

Smile, when you say you like...

PRAXIS

#2

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Editor's Mouth: Dry

An eerie silence sets in after you send out two hundred and fifty-five samples of a 'zine. Particularly when no-one in the hobby knows it's coming. Quiet. Spooky. Almost preternatural, wondering what kind of reaction it will get, who you will hear from first.

As it happens, I was playing in one of Chris Greaves' games on the Saturday after I sent #1 out. I rode to Whitby in the car with Chris. "Oh yes, I got your 'zine", he said after a few minutes of inconsequential chat. "Looked alright". Without saying so, he managed to leave the strong impression that he had looked it over and, not finding anything that would tempt him to actually read any part of the thing, tossed it into the trash can. This is Chris' way.

When I got to the game, I was greeted by Dave Carter: "Got some junk mail from you the other day". Is it all going to be like this?, I thought. But Dave was just kidding, and he was careful to treat me with the respect due a new publisher. "This guy's a big wheel, now", he said to nobody in particular. "He's a publisher!"

The first phone call came from Bruce McIntyre. The first American phone call came from Gary Coughlan, although Kathy Byrne was not far behind. The first letter came from Randolph Smyth. The first American letter came from Ken Peel. All of you have a place on the PRAXIS Roll of Honour.

There were not enough subscriptions to make it profitable to abscond with the money, so you leave me with no choice but to print another issue.

Actually, I guessed that I would have 37 subscribers, so I have done alright.

Many thanks for your kind and encouraging comments, and especially for the absence of outright criticism. Some publishers would have you believe that they are thirsting to hear your constructive criticism. What a lot of nonsense! I don't want to hear any criticism at all until after #5. At that time, I will, reluctantly, begin to accept criticism that is very constructive and politely phrased. Until then, keep your complaints to yourselves. And don't go airing them in other 'zines, either! I want to enjoy my honeymoon.

This issue is (if I have counted right) about thirty-eight pages long. I doubt that many of my issues will be this length, although I leave the option open. The average issue of PRAXIS will be about sixteen to twenty pages long, I think. I reserve the right to go as low as eight.

I don't really want to get mucky about it, but let me wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. If you don't celebrate Christmas ~~SHAME ON YOU~~ substitute the festival of your choice.

PRAXIS is a journal of postal Diplomacy published every five weeks by Alan Stewart, 702-25 St. Mary St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 1R2. It is edited by the aforesaid Stewart. Collating? Stewart. Sticking into envelopes? Stewart. Licking stamps? You guessed it. Stewart's phone number is (416) 961-8095. Allen B.

Calhamer invented Postal Diplomacy, and the people who own the rights to it have lawyers, so be careful.

Struggle

As of this time, about twenty-four of you signed up for my three gamestarts. Thank you all very much.

I was sorely tempted to open a fourth, but wise counsellors talked me out of it.

One thing I forgot, foolishly, to mention is that I need standbys. Standbys will receive three issues if called as a replacement player and a further five for finishing the game. Standbys should advise me if there are any games they don't want to be called for Likewise and in reverse, or vice versa, for players. looking over the standby list. Compende?

STANDBYS : Stafford (Thanx for volunteering).

1985 ??

A L G O M A

Spring '00

GAMESTART

A-I-R-T-G-F-E	AUSTRIA	Conrad von Metzke, 4374 Donald Avenue, San Diego, CA 92117.
E-F-A-I-G-R-T	ENGLAND	Randolph Smyth, 119-70 Maryland St., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 1K7
F-E-T-G-A-R-I	FRANCE	Jim Finley, (best way to address the envelope is:) Lt. Finley, J.R.; H Co., 3rd Plt, TBS; MCDEC, Quantico, VA; 22134-5053
x-x-x-x-x-x-I	GERMANY	Chris Greaves, 13 Winston Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario, M1N 1W2
I-T-F-A-E-G-R	ITALY	Jeff Bevis, 1129 Washington #1, Muskegon, MI, 49441
x-x-x-x-x-x-x	RUSSIA	Derwood Bowen, 101-4400 Clarkwood Parkway, Warrensville Heights, OH, 44128
x-x-x-x-x-x-x-	TURKEY	Mark Weidmark, 12 East Avenue, Brockville, Ontario, K6V 2M7

