

HOUSE OF LORDS (AGAIN)

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 almost anyone, even Canadians. It is composed primarily of the thoughts of its publisher, and a great many letters on topics relevant to publishing a dipzeen in the modern world. Most importantly, this is a forum for those with experience to share the wealth.

You can get this zeen any of several ways, if you are a publisher or GM. First of all, by sending me one American Dollar per issue, and agreeing to trade. Second, by sending me one American Dollar per issue, and writing something at least once every other issue. Third, agree to run this off for me (at no cost to myself, and in the manner to which I have become accustomed). What, no takers on that one? Oh, well, I can always try.... NonGMpubbers are obviously limited to the second option only, having nothing to trade (too bad). But really, I'd rather that you took the time to write rather than trade (or, better still, do both!), as the more you put in, the more you get out.

What is really going on here? Where have I been for the last two years? Oh...around...doing stuff...having a good time...letting the dust settle. A bit of history....

I created this zeen about three years ago, to be a positive force for making a better dipdom by improving communications between GMs and pubbers. Slightly less than a year later, I announced the impending fold of the zeen after issue number 8 amid a tempest in a teapot of controversy. However, instead of putting out two more issues, as promised, HOL folded after #6 with issue #7 all but ready to go to print. No refunds were sent out, because nobody had a positive sub balance (only counting paid issues, not freebies). I faded into the woodwork as much as possible, as the whole experience left me with a very bad feeling.

In retrospect, all the quibbling was trivial - though it didn't seem so at the time. In its first incarnation, the zeen was meant to be distributed exclusively to GMs and pubbers. Several individuals, for whatever reasons, chose to interpret this as "elitism" on my part - though it was never meant as such, and nobody was ever turned away as "unworthy." Anyway, don't let me get started on that, or I may change my mind again. Where was I? Oh yes, this incarnation is meant for very similar channels - GMs and pubbers. I don't imagine that your average Joe Gameplayer is going to be too interested in what's going on in here...though I may be wrong, and to avoid another controversy flare-up, there will be no restrictions made this time.

Dipdom has suffered through a lot in the two years since #6, and only now has the atmosphere cleared enough for me to consider giving this another go. If response is as positive as last time, we'll give it a good run this time - more than six issues. If it's not, well, I finally managed to get #7 out on the street after all, and we'll leave it at that.

One thing HOL will *not* become is a forum for feuding and name-calling. This is not THE NOT FOR HIRE all over again. Hopefully we can all put aside whatever grudges we have within these pages for the greater good of all dipdom. I'm not asking that you forgive and forget, just that you set it aside for a few moments each month, when you sit down and write. I don't expect you to become emotionless robots either, as that would be boring (and impossible, as well). Just have a sense of perspective and realize what this zeen is all about. Good, we understand each other.

Why, I'll even try to get along with the Canadians!

I hope that's enough of that sort of background for you...now on to how we work

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this.

Format will be a section of Old Business - any topic that's been brought up before and is still interesting, a section of New Business - the issue's feature topic, and finally Future Business - my intro to the next issue's New Business. Leading this all off will be a bunch of announcements, news and notices. Anything interesting is fair game.

Presently simmering away in Old Business are: The Concept (a general catch-all), Diptax (about Larry Peery's proposal to donate one dollar per player per game for dipdom services), Polls (general discussion on the merits and demerits of various polling systems), Cost (where those sub fees go), Dipcon (assorted proposals for handling Dipcon - admittedly more popular then than now), PBEM (electronic mail games - where are they now?), Filing Systems (that familiar state of disorganization), Out of Dipdom Experiences (experiences with other hobbies, and how we came to be in dipdom), and Ethics (the tail end of this discussion). Most of my comments in double parens remain unchanged from the first time I did this two years ago. Updated comments are noted "86." Feel free to comment on anything you see. If there's a topic near and dear to your heart that we haven't covered, let me know. I'm always open to suggestion.

First thing I'd like to have for next issue is an in-depth critical (in the academic sense) review of the new publisher's handbook. Strengths and weaknesses, what's there and what's not, what you like about it and what you don't, etc. If you feel up to it, I'd like to see it. And if we get more than one, well that's even better!

Second item I'd like to see would be one of those little maps, you know the kind, to print with game reports. Send whichever ones you can, and I'll print the best selections.

One point I've left out is what sort of schedule we'd be working on. As this is prepared on a very flexible machine, I can be flexible as well. Usually about four to five weeks after an issue comes out, I'll start the final preparations for the next issue. That can take anywhere from a few days to maybe two weeks. So since this issue is going out around the end of August, I'll assemble the next one by around the end of September. Of course, the sooner you write in, the more time I'll have to type up your letter, and the faster my turnaround will be. I expect this to be about as big as any issue gets, so if I get that much material sooner than expected, we'll go to print earlier. Rigid schedule-making is not one of my strengths!

Announcements

Obviously, our number one announcement is that we're back in business, the mailbox is open, and we're taking submissions again. While the material in this issue is mostly two years old, it seems to hold up pretty well. Some doesn't, of course, but for the most part I'm pleased. This'll all make more sense if you have issues #1-6, which are available as back issues. The six issues, totalling 114 pages, can be had for...pick a number...\$3 total. Yeah, sounds reasonable, should cover postage and a trip to Haagen Dazs.

There's a new publisher's handbook running around. While I haven't seen a copy, those who have seem to like it. Send \$3 to Bruce Linsey (73 Ashuelot St, #3, Dalton, MA 01226) for a copy of it.

PERELANDRA, by Pete Gaughan, has folded. Pete will continue to run his games on flyers, and have a subzeen in MAGUS, so I hear. How about sending in one of your pretty little maps, Pete?

There's talk of reviving the PDO Auction, though no solid plans as yet. Film at eleven.

And that's all that I can think about off the top of my head. I'm the first to admit that

I'm not as on top of things as I used to be, and if there's anything that you'd like to bring to our attention, please do so. Any new zeens out there?

(Very) Old Business

The Concept

(Steve Langley) Re Larry Peery's suggestion that we should be either positive or silent in our interactions. Silence is hard to notice. Someone can be silent and get zip credit. Witness Julie's letter on the subject. Theoretically, if everyone only said nice things and kept silent on all other fronts, in some future time, all the feuds and troubles would be forgotten. That's theoretically. In practice, new people would come along, not quite up on the "rules," and say a few nasty things about others. Not only that, but a few of the elders would fire a few "humorous" shots. Someone would decide that since someone else wasn't being nice...etc. Then too, sometimes a situation needs discussion and there is no "nice" thing to say. Of course, it can't hurt to curb our worst impulses and try to tone down actions and reactions. It just may not help as much as Larry would like.

I think that college should be an inhibiting factor on Diptime. To get full use out of college, one needs to put a lot of time into research and study. That doesn't mean that college will keep the dedicated pubber from pubbing, though. It's all just a matter of one's priorities.

((But why should college be any more of a factor than, say, work? To get full use out of a job takes as much effort as college. Besides, if you're employed, theoretically you have the money to participate in more diversions. Yes, it's all a matter of priorities. Isn't everything?))

(Jim Bumpas) I understand how you feel about HOL. No one could keep publishing something like this for long. Eight issues is phenomenal enough -- I couldn't have done it. You've provided a good service and an active forum. Thanks.

I'm dismayed by Peery's letter. He commits the very crime he condemns, except he "names no names." Instead, perhaps more people than he intends might think he's talking about them. I don't see any good reason to use the word "scum" half a dozen times in one letter, and a dozen or more worse perjoratives to boot. He hopes those who do not engage in "feuds" will endorse his so-called "11th Commandment." I am one of those he calls a disinterested observer, and I don't endorse it. It'll probably only provoke more of the very behavior it intends to discourage. The violators may enjoy the increased notoriety. The best way to discourage name-calling is to ignore it. Attention is what they want. They want the object of their attack to become outraged and behave outrageously.

I think Dick Martin puts his finger on the crux of Peery's problem: "The hobby is... a model in which we practice the same kind of behavior as we do in real life." Nothing could be further from the truth, I hope. None of us, I think, send off armies and fleets full of men to kill and be killed. None of us engage in diplomatic arrangements which determine the destinies of millions of people. None of us betray our friends and reach for that win in life which causes others to be trampled beneath our feet in our scramble for the top. Maybe Peery does. I hope not.

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((Actually, there are a few who would trample their friends in the struggle for the "top." In a population of 800+ people, with the basis a game like Dip, that's not so surprising. Depressing, but not surprising.

((Thanks for the nice words about HOL, I appreciate them.))

(Rod Walker) I hope you will reconsider folding HOL or *at least* get somebody else to do it. I realize it's a lot of work, but it's a valuable service. If you feel unduly hassled by the "elitist" thing, see below.

This "elite" business is a nonissue, in my opinion. The limitation of direct participation in HOL to GMs/publishers is a functional one. I readily admit that there are some non-pubbers who have better ideas (etc.) than some pubbers. However, there has to be some way to limit the amount of work you have to do. Given the format of HOL, if you threw it open to anybody, you would see it double in size in no time, probably. Maybe more. So you must limit participation in order to keep your work within reasonable limits.

