

5058 Hawley Blvd.
San Diego CA 92116
23 September 1971
H.I.M. Augustus, 690AUC

Dear

You are invited to sit on the Postal Diplomacy Rating Commission (PDRC), an organization for the purpose of resolving disputes involving the inclusion or non-inclusions of games in rating systems. This letter will explain what I mean by this and what this invitation entails.

While every person who runs a rating system controls it without question, there is a need for guidance on questionable games. This will serve two purposes: first, as a standard against which rating systems may be judged by the postal Diplomacy public; second, as an aid and guide to newer players/GMs who are beginning to run rating systems.

Until now, this need has been minimal. Those who ran rating systems entered postal Diplomacy within a few years of its inception, and had access to most of the documentation involved. This is no longer the case. However, owing to the efforts of the TERMINUS Project, jointly by myself and Tony Pandin, game statistics will soon be available on an almost unlimited basis. The effect is almost certain to be a proliferation of rating systems such as almost took place during 1966-1968.

The group I propose will help provide some standards of judgement and comparison. I emphasize strongly that it is not, and should not, be connected in any way with other Diplomacy organizations. I hope that all such groups will be represented in its membership, but only as an unofficial criterion, not as an official standard.

I would like further to note that this group would have no power of compulsion, nor should it. The prestige of its membership and the fairness of its recommendations alone should be enough to sustain its status as a voluntary arbiter.

The PDRC's sole purpose involves determining if it would recommend the inclusion of various regular postal games in rating systems, combined with setting standards for such inclusion, to be applied generally by those who care to adopt them.

The PDRC would operate democratically, all decisions to be taken by majority vote. It should have either an odd number of voting members, or an even number of members, one of whom is a non-voting (save in case of tie) Chairman/Executive Secretary. Once its initial membership is established, new members could be admitted by vote, with the understanding that (a) new members should be prominent in fields relating to rating systems and (b) the size of the Commission should be limited to the range 7-13, in order to be manageable.

The two important questions the Commission will be called upon to answer are: what is a regular game? and should a given game be rated? In the latter instance, various games are omitted from rating systems because the rater feels things which occurred during the game make it unfair to include the game in a rating system. While many of these problems are self-evident, some are more doubtful and should be looked into.

I am initially contacting 6 people, plus myself, for inclusion on the Commission. If all accept, the initial Commission will consist of:

1. ALLAN B. CALHAMER, the inventor of Diplomacy.
2. WALTER BUCHANAN, editor of HOOSIER ARCHIVES, member of the NFFFGBDD and the IFWDS, and Director of the Diplomacy Association. Mr. Buchanan is

a prominent player and bibliophile. His Diplomacy Library is one of the largest in the country and will be able to provide the Commission with the documentary material it may require (so long as our needs are not excessive).

3. JOHN MCCALLUM, editor of PFENNIG-HALBPENNIG, former editor of BROB-DINGNAG, SERENDIP, ACELDAMA, and LAURANIA. Mr. McCallum has run two rating systems (the BROBDINGNAG system and the Calhamer Point Count), in addition to publishing numerous articles on the subject of ratings and is the leading authority in the field.

4. TONY PANDIN, current editor of LEGATUS, head of the TERMINUS project, and Chief of the NFFFGB Diplomacy Division. Mr. Pandin is working with me on making all game records generally available and is therefore deeply involved in the data relevant to rating systems.

5. DOUG BEYERLEIN, former editor of EFGIART and conductor of the Beyerleing Player Poll. Mr. Beyerlein is a prominent player and is the author of several articles on rating systems published in THE VOICE and LEBOR GABALA. Doug's expertise will be most useful.

6. RICHARD MILLER, Director of the Diplomacy Association. Mr. Miller is in the field of mathematics and could provide useful help in this area. He is also becoming involved in rating systems, having been involved with Burt Labelle's ANTARES Project.

7. BURTON LABELLE, designer of the ANTARES Project (see the enclosed copy of NUMENOR. This is the first major new rating system to appear this year and is, I think, the first of many to appear in the next couple of years.

8. ROD WALKER, editor of EREHWON, &c., former Chief of the NFFFGB Diplomacy Division, member of the IFWDS and the DA, designer of the EREHWON and NUMENOR listings, custodian of the Boardman Numbers, and so on. You all know who I am, so why push it?

Well, that does seem to be 8, not 7. Oh, well.

The way the Commission would function, I think, would be this. First, we would take a list of all games with Boardman Numbers, delete those obviously unrateable (team games and other variants, hoaxes, cancelled games, and whatnot) and publish it as a preliminary listing. Then, anyone who wished a game deleted would write us, provide evidence for his contention, and we would take action. This would include soliciting the other side of the dispute (if any) and going over documentation. Once a decision is made to delete (or not delete) a game from our list of games we recommend be rated, I suppose there should be a rule that the game cannot come up again for a change in status for at least a year, just to keep down work. Does that sound fair?

As you can see, this will be ad hoc for a while, while we find an acceptable working procedure. So long as what we do is open and above-board, and equitable, there should be no problem.

I would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible. If I do not hear from you by Friday, 15 October 1971, I will assume you are not interested. Please write, whether you would like to serve on the PDRC or not. Any additional ideas, suggestions for other member, and so on will be most gratefully accepted.

Sincerely,



Rod Walker

PDRC BULLETIN

Number 1

29 October 1971

The PDRC Bulletin conducts the business of the Postal Diplomacy Rating Commission. This issue is Pandemonium Publication #407, edited and published by Rod Walker, 5058 Hawley Blvd., San Diego CA 92116.