GM: Bet you've never heard of a S'00 season before. Well the next deadline is Friday, January 10, 1986. Unless all seven of you send in orders before then and vote against an extension, the S '01 deadline will be extended to Friday, February 14, 1986. Thus in the next issue, Winter '00 will likely occur. Winter '00 press may be submitted.

GM: Please read the supplementary information at the end of the gamestarts regarding things in general.

1985 ??

B R A N T - H A L D I M A N D

Spring '00

GAMESTART

x-x-x-x-x-x-x-	AUSTRIA	Blair Cusack, 1208-1375 Prince of Wales Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K2C 3L5
E-F-I-T-G-R-A	ENGLAND	Melinda Holley, P.O. Box 2793, Huntington, W.V., 25727
F-E-T-A-G-R-I	FRANCE	Fred Wiedemayer, 12K-11311 109 A Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 1G9
G-x-x-x-x-x-x	GERMANY	Marc Hurwitz, P.O. Box 191, Owing Mills, MD., 21117
I-x-x-x-x-x-x	ITALY	Dave Carter, 118 Horsham Ave., Willowdale, Ontario, M2N 1Z9
R-I-F-E-T-G-A	RUSSIA	Robert W. Greier, Jr., 35171 Gromley Rd., Salem, OH, 44460
T-I-A-R-G-F-E	TURKEY	Evans Givan, 8066 Camstock Ct., Citrus Heights, CA, 95612

GM: Some people placed in ALGOMA and BRANT-HALDIMAND expressed a preference for CARLETON. People were distributed among the games in such a way as to allow the best possible geographic spread, keeping in mind the danger of making a game local and thus unrateable.

GM: Bet you've never heard of a S'00 season before. Well, the next deadline is Friday, January 10, 1986. Unless all seven of you send in orders before then and vote against an extension, the S'01 deadline will be extended to Friday, February 14, 1986. Thus in the next issue, Winter '00 will likely occur. Winter '00 press may be submitted.

1985 ??

C A R L E T O N

Spring '00

GAMESTART

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-	AUSTRIA	Thomas Ockert, P.O. Box 219, Lake Ann, MI, 49650
E-A-R-F-T-G-A	ENGLAND	Marc Peters, 1814 Cameron Drive #3, Madison, WI, 53711-3357
F-x-x-x-x-x-x	FRANCE	Bob Acheson, c/o Echo Bay Mines, Lupin, NWT XOE 1M0
F-E-G-T-I-R-A	GERMANY	Ronald J. Brown, 70 F Chesterton Drive, Nepean, Ontario, K2E 5S9
R-E-F-G-T-I-A	ITALY	Robert A. O'Donnell, 2444 Pershing Way, Klamath Falls, OR, 97603
R-I-T-E-F-G-A	RUSSIA	Gary Coughlan, 4614 Martha Cole Lane, Memphis, TN, 38118
R-F-T-G-I-E-A	TURKEY	Frank Easton, 2-325 Indian Rd. Cr., Toronto, Ontario, M6P 2G9

