trax*, threw out legitimate ballots from Sue McPherson and Ed Wrobel, abused Dick for asking people to give his zeen a "10," and talked Tom Swider out of voting for *Thorazeen*. Do these "vote blotting" activities cancel out his "vote bloating" ones?

[Still wondering why "everybody is so pissed off"? Of course, as Bruce will surely inform you, it's not "everybody," just about twenty people (with Rod Walker and Larry Botimer as the latest additions to the oh-so-short list). Never mind that those twenty people include many of the biggest names, as Linsey himself admits, "Diplomacy's Greatest Gurus." There are still plenty of people out there who will say, "Oh, well, that's not *really* so bad," "It's his poll; let him run it how he wants," and "Anyway, it could never happen to me." Guess who used to think that, too.]

(ROBERT SACKS) I see the claue is at it again. I did not make an "elitist proposal" (they even use the same code words)—I did a serious analysis of proper methodologies that could be applied, and listed a select jury as one of three possible options. My own preference is for none-of-the-above; I don't want to see any such poll or award. To Walker's Six Principles: I disagree with #3 (only) because I disagree in principle with any such poll and do not want to promote it; otherwise, they're good principles. Of course, the Pollster will claim that any refusal to promote the Poll violates #2.

(MARK BERCH) Rod Walker's letter on the Runestone Poll smacks of Do-It-My-Way-Or-Else. He sets forth "Essential Principles," and warns that, "If Bruce can't agree to reasonable limitations..." then an alternative Poll might well be in order. So let's see what his Principles consist of:

1. "Bruce must agree to refrain from vote-bloating activities..." These include "harassing letters and phone calls." Could we see some of these harassing letters, Rod? Do I have to remind you of what happened to Kathy Byrne when she tried to hit Linsey over the head with a letter that she was unable to produce? And could you produce someone who will say, "I got a harassing phone call from Bruce trying to get me to vote"? Rod also mentions "manipulation of novices." Who? Who was manipulated into voting and what form did this

manipulation take? "Questionable inducements to undecided voters." Huh? Who was induced and with what? For at least that he gives this specific: "...a list of people who have already voted, all prominent names, as 'proof' that it's 'OK' to vote." Could we see that list, Rod? Is it too much to ask for you to produce what you talk about? In this regard, Rod seems to be opposed to the mass mailing of ballots by Bruce: "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." Originally, Bruce was criticized for sending out not enough ballots—now, it's a matter of too many. But the premise is absurd. You'll never get nearly all the zeens to run the ballots. Pubbers are perfectly within their rights not to run ballots if for any reason they don't feel like it—and many will exercise that right regardless of how the poll is run. *The Cream Shall Rise #4* quotes several people as expressing appreciation for having been mailed a ballot. Rod continues: "No hype attached to poll announcements." If Rod doesn't like hype, that's just too damn bad. Hype has always been part of how the hobby operates.

2. and 3. don't apply to the Pollster.

4. "Bruce must refrain from any manipulation of the votes..." Rod, are *you* saying Bruce has actually done this, or is this just innuendo? If not, why raise it, and if so, which ballot(s) do you refer to?

5. "Bruce must 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)... Encouraging someone to vote for something he or she has only seen one or two issues of is ridiculous." Elsewhere Rod refers to "drastic lowering of voting standards." Really? In all the years John Leeder ran the poll, he never set *any* requirement, relying instead on people using their good judgment. Why was that OK for Leeder, but when Bruce has a standard of two issues, you call it "ridiculous"? Smyth in various years used a two or, one time, three issue requirement. Is that you "drastic lowering" Rod, going from three to two? Why must Bruce be held to a standard others were not held to? And I don't think that six months is a "reasonable standard" at all—meaning that if he acceded to your essential principle, then he'd have to contend with Berch who feels that six is unreasonable (knocks out too many new zeens, for one thing). There are zeens in the hobby for which even one issue (*eg, The Zeen Register*) would suffice. In fact, if the zeen were irregular, "six months" might cover only a single issue!! If Rod is going to call two issues ridiculous, the burden ought to be on him to say why.

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 read format... people must not be required to pay for that sort of thing." Gosh, Rod, it must be such fun to instruct people on how to spend their money. This is another example of a double standard. Neither Leeder nor Smyth ever did this—I'm pretty sure they didn't even keep records of which pubbers "publicized the poll." How is it that you didn't complain then, but now with Bruce, he's violated some "essential principle." I'd like to remind the let-the-public-know Mr Walker that when he was editor of *DW*, he wrapped up a deal with John Leeder which entailed Leeder extending the deadline for an extra month (Bruce wasn't the first to extend an RP deadline) and then sitting on the results until *DW* could get them out first. I supported Leeder's right to do that because I felt that the Pollster could release the results any way he saw fit. I still do. Is this really a problem? Can Rod name someone who sent Bruce an SASE, asked for the basic results, and didn't get it? And I don't see that Bruce needs to do more than that—I certainly wouldn't.