Membership. I have now heard from everyone invited to sit on the Commission except Richard Miller. That is unfortunate, since it seems to me a good idea to have someone directly connected with the New York faction of the Diplomacy Association on the Commission. Any ideas which anyone has on how we might achieve this would be appreciated. Anyway, the current membership stands at:

1. Allan B. Calhmer, 501 N. Stone, La Grange Park IL 60525.
2. John McCallum, P.O. Box 52, Ralston, Alberta, Canada.
3. Walter Buchanan, R.R. #3, Lebanon IN 46052.
4. Tony Pandin, 10406 Shaker Blvd., Cleveland OH 44104.
5. Douglas Beyerlein, 3934 SW Southern, Seattle WA 98116.
6. Burton Labelle, 146 Elm St., Saco ME 04072.
7. Rod Walker, 5058 Hawley Blvd., San Diego CA 92116.

Additional Membership. A very large group would be difficult to work with, both for the individual members and for whomever coordinates the activities of the Commission. I don't know how large is "too large", and would like to know how you feel on this.

Several members have suggested Jeff Power, 121 Gauss Hall, Princeton Univ., Princeton NJ 08540, for membership. Jeff will be taking over maintenance of the BRODDINGNAG Rating System. I invited Jeff, but he declined. He seems to be under the impression that only active ratings custodians and "experts" are desired. I have written again, explaining that, insofar as I was concerned, this should not be so, and hope for a reply soon. Copy of this will be sent to Jeff. When you write to discuss size of the Commission, if you have any suggestions for people who might make good members, let me know.

Membership Philosophy. In talking and corresponding with others, I have noted a few ideas on this. It is felt certain people and kinds of people should sit on the Commission. Types mentioned: (a) people with access to archival collections, (b) those who maintain rating systems, (c) those with a good deal of experience in the game, (d) those with very little experience in the game, (e) representatives of various groups and interests in postal Diplomacy. A group so composed could be considered very balanced group, one different points of view would be represented. We should also have people who are primarily (f) players and (g) Gamesmasters (one or the other). Have I left anything out? What other points of view might be represented?

Administration. For simplicity's sake, we need someone to coordinate the work of the Commission (a sort of executive secretary; he could be called a "coordinator") and someone to publish a bulletin which would contain discussions, relevant data, findings, and so on. I can do the publishing for the time being, although I hope someone will be able to take over from me in the near future...any volunteers? Also, who would like to serve as "coordinator"? Suggestions and ideas on all this solicited.

Allan Calhmer (24 October 1971): "This idea is one that might turn out to be very good and might turn out to be a big waste of time. For one thing, I don't know whether or not there would be sufficient adversary representation in each case. If we had to elicit all the information ourselves

the work might well become greater than the anticipated benefit.

"The benefit, if any, would be in increasing the quality of the rating systems; but that effect wouldn't be achieved unless the board's decisions were quality decisions." [Allan goes on to discuss rating systems in general; this portion will be printed in NUMENOR 15.]

John McCallum and I had a long conversation, shortly after my 23 September letter went out. The main point of the discussion was the idea that the PDRC might recommend the inclusion or exclusion of various games about which there is some difference of opinion. John pointed out that there is a very practical difficulty in this. Generally, if not universally, the people who maintain rating systems have their own standards about which games they will or will not include. They are not interested so much in being told they ought to do this or that, but in information--facts--which will enable them to reach fair and realistic decisions. That is a very cogent observation, one which will also make our task easier. I might also observe that refusing to make value judgements will help keep us from having to take sides in some of the emotional disputes which erupt from time to time over this or that game. Comments?

Objectives. As I see it, then, the PDRC has two main tasks:

1. Differentiating between "regular" and "variant" games (as between games which have Boardman Numbers; those which have only Miller Numbers are pretty obviously variants). [Humm...I meant, "...as among games...", did I not?] We are likely to find that some games do not fit conveniently into either category. What should be done in such instances? I would also like to have everyone's definition of a "regular postal Diplomacy game", as a preliminary to finding a definition to which we can all agree as a working basis.

2. Determining relevant facts about various games. We will need to deal with such questions as: "Did the Gamesmaster also play in the game?" "Did a relative or other person living in the same house as the Gamesmaster play in the game?" "Did the GM violate his own House Rules?" and so on.

Does anyone have any ideas to add to this?

Procedure. Obviously, we will first be involved in making up our minds how we are to operate. Not only should we deal with the questions above, but we need to answer such questions as, How will votes be taken? What will constitute a majority? Should there be different majorities for different types of question? How will the "coordinator" be selected? How will membership on the PDRC be determined (terms of office, elections, eligibility, &c.)? I am sure there are others. Any and all ideas, suggestions, draft documents, and so on, will be welcome.

Once these questions are settled, I propose we make a listing of the obvious variants among the games with Boardman Numbers (team games, e.g.), and games in types of categories which may be relevant to rating systems (e.g., 5-man games, GM-is-a-player games, etc.). Once this is done we should notify the major Diplomacy publications that we are in business and anyone who wishes us to move a game from the "regular" category to the "variant", or vice versa, or wants to know if thus-and-so occurred in a given game, should contact us. If we do not find adequate adversary proceeding available in any case where it is needed, we can then determine on a solution to that problem.

Please write on all this. I will try to publish what I get in PDRCB 2, but try to be terse, as my time is very limited. Please go back over this issue and make sure you have addressed yourself to every issue of importance. Many thanks. Try to have a reply in to me by Tuesday, 23 November; I will publish then.