GAMENOTES

1. Blair Cusack, a Canadian postal player since 1971, two-time Canadian MVP (don't ask me who conferred this title or what it means), has offered to do a predictive commentary for one of my games. I don't think BRANT-HALDIMAND would be appropriate, as he is in it. Blair would "analyze a game from start to finish, with publication of my predictions or analysis prior to a season (i.e., I analyze S 1902 after F/W '01 are published... I get it in to the 'zine for the S '02 deadline like the player)..." I like game commentary and I will invite Blair to comment on one of the games. But I don't believe in game commentary unless the players know about it in advance and approve. So please let me know whether you would like to be commented on, or whether you object. One objection will be enough to kill the idea, and no reason need be given. Let me know what you think before February 14, 1986.
2. The idea of running a "Far East" game aroused a clamour of uninterest. However, a variant shall indeed be run in PRAXIS, with a guest GM. It's all very hush hush now, but you shall hear about it here soon. It'll be good, too; you'll want to get in on it.
3. The next deadline for all three games is February 14, 1986 unless all seven players in any game vote to have it begin by five weeks from now, January 10, 1986.
4. The Ordinances of PRAXIS will be sent to the players under separate cover, later this week.
5. The Gamesmaster for all of these games is Alan Stewart, 702-25 St. Mary St., Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 1R2. You may phone orders in at any time of day or night, if you are desperate enough. If you call in the middle of the night I may make you wait on the line until I orient myself. Preferred phone times for orders are 7:30-8:00 A.M. Eastern Standard Time and 7:00-11:00 P.M. E.S.T.
6. Some of you have not paid for your subscription yet, or made arrangements by which you might receive this 'zine. If this lamentable condition has not corrected itself by the next issue, I will call standbys for the positions in question.
7. Remember that phone deadlines are at one minute to midnight of the day before the mail deadline.
8. As you can see, everyone in ALGOMA and BRANT-HALDIMAND was able to get his or her first choice--rather remarkable, I think. FRANCE and RUSSIA were allocated in CARLETON by roll of the die. In the end, Robert O'Donnell was left with his sixth choice, which might seem anomalous as Gary Coughlan named ITALY as his second choice. As it said on pg. 2 of PRAXIS #1, "powers chosen by two or more players /shall be/ allocated at random to one of those players....no other method will be used to give the plays "as a whole" something closer to their stated preferences."
9. Would it be GM interference if I said that I was very happy with my opening lineup and proud of them and wished you all good luck?

Next page is not pg. 4. Find pg. 4

3. You are GMing three games in which Player A and Player B are both taking part. As far as any of your readers could tell, they are exemplary players--they ally in one game, fight in another, and don't commit themselves in the third. But they are talkative little devils--both of course have told you in the course of their calls to change orders that the "fight" is a sham, and that they had agreed a long time ago to ally in all games, and to stage little disagreements to fool the rest of the board. Of course you said nothing to this but "Hmm-hmm"--but now the gamestart arrives, and they are England and France and you are Germany. Does your knowledge of their habits affect your diplomacy in any way--and if not, how do you stop it?

Kathy Byrne:

I would not relate their scheme, but I would sure as hell do everything I could to get the rest of the board after them.

Rod Walker:

I think I'd tell the GM to abort the gamestart and put you in another game. Tell him why. If he refuses, I'd play, and I'd tell all the neighbors of these turkeys that they have a cross-game alliance, but just don't tell them how you know. Or, as a last resort, you could get the other two to join in your request to abort the game. Frankly, I think cross-game alliances are unethical, and I wouldn't lose much sleep if I had to use my knowledge against these two.

((I'm very uncomfortable with the idea that someone else's unethical practices entitle you to play fast and loose with ethics yourself--that's what your last sentence seems to advocate. I may be reading too much into it.))

Andy Lischett:

Sure I use my knowledge, but again, I don't spread it around. If they are dumb enough to tell me, I'm not going to be dumb enough to not use that knowledge.

Conrad von Metzke:

Damn right my activities are affected! Any player of mine who tells me intimate background of that sort is crazy! I will not, of course, release the data to my players but I am hardly going to pretend I didn't hear it when my own survival in a game is involved.

Bruce Linsey:

This is a difficult situation. You would be in clear violation of GMing ethics to take into account what you already know about these two and pass it on to others. But you would be doing nothing wrong by threatening to tell the world if they don't alter their ways in this game. That will probably only provoke another fake war, of course, and you'll get your ass kicked anyway. Perhaps you should resign--or better yet, you should have taken more care not to end up in this game.