Now, how to do that? Let's say that you decide to limit it to the "best" contributors. How do you determine *that*? Your list of such people would not be the same as mine, and any such list would surely be "elitist" even if it were objectively accurate (something probably not possible, anyway). So, as a practical matter, you limit things by the objective criterion of GM/pubber only. This is "elitist" only in the minds of people who want to see things in a negative light whenever possible and who don't have to do the work you're doing.

((I have reconsidered folding, about five times. If I've changed my mind so many times over the last few months, I don't really want to do this. I have better things to do than get aggravated, and plan to do them.

((There is no way in the world that I would inflict HOL upon some unsuspecting soul. It has been both the best and worst experience of my dipdom career, but the negatives outweigh the positives. I make no farcical claim that HOL is a "hobby service" and do not wish it to be treated as such. It's just a zeen. A very special zeen, in my eyes, because it dared to be different (and succeeded, I think), but nothing more. There will be no "HOL janitor" to be jeered at.

((You are correct in that "elitism" is a non-issue. It always has been. It was merely something for certain individuals to misrepresent and use as ammunition against the zeen. Who was it that said you couldn't torpedo things in dipdom? He was wrong.))

(Mark Matuschak) The idea of saying nothing bad about others and avoiding feuds is nothing new to me (just to get in the required amount of elitism and arrogance). My philosophy has *always* been that TBB exists as a game-playing forum where no other exists, and all my efforts go into making TBB enjoyable to my wargaming subbers. Besides, I never have enough space to get nasty.

Last year, in my annual survey of my own subscribers, one person wrote that TBB was like a big family, and that's the way I want to keep it. It's open to anyone who's interested, but it's primary goal is enjoyable game-playing. Because of that, I studiously avoid the following:

1) politics -- I'd rather relate to my subbers as gamers than as liberals or conservatives, and there's too many ways to rub people the wrong way.

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2) feuds -- I normally will not print or write anything attacking any person. That does not promote the enjoyment of game-playing. The only limited exception to this is that if someone questions a GM decision of mine, I will print a full disclosure of all communications, as I think that's only fair to other players. I will *never* engage in feuds with non-subbers via TBB.

For some reason, I've never had any real problems. Everyone in TBB pretty much gets along well with everyone else. I also avoid polls like the plague, because it's only important to me how my *own* subbers view TBB, and I receive that info already. Wargamers seem to be a less nasty bunch of people than Dippers in general, and more laid-back about things. Maybe that's because Dip is more intensely *personal* than wargames, so personalities inextricably become bound up in Dip-playing. And then, maybe I'm just making one of those all-too-prevalent generalizations.

((Generally speaking, I agree with you.))

(Lu Henry) Truly sorry to see HOL going to that great Dip-heaven in the sky. It was (and is) a very enjoyable and worthwhile forum.

It is very, very difficult to understand why persons involved in this hobby, or any other endeavor, should cease the criticism of ideas merely because the proponent of those ideas feels that the criticism is negative; and as for ad hominem attacks, one should not call one's critics scum, immature psychological sociopaths, troublemakers and the like. It does lower the tone of the debate. Indeed, since I oppose Diptax, I might even feel a bit offended were I not chuckling over the absence of logic in calling for a suspension of negative comments coupled with such perjorative terms. I suggest Mr. Peery clean up his own stable before he tells others of the condition of their farm.

Someone in Issue #6 created the analogy of Diplomacy's future being either one big piranha or a tank of angel fish. Perhaps, neither is the optimum. We may not want a piranha (I guess this was the reference to the empire builder) or a tank of angel fish (all very much the same, swimming lockstep to the tune of the great organizational plan).

Maybe, if we're going to carry out the simile of fish, many of us want a tank with an angel or two, a guppy or two, even a catfish. (I could really work on this idea -- you know -- "I have a dream, a dream where dipdom is at peace with little zeens and big zeens, east coast zeens and west coast zeens. Yes, my friends, I have a dream.")

((Alas, it is only a dream. How do we go about making it a reality?

((I always wanted to be a guppy!))

(Robert Sacks) So who is going to put out HOL when you stop? If you make the wrong choice, either it won't continue, or it will cease to be an independent forum. If you insist on not having a successor, and fail, it will probably cease to be an independent forum.

On the Peery proposal to ban destructive criticism. Is Mr. Peery seriously suggesting that it was improper to attack Oaklyn/Tretick, or Gordon Anderson's trademarking DipCon, or The Diplomacy Association, or the Gemignani Awards, or my tenure as MNC or Registrar of Known Game Openings, or Dick Martin's management of HOL, or Kathy Byrne's refusal to assign a Boardman Number to a game she considered a variant? Let us see exactly what he is talking about. Is everyone exempt from destructive criticism, or just a privileged few?

On services -- if anyone can run a service, who's the new custodian for HOL?

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Actually, not anyone can run a service, even if there were enough services for everyone to run.

((There will be no "successor" for HOL. Maybe I'll revive it again some day, but not for a long time. If anybody is foolish enough to try to revive this concept without a sufficient cool-down period, he's likely to just get caught in the fallout from this zeen, and be in for a pointless bad experience. Take my word for it kids, this is a lot more work than it looks like (and it looks like a lot of work!).

((Some would scoff at your notion that this is an "independent" publication, and cry "East Coast Clique!" But there's a lot of ignorant people in the world.))

(Mark Luedi) A *very* long overdue letter (and probably long-winded as well). Whether or not the petition and signatures in POLITESSE is authentic or not, you can add my name to the list of people imploring you not to fold up HOL. I will beg, grovel, threaten you, even (gasp!) contribute to try and keep you publishing. Maybe Linsey and Berch have a lot of negative things to say about HOL, but what about all of those who really find it (for the most part at least) among the most informative and enlightening articles of Dip mail around? You can't fold! I'm not able (nor capable enough) to volunteer to take it over. Maybe someone else is if you're not willing to continue. Maybe Linsey and Berch deserve good spankings. Maybe you do too. Why don't we have a dipdom Disciplinary Committee to take care of these things?

Here's an idea on subscriptions to HOL: Limit the circulation to, say, 40 people. Give pubbers first crack, then anybody else (maybe have a waiting list for those "extras") and state that in order to keep receiving HOL, one has to contribute on a regular basis rather than be deadwood (modesty prevents...). Charge everyone the same \$1.00 (or \$1.50) per issue. I agree with others that non-pubbers/GMs may have some pretty insightful comments to make, and if they're making them, fine, well, and good; if they're not, well then, bye-bye. Maybe that sounds more elitist than the original situation. I never said it was a good idea (or maybe it's only suffering the effects of my way of expressing it). (And what about Highfield and Sesler? Are you still sending them copies?)

I'm wondering when you're going to open up the topic of the psychological demands and stresses (and gratifications) of publishing. *That* would be an interesting topic, and I'd be anxious to see what other publishers would have to say; and if I feel motivated, I'm sure I could come up with some rather verbose comments. I imagine that a warehouse zeen does not present quite the same difficulties as a zeen like TMOBR does. I can relate to your comment about "weak" areas, but not for the purpose of annoying people, but more as a way of saying "screw it" and giving myself a break.

((Thanks, Mark, but I'm still gonna fold. Don't be disappointed. Who knows, maybe I'll try this again some day.

((I liked your method of handling the subber list (really!). My next planned sub method would have been similar. I'll keep it in mind.

((I also liked your topic, and could have written reams about it myself. Tom Swider suggested something similar about six months ago, but I never got around to doing it. But I also have the impression that this is one where we'd see a lot of facades thrown up. Maybe not, but I have my doubts.))

(Keith Sherwood) I have never thought there was such a rift between the Canadian

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hobby and American in *anyone's* mind. I've never considered either autonomous. Thinking about it, I suppose they could be separate. I don't think it would be particularly helpful to either side of the border, however, and I don't think it has been proposed or considered seriously. What we have here is a lack of communication: a burst of Canadian nationalism in the face of an arrogant American attitude that they can take the Canadians for granted. Or something like that.

I didn't see HOL #4 or the original piece, but it looks as if separatism, on anyone's part (yours or Brown's) could become a hot issue, if only as an intellectual exercise. Then again, no use getting bent out of shape on said intellectual exercise when only words, and not separatism actions, have been exchanged.

Oh, a subject I can really get into: Konrad's comments on college students, free time, and Diplomacy. I'm now in my third year at University of California at San Diego, what may reasonably be termed a competitive institution of higher education. During my entire tenure I've been in the postal Dip hobby. I have blown more than a small amount of time on the postal Diplomacy hobby. However, time management always has been a problem for me, and I don't think it's mere rationalization to say I would have blown off that time on something else if not on Diplomacy. Once more, I don't particularly regret any of that "wasted" time, for wasted hobby time is what keeps us all sane. However, at some point, I realized I really had to cut down on excuses and time wasting, so I went about cutting down on my games, not starting new ones, getting off standby lists, that sort of thing. A funny thing happened however: when I dropped under five games, my enthusiasm and interest went to nil. I had to keep a certain involvement level to care at all. So when my games looked like they would drop to zero, I shifted emphasis (changed my major?): I started one game, a two-weeker where my interest level would be kept high, and I started GMing just a little bit as a guest GM.