I have said this in a number of other disputes, and it's appropriate here as well: A Custodian is entitled to operate any way he or she sees fit, so long as the job gets done. If Rod doesn't like how the RP is being run, he can try to persuade him to change policy. Bruce has made changes in the past (in the scoring system, in how ballots are distributed, etc) and will probably do so in the future. If people don't like how you, Rod, are running the Orphan service, should they imperiously set down "essential principles," or should they try to persuade you to change?

It is true, as Steve Langley states, that the Marco Poll (roughly, you name your five favorite zeens, in order, and each gets points depending on where on the list it appears), in my opinion, gives an advantage to large circulation zeens—I have stated that opinion before. This arises from the fact that all votes help a zeen's ranking (a point that Jim Burgess also makes). A larger circulation zeen would tend to get more votes, and hence would be helped the most. In that way, the Marco Poll tends to operate in the same way as the Calhamer point count system for rating postal play—it's just a raw collection of positive outcomes, not divided by the numbers of games. A player with two wins in two games will lose out to a player with three wins in one thousand games. In this regard, Langley mentions his circulation as running "52 or 53." My guess would be that this was comfortably above the hobby

average, so his *Magus* probably was helped overall.

However, my main problem with the Marco Poll methodology is that the results are strongly skewed by the number of zeens that the voter gets, which ought to be largely irrelevant. If a player gets five zeens, and votes for five zeens, then his fifth place zeen, which will get a point, is actually his least favorite zeen, and there's a good chance he or she doesn't much care for it. A voter who gets twenty zeens (not unusual in this hobby)—her fifth place zeen is in the top quarter. And she probably likes it quite a bit. In fact, her sixth choice is probably better liked than the first player's fifth choice, but that #6 will get no points.

As a more general rule, I dislike restrictions on a voter unless there's a good reason for it. I can think of no good reason for not letting a voter express his views on his sixth (or sixteenth) favorite zeen.

No system is perfect, but I think the preference matrix is best. This was first used in the British zeen poll, but there it was one of three methods used to calculate the result. I believe the first place it was used as the sole method was when Steve Langley used it in a Freshman Poll.

[I don't agree with all your premises. First of all, there is no requirement to list five zeens—you can list fewer. So the guy who gets five zeens, but doesn't like the fifth, could simply not vote for it at all. He likes "the null zeen" better than that one, so it drops through the bottom. But I don't think there's a "good chance" he doesn't care for it anyway—why does he get a zeen he doesn't like?

[However, I think the idea of letting the voters list *all* the zeens they get in the order they like them has some merit. One of the problems with Linsey's Poll seems to be that some people are trying to vote for zeens on an absolute scale of 0-10 ("This zeen is definitely a 10"), some people are trying to vote on a relative scale ("Well, I gave that zeen a 10, and I don't like this one quite as much, so I'll give it a 9"), and some people are trying to do both at the same time within the confines of the same 0-10 scale, in the process getting themselves (and the results) hopelessly muddled. What if the two parts were separated? In one part, the voters would be instructed to place the zeens on an absolute scale ("10" being hypothetical perfection, and therefore usually unobtainable). In the other, the voters would just list *all* the zeens they get in order of preference (maybe even allow grouping, eg, 1. *Thorazeen*; 2. *Praxis*; 3. *Whitestonia, House of Lords, Retaliation*; 4. *Dip Digest*). This could be done on one preprinted ballot by listing the zeens down

the middle and having the left column for preference scores and the right column for absolute scores. Or the two parts could even be run by two different people. *Then* combine the results. This would make the preference matrix part of the poll crystal clear, instead of its being an artifact generated from the absolute scoring of many voters.

[I don't recall when Bruce was criticized for not sending out enough ballots. When was that?

[Last issue we had Rod Walker eulogizing John Koning for writing the funniest article ever when he was dead; this issue we have Mark Berch's wonderful image of Kathy Byrne trying to hit Linsey over the head with a letter she couldn't produce. She should have used a beer can or a pot of peas.]