((Interesting point you make, about it being OK to threaten but not to do. A similar problem comes to mind. I believe that cross-game alliances & cross-game revenge is unethical. But I have always believed that it would be acceptable to threaten another player with cross-game revenge--usually stupid and self-defeating, but ethically acceptable--so long as you did not actually carry that threat out. My instincts tell me a different story when it comes to the idea of a GM threatening to do something that he realizes would be unethical. The GM's obligations are of a higher order than any player's. The GM compromises his position by even threatening to do an improper act; the player is OK until and unless he actually commits the dirty deed.))

Paul Gardner:

In this example, I must resign because it appears that not only have these two taken pains to keep their association secret, they have had relative success in doing so. Best might be to make up an excuse and bow out.

Bruce McIntyre:

The two players in #3 are cross-gamers. I see no problem in telling everyone else about what you have heard over the phone: at worst you are being unethical to gain the same advantage that they will probably seek.

((That's a no-no: see my responses to Rod and to Bruce Linsey.))

Synthesis

4

Hold on for a second while I try to find a good typing song on my Walkman. Can't find one. Oh well.

"Synthesis" contains the responses to the gamesmastering questions contained in "The Party Line" #1. Fourteen people responded to the questions in whole or part. Questions 1 and 2 were duds--they didn't arouse much interest or give anyone any trouble. I was just getting you all warmed up! Thanks to Dave Anderson, Ron (Canada) Brown, Jim Finlay, James Early, Kathy Byrne, Paul Gardner, Evans Givan, Steve Langley, Bruce Linsey, Andy Lischett, Bruce McIntyre, Randolph Smyth, Conrad von Metzke, and Rod Walker for responding. Notice that eleven of the fourteen have last names beginning with a letter in the first half of the alphabet. Why is this? Did I get tired as I was nearing the end of the mailing list and start tossing some envelopes into the trash can instead of filling them with 'zine?

Some of you had general responses to the quiz:

Randolph Smyth:

Re your "Party Line" quiz: most of your questions get similar answers, based on my philosophy that the type of information you describe is not within the "confidentiality" of GM-player communications, only the specifics of the orders is.

Evans Givan:

I think your concerns about possible advantage accruing to a GM/player are unwarranted. Most everybody has an advantage of some kind. You should use what you've got. Anybody doesn't like it can go play in one of the weepy zines. Like Magus.

Bruce Linsey:

"The Party Line" was one of the most interesting sections of the issue--round-table discussions on relevant hobby issues are just my speed! You also seem to have realized that the best questions are those which cover the "grey area\$"--some people will respond from each viewpoint, thus adding interest to the discussion.

Rod Walker:

People who are overly talkative, or otherwise reveal their Achilles' heels, to a GM who's still an active player no doubt deserve the comeuppance of their indiscretions. I should think a GM can't reveal confidences, but using what he knows is another matter.

Steve Langley:

I hesitate to answer your GM questions. I will make the general statement that it is impossible to separate the knowledge one has as a GM from one's play. Even to attempt to do so is, by the act, a failure.

Ron (Canada) Brown:

Re. answers to your questions in The Party Line. I think a general answer should suffice. Some purists would have us believe that at the start of each new game everyone should be regarded from an equally neutral viewpoint, but, how can one, I ask, deny what he knows about someone? And, why should we not use our knowledge of other players to our advantage? Should I pretend that I don't know that Joe Blow will attack me when he has every time we've played before? I think it would be naive of me to keep leaving myself open when past experience has taught me the folly of doing so. Though I've found generally that the nasty tricks (such as forging orders) usually backfire and that one does far better at this game by building a reputation as a decent guy and a good strategist, I would use my knowledge of how someone submits orders to me to attempt to forge orders for another game if it suited my purpose. Why not? Again, you can't shut off part of your mind and pretend that you don't know something. As long as one follows the rules of the game and the hobby, anything goes.