The jury is still out, and I still waste time, but I've changed my Diplomacy hobby direction (if not my studies) to keep things interesting. There are times when the college student in me does exclude all else, and else must suffer. But this is my number one hobby these days, so I do make time for it, and I don't feel (too) guilty.

I used to laugh at college students who dropped out of the hobby in disgrace as they folded or whatever under time pressures. Used to. Now I just smile.

I don't know if you're going to get along with Mark on the quoting of material. Newspapers don't have to print entire press conferences, just selected quotes. Mark is doing the same as a newspaper editor and writer does - condensing material into small, digestible bits. It's up to his readers, I think, to decide if they believe in the reporting in DD as they would trust THE TIMES. Of course, those writing in HOL #5 requesting not to be quoted sound more as if they regard DD as well as they do the NATIONAL ENQUIRER.

((86- Well, I'm a college student again and that's when I've had the easiest times as a pubber. Remains to be seen if it's as easy this time as last.

((86- I don't mind quoting, per se, particularly if done properly. But common practice is to take only the juicy fragments that will make the quotee look as bad as possible, and simply fits the best with the quoter's point of view. Little effort is made to present the the victim's whole point of view. Unfortunately, this still happens in dipdom today.))

(Mike Conner) I was dismayed to read of your intention to fold HOL. I know you have valid reasons, but I hope you'll change your mind. You surely must realize that you're doing something useful. The freshman zine poll results certainly attest to that, not to mention the participation of so many correspondents in each issue. This is a forum that

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should be continued. I want to read the rest of HOL #6 and give you my reactions to some of the matters discussed there.

The kickoff letter from Larry Peery is one of the few things he's written that I've managed to read to the end. Yes, he certainly is verbose, and his point would be made more effectively if he wouldn't beat it to a pulp, but it is a good one. It is too bad that people abandon postal Diplomacy with a bad aftertaste because the turbulence from personal clashes interferes with the pleasure of playing.

It's just a game, not a lifestyle, for me. You won't find references to personal disputes in LSD, but that's mainly because the readers don't see LSD as a forum for that kind of crap. I don't mind raising question related to game-related matters, viz. the interchange among Paul Milewski, Kathy Byrne, Bill Quinn, and me on rules revisions, standby policies, and their relationship to BNC rulings on game irregularity. I think everyone interested in the subject learned a little.

Of course, other people are in this hobby for other reasons. The appeal of a gloves-off fantasy world where nothing is sacred cannot be ignored. Some people just like to get the old blood pressure up now and then. Others like to set up systems: collecting and analyzing statistics, forming committees, writing letters, setting up files, etc. And some like the feeling of power that GMing, pubbing, or being a hobby mover gives them, never mind the smallness of the pond. It's not so strange that our hobby attracts people who are in some way interested in political maneuvering. We're talking Diplomacy, right?

I say it takes all kinds, assholes and saints, and we got 'em. I personally believe the positive contributions of individuals and groups far outweigh the negatives, but I know a strong case can be made against that view. At any rate, postal Diplomacy is an organic institution, changing in response to the abilities and needs of its members, and their willingness to devote time, energy, and money. The state of the hobby is what its members deserve.

Your comments on stereotypes are right on target. I don't feel like I belong to any particular factions, perhaps because I don't really get involved in hobby politics. I do find them amusing from afar, though.

I get a kick out of all the generalizations brought to bear as arguments against other generalizations. Mark Berch: "...starting college would probably be second only to getting married in terms of causing dropouts." Maybe so. Do you base that statement on gut feeling, or are there statistics? You are right about changing priorities. When your lifestyle changes, something's gotta make room. Marriage (or divorce), a new job, new baby, illness, etc., always cause dislocations and force people to rearrange priorities. Since Dippy is a hobby to most people, it can be "sacrificed" to satisfy real-world demands. I've weathered several personal crises in the last several years, and without apologies I've let playing and pubbing take a back seat. It's a matter of survival. Some people just drop out, since they don't have much invested in friendships or institutions, and little can be done to force a dropout pubber to make refunds. Game dropouts don't bother me a bit, since governments become disarrayed and change hands in the "real" world.

Dipcon

(Steve Langley) Dipcon? Let's let Tallman worry about it. Better yet, clean the silly putty off of Tom Swider's proposal. Hold Dipcon in a 300-mile radius of NYC each year. It

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will draw a big crowd and a majority of the PBM players and pubbers will be within 1000 miles of it all the time. It will also be out of reach of Californians, who are all flakes, fruits, or nuts.

((Better yet, why don't we hold it in Calcutta? That way it's out of everybody's reach, and we won't have to worry about it any longer.

((At least the Californians aren't arrogant elitists, or are they?))

(Jim Bumpas) I don't understand Rod Walker's contention that regional Dipcons might split the hobby. Rod makes the bald assertion that "we need a single continental con as a symbol (and working example) of hobby unity." How does it split the hobby? How does one con a year (instead of two, four, seven, or more?) prevent geographical splits in the hobby? How is a single North American con more a step towards a world Dipcon? I fail to see the logic in any of this. The purpose of holding a con is to provide the opportunity for the maximum number of players to gather for FTF play against top competition, usually for prizes. If the Dipcon Society is only providing this opportunity for 50, 100, 200 or more players a year, then how can it be said to be "unifying" the hobby? Rod speaks of a "real" Dipcon and disparages "a mere half a Dipcon." Do some people really need to know they are attending the only "real" Dipcon in a year? How does a FTF event unify the postal hobby, anyway? It seems to me *any* FTF tournament unifies the hobby as much as Dipcon. FTF tournaments usually put new people in touch with the postal hobby when they see sample zeens and talk to others who PBM.

In the final analysis, it doesn't matter if Dipcon is held only once a year in a whole nation, a whole continent, or the whole universe. Other FTF tournaments will be held to satisfy the public need for FTF tournaments. New players will cycle into the postal hobby through this means (along with other means). The hobby will be no less unified for all this. Maybe one reason for calling one tournament a year "Dipcon" is so those people who want to know they're attending the one "real," "official," "genuine," "unifying" event can tell their grandchildren about it.

((You must recall that Rod runs DIPLOMACY WORLD, with the same notion of "sub to DW for hobby unity." Rod is a strong promoter of monolithic organizations/events/etc that he has influence/control over.

((When it comes down to it, "Dipcon" is just another dip con, with the special bonus of the traditional headache for the unlucky soul in charge.))

(Lu Henry) It's probably seditious to say so, but I really don't give a damn. The winner of the Diplomacy tourney is just a winner of another Diplomacy game. Symbol of national unity? Why? Who cares? A nice get together to meet other players and pubbers. That's about it as far as I'm concerned, and a magic name isn't needed for that purpose. Actually an air-conditioned apartment complex community room of sufficient size would have been just as nice a forum for such a get-together as Cobo Hall in Detroit was in '83. Probably would have been cheaper lodging nearby, a pool, and a nice neighborhood bar within three blocks with reasonably priced drinks for afterwards.

((86- And for this reason, Dipcon at Madcon next year will be an interesting experiment.))

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(Robert Sacks) If there is no convention for the location and year specified, it doesn't matter if it isn't a specific convention.

The problems with Dipcon have not been with rotation. The conventions have failed to perform, the committees have failed to perform, the Dipcon has been used as a partisan weapon, and it is no longer possible to discuss hobby problems at Dipcon. It is badly broken. Let's fix it.

((It would seem to be that the main business of Dipcon is making sure there will be a *next* Dipcon. It's been that way for as long as I've been going to the things.

((The only con I've been to where the con could really be said to "perform" was this year's Marycon (I missed it last year). All the games were on a par with good pickup games, and that's hard to top.

((86- And the two Marycons since this was written (or is it three?) have been every bit every bit as good.))

Costs

(Steve Langley) I thought MAGUS was getting by pretty cheap until I saw other pubbers' numbers. We spend about \$1.10 per issue, and that doesn't count any machine costs for the computer or the odd box of staples, etc.

((86- RETAL #104, 10 pages, ran me 76¢ per copy. With MAGUS at triple that size, you are getting off cheap, but only relatively. How do things compare between then and now?))

Diptax

(Jim Bumpas) Even if the Diptax were "voluntary," there's still the problem of who will collect and disburse the funds. This is also a problem with taking a general fund from tournament income. Far better to designate funds to specific projects. Money from tournaments is voluntary for the players, too. Especially if they know some of the money is going into a particular fund. They can choose not to play. I endorse the comments of Lu Henry in HOL #6. I also agree with John Caruso: tournament fees are in no way analogous to a Diptax. At Pacificon, *all* the tournament fees for 9 years have gone into prizes for the top 10% of participants. All the overhead for the tournament is paid for by general Pacificon admissions and dealer fees, along with volunteer tournament organizers.