(MARK LARZELERE) Rod Walker suggests setting up a poll to be offered explicitly as an alternative to Bruce Linsey's poll, and not just "another" poll. But what's wrong with another poll? You could have its deadline six months apart from Linsey's poll (as I did with the Marco when I ran it), and before starting the poll we might have some discussion on the best methodology for the poll. Trying to get Linsey to change anything is like beating your head against the wall (since he takes any suggestion that his poll isn't perfect as a personal attack), and setting up a new poll just to "get" Linsey would only hurt both polls by creating a bad atmosphere. Maybe if Pete Gaughan is interested in doing the Marco Poll, he could be persuaded to do a new poll instead that's more like the Runestone Poll. How about having public voting instead of secret ballots? The Poll isn't an election, so there shouldn't be a compelling need for secret ballot. The Poll should also have some clear rules on what zeens are eligible, who is eligible to vote in the poll, and what distinguishes a zeen from a subzeen.

[Mark, I hope you will appreciate this little poem I wrote especially for you: "See ya later, Linsey-hater/After while, Berchophile." Merry Xmas.]

ratings & scoring systems

(JOHN CARUSO) We all know I'm not a ratings player, nor do I care about them. Still, that doesn't prevent me from having an opinion.

I agree with Dick's basic philosophy. The name of the game, any game for that matter, is winning. It shouldn't matter if you come in a strong second or get blown away in 1902. You've lost. Draws are

just a group win. Thus it shouldn't matter if you drew with one center or fifteen. The one center worked just as hard (if not harder) to survive and get to be part of the draw.

A scoring/rating system I might offer would go something like this: sole win = 100%; two-way draw = 50% each; three-way = 33 1/3% each; four-way = 25% each; and so on. If a tie breaker was needed, I'd suggest center count at the end of the game for the last season only. No bonus or penalty points.

(ROBERT SACKS) Question to Hood: does my scoring system satisfy your requirements?

[What scoring system is that, Robert?]

(DAVID HOOD) I disagree violently with Dick's contention that a system should treat all non-winners/drawers alike, since they all "lost." As I pointed out in my letter, these all-or-nothing systems do not give any incentives for down-and-out players to play the rest of the game with any rationality. We applaud players for sticking it out to the end with bad positions, but refuse to give them any real, concrete incentive to do so.

It also makes no sense to penalize larger players because they failed to get in a draw. At least the '02 eliminated power got close to winning, whereas the '02 eliminated power was creamed from the beginning. Who has played a better game? I don't think it makes sense to say that the second guy did. That would be penalizing partial success, and will lead players to eschew dots if they don't think they can win or be in the draw. And that's a silly way to play out the last few game-years of a game. Scoring systems must be designed that *incentives* play the major role in human action; that one cannot divorce what one means by a "good game" from how many points one awards.

I *do* think it's fair to compare games which were played under different houserules—the assumption is that the differences will nearly cancel each other in the aggregate. After all, my PBM ratings system has to assume this. Differences in scoring systems would not be an issue, since each game's *results* would be tabulated under the same system.

The bottom line is that a good system needs to award wins/draws, certainly, but should also award (in some manner) a showing which is two or three centers better than the next guy's showing. Otherwise the little powers, which usually have no chance of drawing, will simply play for revenge or some other undesirable goal. *Incentives* are the key.

[I agree incentives are the key, but shouldn't the main incentive be to win? Dick has won a postal game from a "hopeless" two-center standby Austrian position. His incentive to survive, instead of just "spoiling" the game, was that you gotta play to win, "never say die." So Dick prefers a scoring system geared to winning. He also runs his games under DIAS (Draws Include All Survivors), which is the logical extension of that philosophy. When we ran the Marycon tournament under DIAS, we had a much greater percentage of wins and small draws than I have ever seen in any other tournament.

[From a "play to win" point of view, your system, which offers incentives for players who don't think they can win or be in the draw, actually encourages weaker play.]

(MARK NELSON) Tournament scoring systems—how come we still restrict ourselves to a Calhamerian approach? It isn't the number of players in a draw which is important—it's how close you've come to winning. Penalizing someone for trying to win is daft. Well, daft if you do it directly by giving a negative highest sc total [ref Salvatore's system]. Instead perhaps you should increase the rewards for *winning*.

nut'n'honey

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) New Blood List, where are you?

I must be something of an outcast in this bunch, as I eat "generic" breakfast cereal. In point of fact, I prefer "Sugar Puffs," the only open-market cereal brand that still uses the word "sugar" in its name. Come on, do they really expect you to believe that the stuff they put on Super Golden Crisp is real honey? What do they want you to think Frosted Flakes are frosted with—NutraSweet? Moral Lesson #1 for the kiddies of America: Hypocrisy Pays!

[The original idea here was that you all would send us a list of new subbers and inquiries to your zeens, and we could collate and publish them each issue. If nobody sends us those lists (and they haven't), we can't publish them. If you would like to see new blood lists, send us yours!]

new business: recipe ready

(BRUCE LINSEY) "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?"