Bruce McIntyre:

All of the GM-player relations questions on page number (HEY! YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANY PAGE NUMBERS IN THIS THING!) er, in The Party Line are on the same general theme: one or more players has complained that I've used the sacred trust between a GM and his players to help me decide what to do in another game in which we're both players. What doesn't

Bruce McIntyre (cont.):

seem to be mentioned is that many of the circumstances presented are often common knowledge to the rest of the players in the game I'm in.

1. You are GMing a game of Player A's. You know because of this, that he is quite sloppy and negligent with his orders. Always, they arrive (if at all) just before the deadline. Sometimes they arrive after--although he hasn't been NMRed yet because your houserules allow you to accept orders arriving after the deadline but before the 'zine is sent out, and your turnaround has been slow. Now you open your gamestart and find that you're in a game with player A. Can you allow your knowledge of his sloppiness to affect any decision you might make about whether or not to take him as an ally? If so, how do you justify taking confidential information into account--and if not, how do you prevent yourself from being affected by that information in playing the game?

2. Is paragraph #1 any different from a situation where you know that Player A is extremely scrupulous about his orders--always something arriving right away, and often a change or two of orders before the deadline arrives?

Randolph Smyth:

1 & 2 I don't think that anyone can hide his sloppiness/scrupulousness in his general correspondence. I'd estimate that 80% of the time, I know after one letter from a neighbour whether he will make a good ally, and it's that kind of characteristic that I base my decision on. Knowing the guy's reputation in advance may give you some ideas before the first letter arrives from him, but that "advantage" isn't significant enough to give me ethical convulsions.

Adding to your senario, suppose player B is also in the game with you and A...and playing with A in the game you're GMing. If he's reasonably observant, he'll know A's characteristics from player-player interaction, and has every right to make whatever use he can of the knowledge. Why should you attempt to divorce yourself from the same information, simply because you attained it as a GM instead?

Basically a player's "reputation" is in the public domain.

David Anderson:

1. It is the other GM's problem what happens to Player A. He may let Player A's go through even though it may be late and so just keep your eye and knife on Player A!

Kathy Byrne:

Since my turnaround is never slow, the guy would NMR out. However knowing a player is sloppy & late would definitely affect my judgement as to having him for an ally. Of course I won't ally with him--would you? It is not breaking GM confidentiality by refusing an unreliable player an alliance--that is just using common sense.

2. Now I'd ally with the guy! I was a player for 6 years before I became a GM. As a player I noted who was unreliable & who was a good ally--GMing just proved my theory correct.

Rod Walker:

1. If player A is as negligent as you say, he has no doubt NMRd frequently. That would be a matter of public record. However, if he doesn't NMR, but just keeps getting orders in under the wire, then you probably don't know anything of much value.

2. This player would never NMR, and that would be a matter of public record too. He's no doubt known for being reliable. This is a good ally but a fearsome enemy. You should act accordingly, but why spread such knowledge about to other players?

Andy Lischett:

1. Yes, I would let knowledge of Player A's sloppiness affect decisions regarding him, simply because it's impossible to forget on command. I would not, however, transmit that knowledge to Player B or Player C unless it was either available through other sources (watching his games elsewhere) or a reasonable lie.

A couple of similar but more specific things have happened to me. Once I was GMing a game with Player A and playing against him in another 'zine. I received a third 'zine in which he NMRed on the deadline for my zine in which he also NMRed. The deadline for my game with him was the next day, so I revised my orders and phoned my GM, assuming that Player A NMRed there as well. The other examply was even better, but I've forgotten it, so you'll have to take my word.

Andy Lischett (cont.)