(Rod Walker) Lu Henry, again, makes very great sense. If I were to quibble, it would be only to point out that the BNC is not the only Custodian to print income/expense statements. The MNC and PONTEVEDRIA do as well. I agree with him that hobby services should do that.

I deny Robert Sacks' assertion. Rod Walker certainly *did not* propose to "tax the hobby for the NADF Treasury, c. 1979-80," nor at any other time. I would like to challenge Sacks to provide documentary proof of his statement (or anyone else, for that matter). Failing that, I suggest it would be time for Robert to retract his untrue statement. I made *no* such proposal.

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Steve Langley's summing-up was quite good. Those *are* the problems with Larry's proposal. Part of the problem, too, is that who is "eligible" and who is not "eligible" for receipt of these funds has now been made a political football in some quarters. In my opinion, if a hobby person is providing a useful service and wants/needs financial help, he/she should get it.

((If a dipdomite provides a useful service and wants financial help, he has to earn the help by demonstrating that any money would not be wasted. If a job can be done successfully with \$100 a year, but somebody wants to spend \$300, why spend the extra \$200?))

Ethics

(John Caruso) "Attempted torpedoing" is more like it, as the person is still active, though barely, in dipdom. Yet one has to wonder --- is plotting to "torpedo" and "arranging" to "rig" or "setup" or "stage" or packing the meeting ethical? And should all this sneaky behind the scenes activity be allowed to go on, unpunished or unpublicized, because it was done OTR? Even though all the correspondences are supposed to be allegedly available to anyone upon request?

Ethics are very complex. Whose ethics should we go by? Berch's? Oaklyn's? Boardman's? Caruso's? Martin's? A lot of Rod Walker's letter deals with "traditional" ethics, but who created those "traditional" ethics? Rod certainly doesn't mean standard journalistic ethics as just about every pubber and every zeen violates some form of ethical behavior -- whether it be reprinting an article, copying a cartoon, rewriting a famous story, quoting or misquoting someone. Hell, there are people who would even pass around material because it was allegedly labelled incorrectly, even though the meaning of the label was clear. If the old way was the best way, there would never be any new ways or ideas. Courtesy copies of personal attacks is another joke. Come on -- is it a courtesy to get a copy of an attack? Right of reply is another farce -- especially when the editor can always get the last word, or edit.

I have some final questions for the readers. Which are unethical?

1. Plotting to do something dishonest.
2. Knowing about it, even though you aren't involved, and not exposing it.
3. Exposing it even if the method is exposing OTR material.

Which of the above three is more unethical? If there is such a thing. And is #3 acceptable because of #1, despite the OTR?

((You use so many quotation marks in the first paragraph it's apparent that you have a specific incident in mind that you would like the readers to comment on without knowing the exact situation. Most of the situations you list are borderline -- there's nothing technically wrong with packing or planning strategy for a meeting. While it short-circuits the democratic process, it's in the "finest" tradition of American politics. To actually rig a meeting is very difficult, though a poll or secret ballot would be relatively easy.

((The question of off the record material is very touchy. It's relatively easy to hide behind an OTR label and do the sleaziest things. My personal inclination is to reveal any OTR material which I feel is *important* enough to warrant overriding the label. OTR for

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privacy is one thing, but hiding dishonesty is entirely another. Obviously I would choose #3 above.

((86- Events of the time period caused me to totally drop the notion of "off the record" writings. I neither use nor acknowledge such labels, and haven't for several years.

((I'm not so certain that if the old ethics were the best ethics then we would never have any change. To assume that change is always for the better is quite an assumption!))

(Lu Henry) Simple. Run the game the way you want your GMs to run the ones you play in -- honestly, no advantages to any one player, no disadvantages either, and be consistent. GM incompetence does not necessarily equal lack of ethics. I have more problems running the non-dip games where rules interpretations more easily differ but the play of these non-dip games is much less formal and egotistical (nobody yet has put together a ranking system for Ironbottom Sound games, for example) and the players more genuinely want to have merely a good game and learn a bit about the rules and how the game flows. Of course having one's Spitfire shot down bruises the ego less, it seems, than having Stp fall to a greedy English player. The problems are not of ethics; they're more agonizing over a rules interpretation and worrying if one is correct.

I've never had a problem with right of reply. But then, I don't run a long (or short) letters column. When I do a game review, a copy is sent after the fact to the designer/publisher and any reply received will be published. But then, again, my subbers don't write letters attacking their fellows and I try not to write them to others. Although truth is a defense to libel, it's still a defense. The libeled party doesn't have to prove they are pure and innocent. If a claim is made that one has been libeled, the defense must prove the truth of the statement. But why get to that point in the first place? What does one get by making substantiated or unsubstantiated attacks on others? Other than alerting the potential subscribers that a GM is a charlatan, do any of the attacks have any real benefit? Most merely show the lack of maturity of the person making the attack; and, sadly, absence of maturity is a characteristic of many folk who game.

((Would you also say that lack of maturity is a characteristic of many folk, period?

((Attacks can be useful if one is trying to increase his status in dipdom, if only in a relative sense. These initiate seemingly neverending rounds of counterattacks. When the dust clears, usually nothing is gained by either participant -- it's the relative loss that matters. Once a person has been caught up into the cycle, it is practically impossible to ever break entirely free from it. I would have to guess that most people start these cycles because 1) they believe they are right and the other guy is wrong, and 2) they really don't realize the consequences, or 3) they derive some perverse pleasure from it.))

(Jim Bumpas) I never phone players for an NMR. I leave the question of getting moves in entirely to the player. But I do have a problem with players calling me (usually to phone in a move) and talking about the game. I find I have to be very careful not to respond in a way which indicates something currently going on in a game. I usually plead ignorance to get off the subject. The most common question: "Has France (etc. you provide the country) gotten a move in yet?" My invariable response is "I don't know" unless the deadline is passed.

As for other matters, we use no houserules in the LIB at all. I've seen no houserules yet which do not change the rules of Diplomacy. Some change them so significantly the

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games should probably be considered irregular by the BNC.

I think fakes are a form of compliment to one's efforts. That someone goes to all that trouble should please the target.

Feuds/Right of Reply: I generally try to keep all this material out of the LIB, although I am sent stuff from time to time. I know some people have fun with all this, but more people are just disgusted by it all -- as am I.

On the other hand, I make quite a few provocative political statements in the LIB and I always print responses from subbers, even if I disagree with them wholeheartedly.

((So you just choose to have your controversies on political subjects, rather than dipdom ones.

((My typical response to, "Has France submitted his orders?" has become, "What if he has and what if he hasn't?" I get some interesting answers, too. The truth ("I don't remember") works well also.))

(Robert Sacks) I can think of two good reasons not to give "right of reply": 1) where the person has abused you without giving "right of reply." 2) Where the person has ripped you off. The rules of "courtesy" do not apply to boors and crooks.

((I can think of other reasons as well. 1) When the reply is totally out of proportion to the cause. 2) When the reply doesn't address the original issues. 3) When the reply is in an unprintable form. 4) When one party wants to break the cycle of attack/counterattack.

((Right of reply is of questionable value anyway. This might make for a good future topic.))

(Konrad Baumeister) Well, what I meant was that, as a GM, it's actually easier to be ethical than it is to be unethical, with no conceivable (to me) problems, so there's no problem with ethics. The act of GMing and so on just doesn't lend itself to people who want to be "unethical." Or does it? I don't see what you can accomplish by being "unethical" that you can't do easier and faster by simple doing things "ethically" and right, by application of common sense.

I guess that I'm not being particularly clear on this point. Well, I guess that I think that GMing is such a simple little exercise that I don't know what the big deal is. I just collect orders, adjudicate the game on the deadline, and send out the results along with the next deadline announced. Easy in principle, and surprisingly easy in practice. I maintain that, and after over seven years I should know a little about it, only people who at least subconsciously want to get into trouble actually do get into trouble. I know of very few areas in life that are as cut and dried when it comes to ethical conduct as the act of gamesmastering a postal Diplomacy game.

On not-for-print items, I'll repeat more-or-less what I've already said a few times: if there is the slightest question in your mind that somebody wouldn't like his piece reprinted ore passed on or quoted, *don't do it*. Certainly, if labelled in any way so as to indicate this wish, one is obliged to follow it. If it's nobody else's business, then it's nobody else's business. I confess total inability to understand why people have this urge to print anything they can get their hands on. I suppose that's why they consider themselves publishers, and not editors.

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((As a GM, it certainly is easier in the long run to be ethical. The little short cuts can cause far more trouble than they could ever save.

((How would you reply to Caruso's three situations for OTR material above?))

Filing Systems

(Steve Langley) My little green box is green. The only other color I've seen is grey.