Yeah, I get a couple dozen of 'em each year, mostly accompanied with people's Runestone ballots. Stuff like "Don't repeat this, but I voted XXX low because he's always late," or whatever.

You don't get off-the-record letters, Julie, because you've made it know that you won't honor the request. People know I will (unless given a good reason not to), and aren't afraid to trust me.

[Sorry, Bruce, you've got it backwards. People don't need to label their letters to me because they know they can trust my judgment and discretion about whether to print their letters. I guess people aren't safe with you even if they do label their letters. What do you consider a "good reason" to ignore the (union) label?]

(BRUCE LINSEY) Please give us a single example of an off-the-record letter which was "used to cover shady MegaDipdom deals which the writer may later wish to deny." It all sounds so deliciously sinister—but has it ever actually happened?

[Do you deny doing this yourself?! Are you stonewalling again, when you know good and well that you do it all the time? -DM]

[I thought you'd never ask.]

off the record

4/4/88

Dear Ken-

Please see the section I've circled in red on the latest copy of Known Game Openings, in case you hadn't seen it yet.

You haven't been replying to my letters, but I think Robert is correct on this point. Having the census info is a) as much my right as anyone else's, and b) would be extremely useful in helping me conduct the Runestone Poll (especially if I can get it from you very soon—I'd need it to mail the ballots to those people who only get zines which don't publicize the Poll).

Therefore, let me ask you again: are you willing to make available to me the info you have on who gets which zines? If so, do you want this arrangement made public or kept private? (Either way is fine with me. If you want to do it & deny it, I'm certainly not going to stop you!) If not, why should I not be entitled to this data?

As a side note, I have no idea who is involved in the "rumors" Sacks is referring to. This is the first I've heard of such rumors.

Please answer this letter!

Best,

Bruce

off the record

4/4/88

Dear Ken -

Please see the section I've circled in red on the latest copy of Known Game Openings, in case you hadn't seen it yet.

You haven't been replying to my letters, but I think Robert is correct on this point. Having the census info is a) as much my right as anyone else's, and b) would be extremely useful in helping me conduct the Runestone Poll (especially if I can get it from you very soon - I'd need it to mail the ballots to those people who get only genes which don't publicize the Poll).

Therefore, let me ask you again: are you willing to make available to me the info you have on who gets which genes? If so, do you want this arrangement made public or kept private? (Either way is fine with me. If you want to do it & deny it, I'm certainly not going to stop you!) If not, why should I not be entitled to this data?

As a side note, I have no idea who is involved in the "rumors" Sacks is referring to. This is the first I've heard of such rumors.

Please answer this letter!

Best,




(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I still use NOT FOR PRINT, Julie. Some publishers are real idiots about what they will print, or even whether they tell you they've printed it or not. I got burned pretty badly by Steve Knight a while back, who when briefly relaunching *It's A Trap!* not only printed a letter with my name on it, but didn't even tell me about it or send me a copy of the zeen! There is no way I can tell whether it was a real letter from me or not, a paraphrase, an out-and-out forgery, something Steve made up, or simply something I didn't intend to be public. Since that's when I started getting the death threats, I am very interested in what happened there; in spite of this, nobody has ever told me what I was supposed to have said! Sometimes, though, Linsey's statements that something he writes me is not for print puts me in an ethical bind: I want to get other opinions on what he said in the letter or card, and yet if I quoted or paraphrased him, I would be violating his specific instructions. What's a conscientious editor to do?

[You could make a public statement, as Steve Langley, Dick and I have, that you will no longer respect any such labels, and that people who write you will either have to restrain themselves from telling you stuff they don't want to see in print or else rely on your judgment. You'll probably continue to get the same kind of mail you do now, minus the labels.

[You could ask the writer for permission to quote/paraphrase/print anyway, and tell him why you want to do it. For example, if the letter concerns some other person, he/she should certainly have a "right of reply," *n'est-ce pas?* I hear even the vilest of criminals has that right.

[If your ethical sense is not too finely honed, you can get around the "not for print" label by not printing the letter in your zeen, but making a bunch of copies and mass mailing them. You can get around "do not quote" and "off the record" by paraphrasing.

[Other than that, it's difficult for me or anyone else to advise you without knowing the content of the letters. If you suspect someone is using the "not for print" label in a malicious and unethical way, such as to tell you a bunch of lies and then rely on *your* ethical sense to keep you from checking up on him, then I'd say you have a higher obligation to yourself to find out the truth, even if you have to break the confidentiality of the letters. A reporter protects his sources to protect them from reprisal and so he can get further information from them, but the basis of the relationship is that the source gives *truthful* information.]