(Mark Luedi) Hey, you wanna hear about my filing system? The one that resulted in this being "lost" for almost a month? Actually, that was partly my fault as I put it (and one or two other Dip things) in with some stuff I thought I would pay a lot of attention to while I was travelling to Origins and etc. Well, I never got around to it, and this is a month behind.

I did buy myself a second-hand filing cabinet last night! Should keep things a bit tidier around here. Probably not. It's going to hold all the files of correspondence and whatnot (I'm another of those people who don't throw away anything Dip-related), while everything else is in those stackable filing trays (they had been used for files!), and lying about in a vague though semi-functional floating system.

My "little green box" is white.

One thing I started years ago that has been very helpful is that I use a small calendar book as a "log book," keeping track of all the mail that comes in and goes out. It's also handy as a scheduling calendar for publishing dates, cons, other important events. But, it has come in handy numerous times to check to see if I've mailed something or if something was received (and when!). I keep track of the games I'm in on a separate sheet of paper on a clipboard, writing down deadlines and with a system for whether I've sent in orders and results have been posted. I keep back issues handy, as well as a notebook with records of Brownie Points, monies coming in, gamestarts, etc.

I'm finding out that it pays to be organized. I have only so much tolerance for disorganization, and although at times it appears to be a total mess (and sometimes it is), there is generally a reasonable underlying organization to things. What I really need is a computer/word processor!

((They sure can be handy! This rascal saves me a lot of time.

((86- Or maybe it just seems that way. After all, this is the only zeen I know with a two-year turnaround time!))

Foot in Mouth - John Caruso

This is FIM, the #1 International roving subzine in the world. It's put out by yours truly, John Caruso. Rantings and ravings by contributors will be printed upon request, if submitted to 29-10 164th St, Flushing, NY, 11358. If you care to call and have the phone hung up in your ear, the phone number is (212) 353-9695. Then again, sometime in Aug/Sept, our area code is changing to something else. Dopey me, I forget what. I think -- 718 -- ((It's now 718, of course --DM))

This is issue #20, and every 10 issues is a special one. This one is appearing in HOUSE OF LORDS, thanks to Dick and Julie Martin.

This issue will also deal with what appeared in HOL #6, more specifically, the "DipCon Proposal" topic of discussion. But first, I wish to express my regrets upon the decision

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Dick reached last issue to decide not to continue with HOL after #8. I hope you change your mind, Dick. HOL is one of the few constructive things to come along in the last few years. I hope you all reconsider, because we in dipdom will welcome your change of mind, with open arms.

For starters, I have a personal liking for the two-Dipcon proposal, for obvious reasons. But aside from those, let's see what benefits we have with the two-Dipcon idea. First off, there will be twice as many Dipcons a year, which means if you are a major con attendee, you have twice as many Diplomacy cons to go to. Second, if you can only go to one con a year, you now have the opportunity to attend one Dipcon every two years, within your reasonable travelling distance, instead of the once every four years as Dipcon is now set up. And even if you can't get to more cons, you'll still have a Dipcon within your travel distance once every two years.

Third, the new process will mean that two general areas of the country will be making the Dipcon Society decisions, not the sole area as is now the case with Dipcon. This means that two areas (the two Dipcons) will be voting on any Charter amendments, and ratifying the Chairman, together, or concurrently, whatever the actual final wording of the two-Dipcon amendment will read. I say concurrent, because quite frankly, I also like Dick Martin's suggestion last issue. The idea of a Summer-Winter or a Spring-Fall setup. If this clever idea is used, the rotation system wouldn't have to change, nor the zones or the setup of the zones. The same zones could be used, and the amendment could read Dipcon A rotates as follows: 1986 zone 1 or 2; 1987 zone 2 or 3; 1988 zone 3 or 4; 1989 zone 4 or 1; Dipcon B: 1986 zone 3 or 4; 1987 zone 4 or 1; 1988 zone 1 or 2; 1989 zone 2 or 3. If you'll notice, no two areas are eligible in the same year, yet every zone is eligible every year for one of the two Dipcons. And there already is a provision in the Charter giving preference to the eligible zone that didn't host the last Dipcon.

Fourth, two Dipcons also means the chance for increased revenue to help some of the services. Note, I said chance, nothing is a shoe-in, but the availability of more funding is there, if it can be worked out. At present, it's the same, with the chance of getting money, except that we only have one Dipcon upon which to make this request.

Fifth, the independence of the Dipcon idea, one which is a very good concept, and that Rod Walker helped bring about, will be guaranteed. No one area can control the meeting, and therefore have the hypothetical possibility to monopolize Dipcon, or run a kangaroo Society Meeting. I'm not saying it will happen, it's just that it could happen, and under the present system, it would be a lot easier than under the two Dipcon proposal.

Sixth, it may give people a sense of belonging to part of the Dipcon process. At present, a lot of people seem to be uninformed about what is in the Charter, and exactly what Dipcon is. This could help clear up these blank spots on peoples' minds.

There are benefits to the present system as well. One argument is that the two Dipcon proposal will divide the hobby. But as I see it from here, dipdom is already divided, and the one Dipcon system at present is a "local" Dipcon every year, with that area being graced that year by a Dipcon. Another good point of the present one Dipcon a year system is the matter of tradition, and as far as I'm concerned, THE ONLY legitimate reason for sticking to the one Dipcon system. But what people have to decide, and more precisely, the next Dipcon Society, is do the benefits of the present system outweigh the benefits of the two Dipcon proposal? It can be argued back and forth for months, but no one person will make the final decision. The Society at the next Dipcon will decide. To insure its passing or failing, an active discussion is needed; and the amendment must be written properly or it will die due to lack of support. Plus, everyone should know what the amendment says before they get to Dipcon, so there won't be any big surprises there.

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That brings me to Rod Walker's argument for a symbol of a "working example of hobby unity." The best method to symbolize hobby unity, in my opinion, is to have as many people as possible participate each year. We don't have that at present. What we have is one local Dipcon each year. If as many people as possible can voice their opinions and ideas to symbolize unity, the only way it can logically be done is with more participation, and that can occur with two Dipcons, where people from more than one area are at the Dipcon.

Moving right along, we come upon Rod Walker's threat (and I can't fully understand why he made such a poor choice of words), apparently to secede California from the Dipcon process by proposing a separate Dipcon for California if we, the people who make up dipdom, and more precisely, those who will make up the Dipcon Society at the meeting, decide upon passing the two Dipcon amendment. That sounds divisive to me; not the symbol of hobby unity that Rod always talks about. Dipcon is supposed to be for all equally, not for one or two people, and if the Society decides on two Dipcons over one, or defeats the two Dipcon idea, so be it. As the respected publisher of DW, Rod Walker should take more care before making some of the wild statements he casts out, and he should try to take the more responsible approach of supporting the Dipcon process, and not try to foster its breakup. It is not so much that he is opposing the two Dipcon idea, but the way which he is opposing it -- what he is threatening to do *if* the two Dipcon amendment is passed over his disapproval, also claiming that he's sure many Californians feel as he does. Interestingly enough, Ron Brown's letter in HOL appeared to have a different feeling than Rod Walker. And Don Del Grande echoed Ron's feelings when he was visiting here. It will be very interesting to read some of the other Californian and West Coasters' opinions on the two Dipcon idea, just to see if one person does truly speak for California, or if that was just an isolated instance of an empty statement.

I'm quite sure, however, that Rod's intent wasn't to sound like he would secede California if an amendment he didn't like somehow passed the Society's democratic voting process, nor that he truthfully speaks for many Californians. After all, he is one of the founding fathers of the Dipcon process. Hopefully, he will clarify exactly what he meant to say.

I guess that's about it for this issue of FIM. Take care and have fun....

QUOTE OF THE MONTH: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Now where have I heard that before?

Irregular Games

(Jim Bumpas) A few years ago, when Lee Kendter was BNC, I was refused a BN for one of my games (to the dismay of the players). The game met all the criteria you mention in your response to Robert Sacks: the players' names were known to GM and BNC; private correspondence between the players was unlimited. We called this the "Radio Game." All correspondence had to be printed in the LIBERTERREAN, but players could encipher the correspondence to keep it private. This permitted others the opportunity to break ciphers and read other's mail. Players were not to share identities until the game ended. That was the reason I was told it was irregular: the players' identities were secret during the game. It wasn't really a variant of Diplomacy, since no rules were changed. So it didn't qualify for a Miller number, either. It was a popular game with the players, at least until it was learned the BNC ruled it irregular. But I've never run

another for that reason.

((So the game got neither a Miller Number nor a Boardman Number? That seems strange. But it does seem different from the example last issue in that negotiations were semi-public. Why do you suppose the players lost interest if the game was irregular? I've seen the same phenomenon, and never quite understood it -- particularly in otherwise non-ratings players. I've played in irregular games before, and would do so again -- if it looked interesting enough.))

(Steve Langley) I'm not sure I understand Sacks' question about the game of Diplomacy that is either irregular or a variant. Since the BNC is the final arbiter, I would guess it is her decision to make. Perhaps this is a democracy and it is not her decision. Last I heard, it was not a democracy. As I understand it, there is a game being run by Paul Rauterberg in which the players communicate with each other through Paul. That game has been given a Miller Number. Perhaps that answers Mr. Sacks, perhaps not.

(Rod Walker) Robert Sacks wants advice about a certain game. He is not actually connected with the particular dispute he refers to, but let that pass. It would be nice if he gave the facts rather than a few nebulous (and inaccurate) details. The fact is, he is asking about the WordWorks game. The players are not anonymous, but do not use their real names. Each player can communicate secretly and privately with each other player. These letters are accessible only by the bulletin board. The only difference is that electronic, rather than USPS, mail drops are used. It is the opinion of Mark Berch that the game is regular and should have received a Boardman Number. After much consideration, waffling, and reconsideration, I must confess I agree with Mark. As a whole, however, the question is moot. Part of the problem stems from a tendency to overemphasize superficials (*e.g.* the business of pseudonyms). However, the problem is really minor. Kathy Byrne got a real baptism of fire on this one, decided it was a variant, turned it over to Lee Kendter, who gave it a Miller Number. I do not agree that this was the correct decision entirely, but it represents a sufficient resolution of the problem. The game procedure *is* offbeat, true, but I doubt that it is really a variant. It would be interesting to discuss this at a later date, when recently-frayed tempers have mended.

((Thanks for your calm tone.))

Out of Dipdom Experiences

(Steve Langley) I first became aware of Diplomacy as a LASFS (Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society) member back in 1960 or so. No one had the game, but Bruce Pelz knew of it, and the idea was one of great seductive charm. Sometime in 1961/62, I met Dan Anderson at JPL. We were both "student" gofers for an engineering group. I was Italy in my first game to Anderson's Austria. I was also out by 1903. We played the game at work (JPL was supposed to be work) on lunch hours, but found that negotiations took most of our working days. That wouldn't have been too bad if only gofers partook, but the other five players were all engineers who were then responsible for getting some Ranger spacecraft to take photos of the moon. We didn't have a second game, and I didn't have

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time to drop in on the LASFS crowd just then, so missed out on the Dave McDaniels, Bruce Pelz, Dan Brannon, et. al., games.

Twenty years (give a year) later, John Huestis brought Diplomacy to work and seven people re-enacted my earlier experience (i.e. we spent eight hours a day playing lunch hour Dip). At about this time, Clark Reynolds held one of his Sacramento Dip tourneys, and John signed up to play. I dropped in for a proposed 15-minute look and spent the rest of the day watching the developments on three boards and meeting my first PBM publisher, Ron (California) Brown.

I also bought SUPERNOVA, the 1980 Zine Directory, and the DIP DIGEST Lexicon which Clark had for sale at cover price. I sent for a dozen samples and signed up to be a standby in eight or so zeens. RETALIATION was the first zeen I got in the mail. It was soon followed by a second copy of the same issue. From that point, I started playing as a standby, started a few games, became a PBM GM (of sorts) at work where I continued our daily game without the requirement that all seven of us had found hard to meet, i.e. that of spending our lunch hour together.

A very quick year passed, and I was as deeply hooked as ever, so I decided to start MAGUS as a subzeen in Konrad's GMAW (I negotiated this with Konrad a bit first). Woody was just starting COA and invited me to send him a subzeen just as Konrad said I could send him MAGUS. So I put out two issues a month for seven months and decided I could go to the big time.

I'm still pretty hooked on Dip.

(Jim Bumpas) I first learned of dipdom by an ad in S&T in 1971 or 72. I had first played Diplomacy as a freshman in college in 1961. We played quite a lot during college, but after I left school I did not play again until I discovered PBM.

(Mark Matuschak) 100% on out-of-dipdom experience, huh? Well, TBB and I sort of rotate just outside of Pluto in the dipdom solar system, so I guess I can write something - how about this:

I got started in wargaming with AH's D-Day, purchased through an ad in BOY'S LIFE at age 12. Naturally, no one to play games with in Uniontown, PA, so I went almost immediately to PBM. I was a PanzerBlitz freak for a while and still have hundreds of hand-made counters at home. In fact, I still consider it to be the most fun game I have ever played, and good for solitaire. Next (about 30 games later) came Third Reich. Again, no one to play, and I became involved with the old CSS (Conflict Simulation Society) and started as a trial effort a Third Reich newsletter, which for some reason lost to history became known as THE BUZZARD'S BREATH. That was mid-way during my senior year in high school.

At Dartmouth (and since then) I amazed everyone with my bulky mimeo, late night phone calls on the dorm or fraternity phone ("Some guy from Holland calling"), etc., but kept up TBB. There were a few publishing breaks when I lost my spleen playing football (since I can no longer vent my spleen, that's probably why I don't get involved in any of these feuds!) and later when I went to the Soviet Union.

TBB continued through law school, and here I am, a prospective lawyer.

I have never much cared for Dip. First, the game itself required too many players. Second, it was too simplistic. Third, I was turned off by the cliquishness of the hobby -- I just didn't want to expend the effort to "get involved." So I stayed in wargaming. TBB did have one Dip game, and over the past years I've been trading with Dipzeens -- on the

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increase lately since I've been writing a little more to others.

((D-Day through BOY'S LIFE, huh? There's something ironic about that.))

(Lu Henry) As for the open topic at hand -- experiences in non-Dip hobbies, etc., my discussion will be very, very boring. What can one write of Irish ceili dancing at the Gaelic League in Detroit. Well, first off, the League is sort of a highly structured monolithic organization where one does not question the finances, because, after all, the leaders (at least they are elected and not self-appointed) know best. As for the class, it's kind of like dipdom. Folk quit in a huff because the rest of us wouldn't dance at a Northern Aid function (some for political reasons, some because the organizers couldn't come up with a time certain for our act to go on, some because they had better things to do that day). The best part of it though is the fun and enjoyment the class gives, the lack of any real pressure to perform well (not like the Cleveland dancers who are good, very good, but who seem to be working rather than out for a good time -- they finish first in adult ceili competitions, we finish 23rd out of 4 groups). The only point about this (what can one say about having some beers, dancing, listening to music and singing) is that it is fun, not work. If it became work, most of us would quit. The same with Diplomacy; so long as it's fun, fine. All too many people in this hobby, however, don't seem to be having fun.

The other is SCAA, the temple to organization in amateur and professional road racing and rallying. When I was still a member, one had to pay \$45.00 just to be able to work at a racing event. For this privilege you got to drive your own car any number of miles to the event, pay for your own food and lodging, work your tail off (worked corners til Annie and I married, she decided no more corner working, so up to the timing/scoring tower) and, maybe, if you're lucky, get a few free beers at the end of the day. But you gotta' be a member and you gotta' pay. When I couldn't see much logic in this anymore, I quit. I still time and score, but I'm not licensed, so can't work important professional events. Big deal. The only moral of this story is that SCAA had to be organized -- you didn't want an unlicensed driver or an unteched car cresting a hill at speed when you were behind the Armco, lap charting 20 to 30 cars for the start/finish line crew. In Diplomacy, over-organization seems to be the desire of some of the participants. I don't think Diplomacy need, or should, be built into an empire, nor organized to the degree that anyone is told what to do or how to do it (given the basic proposition that one GM's one's game fairly, accurately, and consistently).

Got into the hobby with Avalon Hill's "first" Gettysburg, and my Dip game is in the old, old big box. Had plenty of gaming time (PTF) in high school, college and law school. With the first job and post-school dating, etc., dropped out for a bit. With marriage in '72, and available time present again, I started to PBM in/around '77 or '78. To me, Dip is just one of many games. Started to GM because some players needed one, and started the zeen to force myself to be more current on game turnarounds (originally a warehouse). Made the mistake of publishing a game review and seeing the sub list grow and then felt obligated to do more than a warehouse. Now it's GMing 18 or so games (only four Dip) and put most of the games out via insert or mid-month mailing so as to have room for the other stuff. Might have done it differently had I only known (i.e., stayed a small warehouse). It's still fun to have an audience for one's thoughts on games, etc., so we keep doing it. PBM satisfies my gaming desires, yet lets me also spend time at home with Annie. Best of both worlds.

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(Mark Luedi) Out-of-Dipdom experiences, eh? Is this a speculative essay on how I might end up dropping out of dipdom, or just something that might have happened to me on the street one day? Or does this involve how we initially got in the hobby or something along those lines? Should call it "Into-Dipdom Experiences...."

Well, I had to find dipdom. There must have been a time during which Avalon Hill didn't include those little flyers telling about a postal Dip hobby; the set I bought didn't have one. I'd first heard about the game in a couple of columns I ran across when I subbed to STRATEGY AND TACTICS ages ago in high school. I was only into wargaming for about a year and a half, but the memory of that interesting-sounding game of Diplomacy must have stuck.