(JIM BURGESS) My response to "NFP" letters has always been to write to such people and inform them that I don't recognize the label, that anything sent to me should be viewed as "public domain." I'm not sure if this is legal, but Bruce Linsey has acknowledged to me that he understands my statement. He still writes NFP letters to me and asks that I consider the label his preference, but I am free not to abide by it. I reiterate to everyone listening that I won't accept NFP labels. Maybe if more people would follow my lead, we could eliminate the practice.

(MARK BERCH) On the subject of "not for print" letters, you say, "...they're 'unfannish' in that they implicitly threaten out-of-Dipdom reprisal for in-Dipdom actions." That's preposterous. I've received over a hundred such letters, I'm sure, and never once have I even faintly perceived any such threat. It's not there. I've likewise written dozens of such letters, and no one has ever complained that my use of such a label made them feel implicitly threatened. I've had people ask me to remove the label, had people tell me it was superfluous (they could tell from context it was DNQ), had people tell me they would no longer honor such labels—but no one has ever complained of feeling threatened.

You ask, "By the way, does anybody besides Walker, Linsey, Berch, and Davis still use the 'Not for Quote...etc, labels?'" Sure, and ironically, once came a few days before *HoL #17*. It was some comments on an editorial in *DD*. I got another one in this past summer asking me to look into an odd sort of dispute. And I got one just this past week, a guy with an idea for a project. He wants to collect ideas/advice quietly before he decides on whether or not to go forward with it and make it public.

[I don't believe you've received "over a hundred such letters," and I'd like proof of that. If you have, I think it a sad commentary on your reputation that so many people who write you don't trust your discretion and judgment about keeping their business with you private.]

(JOHN CARUSO) Mark Berch is just plain wrong about Kathy quoting an OTR letter of his. He made a big fuss about it then too. He released the part of the OTR which he claimed was what Kathy quoted from an OTR letter: "rose among the thorns" *vis a vis* "thorn among the flowers." Neither has the same meaning (a thorn being a pain and a rose meaning a thing of beauty). No quote, no confidential material violated, if paraphrased not even accurate, and most of all, no harm done. But

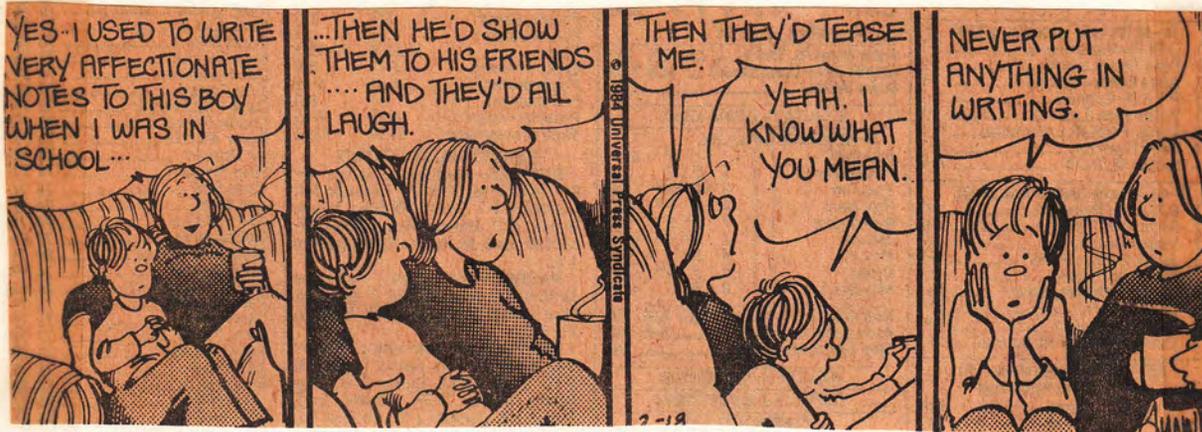
Berch made a big issue of it then. What strikes me as odd is that he again brings up a six-year old disagreement now, six years later, after it was he who dropped the disagreement six years ago. So much for Mark Berch's word to drop an issue (a senseless, nitpick issue at that).

A few years ago, I printed an OTR comment of

Dick Martin's. It was a negative comment about me, to me. I did not get his permission. I printed it, not to make Dick look bad, but because it was relevant to a topic I was writing about. It wasn't a personal note and was relevant, and common sense told me it would be OK. No argument pursued. No bad feelings. No big deal out of a petty thing.

[And that ends another issue, and another year.]

Happy holidays to you all!



✉ **return address** ✉
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first class