A few years later, a friend unveiled a game his brother owned one day -- Diplomacy! We never did play, but I read the rules and decided to keep my eyes open, eventually purchasing it, but sans any information about a postal hobby.

Well, after a couple of face-to-face fiascos, I decided to find out about this postal hobby that I had heard about somewhere (probably in the ads for the game in the old S&T's) and wrote GAMES magazine, who referred me to Avalon Hill, who forwarded my letter to Jerry Jones, then editor of DW, who quoted me in DW#25 (anonymously, p. 35). And this before I had even entered the hobby! (Some people just recognize natural talent, I guess.)

Armed with a list of GMs (finally!), I contacted the one I presumed to be the friendliest (a fellow Hoosier), Bob Sergeant. No game openings, but he referred me to two or three others, including Mike Conner, who was just starting up LONE STAR DIPLOMAT. A couple of months later, I started getting JIHAD!. It would be a year and a half before I was getting more than four or five zeens and being involved much in the hobby at large.

But I do recall, after only two or three months, wanting to publish a Dipzeen, and it was something that got put off for a *long* time. Then I decided maybe subzeening would be more appropriate. It took awhile, but I finally found myself in JUST AMONG FRIENDS, just in time to put out TMOBR numbers 1 and 2 before Al Pearson decided to fold JAF. Actually, there's a lot more to the story than just that, and the rest is history if anybody cares to ever write it down.

So, it's coming up on four years in dipdom for me, but only two and a half or less of being really active. Life would have been very different if not for Dip. *Very* different. So different, I can't even imagine. There have been a couple of times when my postal Dip was about the only cohesive force in my life, as far as commitments were concerned. It was something I had to make considerations for. Of course, that has changed now, 180 degrees. It's a commitment that's keeping me from doing certain things. One of these days, a balance will work its way out. Then again, maybe life wouldn't have been so different. But it's truly amazing the perspectives one gains (literally, the broadened horizons) or can gain by being involved in some of the hobby zeens. In many ways, it's a whole other world -- kind of a unique little sub-culture. And I'm sure others have rambled more eloquently than I about this.

((Oh, I don't know about that. You had to really struggle to find dipdom, and it walked up and bit me on the leg. Suppose we've got a pretty full range, huh?))

PBEM - Electronic Mail Gaming

(Steve Langley) I know next to nothing about CompuServe or Source. I would like to

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see an answer to your question about graphics, though. We've had the technology to reduce photo to computer and back to photo for years. It is probably a bit exotic for home use just now -- and if someone decides there is a market, we could have the capability tomorrow.

With reference to waiting for a better computer. I waited for a couple of years and then bought the best I could afford. Three years later I could buy twice the capability at about half the price. But I would have gone three years without the computer. In a year or two I intend to buy another computer. I see no reason to wait until things reach some plateau of excellence. Chances are, and I speak from my experience of watching color television ads, that no such plateau will ever be reached. (Once it has, prices will rise!)

A lot of people talk/write about PBEM zeens as if they will have huge data base capability. That will only be so if the pubber has a much larger system than most PC's now offer. My system has the capability of accessing a single 8" disk at any given moment. One disk will hold approximately 246K bytes. Now that sounds like a huge amount, and it is, for a PC. On the other hand, page (7) of HOL contains over 50 lines of over 100 characters each. That is 5K characters per page. That might allow for a 50-page PBEM zeen, if the PBEM program can be all held in memory at once. Those 50 pages have to include all of the existing zeen plus room for user input. I suspect that the PBEM players will discover that there is less room for "novel" length press than is now being touted. No real loss, the faster games will still exist.

(Jim Bumpas) That's right, you could get a discontinued model very cheaply. I've seen Timex Sinclairs with 16K RAM sold at drug stores for \$19.95. Add another 16K, a modem, and terminal program (many are in the public domain -- meaning free for the taking), and you can go. I even picked up an Atari 400 for \$50. It has a complete set of chips for my Atari 800. If I ever burn one out, I can cannibalize it instead of paying high prices for a single chip. They're all socketed, so I don't even need to solder. Just plug it in.

PBEM at this point channels creativity into the content of the zeen, rather than the format or appearance. Press can be longer and more involved. Story line continuity can be maintained as past installments can be kept on the data base. BBS systems, including the Source and CompuServe have no graphics capability. Some Videotex systems, with specialized terminals dedicated to the system do receive rather nice graphics. Until the industry adopts a standard for transmitting graphics analogous to the ASCII standard for text, we won't be able to transmit much in the way of graphics.

One might create a map using ASCII text symbols which all could receive. I could create a map using ATASCII (Atari symbols) graphics symbols, but only Ataris could receive it. ATT has developed a system called "naplips" (or something). I predict some graphics standard will be taking hold by the end of this decade.

You're right: the main advantage of PBEM is speed. Editing requirements are minimal. Subbers can get game results quickly, and on short deadlines. The other big advantage (depending upon how much memory, or RAM, is dedicated to the BBS) is the volume of information which can be instantly available to subbers. Complete game histories of each game, including supply center charts for each year, can be maintained on the data base at all times for use of subbers. A file could even contain all past moves, in case someone wants to review them. Complete story lines in press could be kept on file. RAM is very cheap (I've seen chips for sale less than \$5 each), so memory should not be a problem. Disk densities are increasing and prices are falling. I can keep 4 times the disk capacity on line that I could two years ago, with no increase in price.

The cost is higher. Long-distance rates are still higher than postage, even with the

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recent rate reductions and the proposed postage increase to \$0.22.

(Mike Conner) Being infatuated with my fancy new computer, I was struck by the discussion on various electronic matters. Even before my purchase, I didn't understand the controversy about PBEM. I frankly don't see why telephone games are not institutionalized as well. Yeah, we are the "postal" hobby, but distinctions are blurring in many areas of modern life, and we should welcome innovation as stimulating, rather than trying to exclude it and somehow maintain some fictional purity of traditions. I don't really care if the BNC sees fit to establish a multitude of different categories of games. They might be informative to those who like to make statistical analyses. The idea that some are better than others sounds Orwellian: all are equal, but some are more equal than others.

Your argument that one is better off waiting for the next price breakthrough or technical innovation will keep you on the sidelines forever. I really regret all that time I spent typing and retyping papers, adding columns of figures over and over to convince myself of their accuracy, and generally wasting my time with busywork. It's really true that computers can pay for themselves in my line of work. Of course, if you only want to play games, it's harder to make it pay, but even play costs money. If you want something enough, you will rearrange your priorities to get it, whether it's a tool or a toy.

((86- Two years later, PBEM seems a dead topic. Not much has been heard of it for at least the last year. Computer usage in dipdom is still on the rise, though, and we'll touch on that in a future issue.))

Polls

(Steve Langley) The poll discussion continues to amuse and amaze. Your comment on the flaw in "popularity" type polls is well taken. When sheer number of positive votes determines a ranking, the zeen with the largest circulation certainly has an edge. Of course, the circulation figures themselves are a type of measure of a zeen's excellence. While it is true that some pubbers put an upper limit on their subber number, most do not. I know that EE and VOD both have in the range of twice the subbers MAGUS does. Since I think that EE and VOD are the top two zeens in the current hobby, I find that their subber counts, reflecting their standings, to be quite natural.

Let's discuss banning polls for Mr. Sacks. Let's mandate Mr. Sacks to monitor the hobby at large, and if a pubber attempts to run a poll, Mr. Sacks can boycott his zeen. It's worth a try. Right?

I'm looking forward to the next Peeripoll. If it is run the way the previous Peeripoll was run, it will allow a lot of pubbers to have a detailed look at how others perceive their product. Granted, some of us aren't interested in what others think or feel about what we are doing, at least insofar as it can be measured in a poll. Or, perhaps we are not interested in having the opinions as shown in a poll shown to lots of people. Mr. Sacks can boycott this one.

Russell Sipe is quite correct in saying that his 210 out of 25,000 sample is insignificant, statistically or otherwise. He is wrong to say that a sample the size of the Marco or DPP or Runestone Poll is statistically insignificant. Our population is pretty small. A national

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sampling of part of one percent is considered significant for political polls. We get a much larger sampling than that.

He is correct about the so-called grudge votes skewing a poll. We have been discussing that for quite some time. This year, the Runestone Poll will try to filter out some of the grudge votes. Maybe it will make the poll more accurate. Maybe not. In any case, the sample size of the Runestone Poll (if this year's count is similar to years past) is well within the range of significance.

Konrad's point about "What does the numeric Runestone result mean?" brings me back to the upcoming Peeripoll. That poll lets you know what the numbers mean. The different categories for ratings allow the publisher to see both his weak and strong points as seen by the pollees.

((86- I'm curious when we'll see the next Peeripoll. Interestingly enough, HOL did very well in the Peeripoll, and pretty poorly in the same year's Runestone poll. Wonder why that is. Larry may be too busy with DW to do a Peeripoll anytime soon, though.))

(Jim Bumpas) The game is why we have this hobby. For LIB subbers, the games and press *are* the entertainment. I don't think the LIB is ignored because its subbers are not "mainstream." Most LIB subbers also sub to one or more other zeens, so they probably learn about polls. LIB subbers are no more interested in polls than I am, I think. Although one year I had a young subber who was very enthusiastic about the LIB. He put in "9" on all the polls he could find. His one vote was enough to put the LIB near the top. The number of LIB subbers has always been within the range 45-65, but even with more subbers, the minimum number of poll voters might not appear. Why is remaining quiet and in the background such a "large price to pay?"

(Rod Walker) I like Lu Henry's attitude. Some zeens probably rate low because they have few players and get low votes from a few disgruntled persons. That isn't to say that low-rated zeens don't sometimes deserve that status.

I see nothing wrong with the way things are handled now for polls. Perhaps if there were one standard poll, the participation in that one would be higher, but so what? The way things are now, if somebody wants to conduct a poll, he conducts one. Why not? This is *everyone's* hobby. That is why Robert Sacks' idea for "banning" polls is such a poor idea. This means that those who don't like polls are forcing their opinions down the throats of the rest of us. Now voting in, and paying attention to, polls is strictly voluntary.

Sacks' call for a vote on this subject ignores the basic nature of HOL, which is pure discussion. Much of the discussion of late is polemic rather than solid information-trading, which is a pity. But that's life. Anyway, if you *did* take such a vote, and it went the way Sacks wants it to go, so what? How are you going to enforce it? I, for one, would simply ignore such foolishness. Voting *is* an appropriate way to arrive at a decision, yes. However, polling is a way of voting, and a way of expressing opinion. Any measure or action which attempts to limit the power of voting and opinion-expressing is, it seems to me, contrary to the best interest of the hobby. The only way to prevent polling, to "ban" it, is to create some sort of hobby police state. Silly.

Robert's memory must be failing him. "The Calhamer Awards and Beyerlein Player Poll soon collapsed" is far from the truth. The former persisted through four years (1972-75). The latter began in 1971, and the 9th Beyerlein Player Poll was conducted in

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1982. If memory serves here, the Gemignani Awards (and this name was used over Peggy's strenuous objections) persisted about three years. But it's rare for a poll to last longer than a four-five year period. Robert, of course, conveniently forgets that the Runestone Poll has been around since 1977.

In any event, polls are a hobby tradition *and* a service to the hobby. I personally encourage them, and DW will promote any poll it can and publish the results of any poll we get results for. (I say that, but of course I suppose if there were some obviously biased or manipulated poll going on....)

((Recent writings by Gary Coughlan seem to indicate that the Rod Walker award was "obviously biased or manipulated" this year. While that may be his own unique opinion, he does seem to make some good points. For instance, he was on the Nominating Committee, yet had no hand whatsoever in the nominating process. An interesting way to run things....

((86- I remain skeptical on the "service" aspect of polls. In announcing the fold of PERELANDRA, you couldn't help but get the impression that part of the reason was the poor showing of PERELANDRA in the latest polls. This is a service?))

(Robert Sacks) On whether John Caruso is corrupt -- I detect a flaw in his logic, but if he wants to consider himself corrupt because of his involvement with polls, I can't stop him.

On banning polls -- the mechanism is trivial: First, we discuss the proposition "that polls be banned and that we deny all support to them." Then we vote on it. If it passes, you publish the proposition with the vote, as will any other publisher who wishes to. Then those of us who abide by the vote will not run polls, publish ballots, vote, or publish results; they may reprint the proposition whenever the push for polls gets heavy.

I refuse to describe such obscenities as the Calhamer Awards.

((If you refuse to describe them for the rest of us, how can we determine how obscene they are? Obscenity is in the eye of the beholder, and it's hard to see with a hand over one's eyes. Why would an award personally bestowed by Our Founder Allan Calhamer be obscene? Obviously, I have no idea what the Calhamer awards are.))

Future Business

Everybody has a....

GMing Procedure

Each GM runs a game in his own way. As with snowflakes, I've never seen two exactly alike. While it'd be improper to claim that there is any one "best" way for everyone, each of us has something that we invented to make life a bit easier. This is how I go about GMing a game....

The most important single factor in my GMing is that I do it on computer. While I don't run an adjudication program (too lazy to write one), the computer is much more than an overpowered typewriter. The obvious advantages of word processing are boosted by creative use of the editing and file-manipulation capabilities.

When a game starts, I create two documents for it. One is the familiar "GM's Helper" on disk, containing the game chart, player names, and other BNC info. The second will become my ongoing game report. This contains what looks like an ordinary game

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adjudication - player names and unit positions. I send each player a copy of the game report, just as you would for any other source, typewritten or whatever. But it's what happens after that that makes all the difference between a typewritten adjudication and a word processed one.

Immediately after sending out a game report, I make a copy of the current season onto a file disk as a permanent record of the turn. This gives me an ongoing record of the game, with one document per season - just as if I'd stacked the results in a manila folder. Then I go to work on the original document on my "work" disk. First I change the name of the document to the next season due (each turn is similarly named, like "R15 S06"). Then I *erase* everything that I don't want from the last turn, which leaves me with the player names, unit positions, and a note of any retreats or proposals. Since this is done by erasing, rather than retyping, it saves time and drastically reduces my chance of making a typo.

As player orders come in for the next turn, they are immediately typed into the game report along with any press included, and the letter is tossed over the edge of my desk into a large "file" box of zeens and letters. When deadline day rolls around, all the moves are already typed and it's simply a matter of underlining those that fail and noting current retreats. This is done by inspection, rather than setting up a board and trying to sort out all the moves by hand.

I refer to the GM's Helper file to make sure I don't call for a standby that's already been in the game. I also update the GM's Helper if a standby takes over a position, and after every fall turn. Each fall turn, I extract the SC chart from the previous fall's report, copy it into the current turn, and update as necessary. As you can see, I try to keep my typing (and thus effort and errors) at a minimum. When the game ends, endgame statements are typed at the end of the GM's Helper and the whole lot is printed in the zeen - nothing goes to waste.

On deadline day, I spend more time copying each game report into the zeen, arranging things, and making RETAL look reasonably pretty than I do poring over maps and blocks or typing in orders. Then again, I've never used a map while doing an adjudication in all the years I've been GMing, so that doesn't really count. But the endless press typing and arranging that I used to do on deadline weekend...whew! Never again. The key is to do as much as you can before deadline time (short of actually adjudicating the game - last minute changes can be a pain), and you'll never dread a deadline day again.

((Your responses to the above are welcome. Either in the form of suggested improvements, or (especially) reflections on how you do things.))

The End

Gee, gone two years and already I've forgotten how to make the thing come out to the right size. Ah well, easily done by fiddling with the margins, I suppose, but that would be cheating. I'd also have to reprint the first 23 pages (done in advance to save time - it never pays!). Nah, I'll just chat on for a little bit here at the end, instead. While more is not always better, a little bit more never hurt.

There are some new zeens after all. Today's mail brings THE BOOB REPORT #28 and WHO CARES? #39. While neither are "new" in the purest sense, they're moving from quasi-zine and subzeen respectively to independent zeenhood.

THE BOOB REPORT is by Jim Burgess (100 Holden St, Providence, RI 02908-5731), and

Nice meeting you at Marycon - come back again next year!

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will contain a Spy Dip game, a regular dip game or two, and an active letter column (recently featuring rock'n'roll, among other things). No word on what the sub rates or game fees (if any) will be.

WHO CARES? is by Russ Rusnak (900 N Rohlwing Rd, #333, Addison, IL 60101), and contains regular Dip, Cosmic Dip and WWIIb (a 14 player variant) openings. Also featured is a page or so of Russ's ramblings on whatever is on his mind at the moment - often a dirty joke of some sort. A subseen in KATHY'S KORNOR/WHITESTONIA for about the last year or so, this is the second go-round for WHO CARES? as an independent seen.

Who's getting HOL #7? A great many people, it turns out - most of the pubbers listed in the latest ZEEN DIRECTORY, and maybe a few others. As a new seen, we welcome your comments, and any publicity you care to give us. While you're at it, give THE BOOB REPORT and WHO CARES? a little bit of your time as well.

What do you think of putting a "New Blood" list in HOL? This would consist of any novices who're on the lookout for a new place to sub or play, and would be a good place to go if you're looking for somebody to send samples to. Some seen's do this already (COSTAGUANA and GRAUSTARK spring to mind), and on a larger scale this may be even better. You supply the names and addresses, and I'll supply the space. An alternative would be a healthy blacklist of everyone we hate, which you'll never see here. Or none of the above. The choice is yours.

Whoa yeah, I almost forgot. I'm the guy in the return address. Gotta watch me every minute, or I'm liable not to tell you

The return is complete with pretty (though different) covers. Hope you have time to contribute.

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Issue #17

page 26 (last page)

Missing ∴

Replaced with copy
of page from an issue
scanned by Doug Kent
(no, ~~ie~~ don't know whose
issue it was or remember who
I met at MaryCon that year)