2. Same answer as #1 except that everyone can see he's reliable. Then again, maybe they can't.

As a GM I get lots of orders, and get to see who routinely uses contingency orders based on the other players' builds or retreats (etc.) and who doesn't. As a player I use that knowledge all the time. ((You devil.)) Against the non-contingency-order-writer I may make an unusual retreat to catch him off guard, but against the contingency-order-writer I don't get cute because it's not likely to work. ((We could get into some elaborate ploys here: enter into a game solely for the purpose of convincing the GM that you are an utter dingbat, so that when you get into the same game with him, you can let loose))

Conrad von Metzke:

1. It is without the pale of human nature to be able to separate one's "privileged" knowledge from one's intercourse with the subjects thereof. Since one cannot prevent oneself (no matter how scrupulously one tries) from being however subtly influenced by one's ostensibly restricted knowledge of reality, one might as well not bother to try. If you know that Player A is a sleaze, treat him accordingly. Anybody who replies (with the utmost pomposity), "Of course I would deal with 'A' as if I knew nothing," is either a liar or a fool.

2. Same answer.

Bruce Linsey:

Yes, you can allow your knowledge of Player A's sloppiness to affect your play in your game together. The question is more one of practicality than ethics: how could you possibly prevent this from happening? You couldn't. Diplomacy players are human too, and it would be quite impossible for a human to suddenly pretend to himself that he isn't aware of a certain fact that will affect his own well-being in some way.

This situation is a good argument in favor of being selective in terms of your opposition. Player A would have been wise to state that he doesn't want to be in a game with you, for this very reason.

2. No, there is no functional difference between this and Situation #1. In each case you as GM have learned a relevant fact about Player A because of your position. In one case the knowledge is favourable; in the other it is unfavorable. In both cases it is possible (and perhaps unavoidable) that this knowledge will affect your game actions regarding Player A.

Paul Gardner:

1. In this particular kind of case I doubt that the knowledge would affect my play. Jim Bumpas, pubber of Liberterrean recently turned his duties over to one of his players. He then replaced that player in a game which he had previously GMed. I don't see any problems (I'm a player in the game).

((think!))

2. Everything matters when choosing allies, but here I would, if the player really is scrupulous in his orders it will show in the way he approaches his letter writing--likewise the sloppy player. As for the ethical question--ideally, you would take yourself out of the game, because the GM-player relationship is one of trust and discretion. In fact, I would not do so, because the same knowledge could easily come from other sources--other players other GMs, previous games.

Jim Finley:

1 & 2. You cannot prevent your knowledge of these players from affecting your perception of everything they say or do, so be honest with yourself and treat that knowledge as the valuable data that it is.

Bruce McIntyre:

If somebody's "sloppy and negligent" (#1) with orders, people will eventually find out about it--GMs may know sooner than the rest, but it will become common knowledge sooner or later. The fact that this particular player has never been NMRed in your zine is a red herring. If he NMRs often in other zines, surely I can attack him for that reason; if he's never NMRed in other zines, maybe I'm jumping to conclusions and he's more reliable than the evidence suggests. In that case, I'm hurting myself by letting myself be affected by that information. There's no answer to the "how do you prevent yourself from being affected" question, except that "you can't!" Therefore, I feel that the question cannot be satisfactorily answered with respect to the inherent problem, until we

Bruce McIntyre (cont.):

separate those who play from those who GM. And I'm not going to be the first one.

James Early:

1. I don't see anything wrong with allowing your knowledge of a player's sloppiness to affect your decision about whether to ally with him or her. I personally would never ally with such a player, especially if the HRs of a zine permit no late orders. Who wants an ally who NMRs every two or three seasons? I have some players like "player A" in my zine, and I would never ally with them. I think it would be ridiculous to say, "Well, I'll ally with him because I'm not supposed to know that he's a moron."

2. This is not any different from the above situation. I would tend to ally with such a person. If you go to all the trouble to publish a zine, then you are entitled to a few fringe benefits (such as knowing the nature(s) of several players). What's wrong with using this knowledge to your benefit?

Alan Stewart:

Well, obviously I should have taken more care to board up the holes through which many of you tried to weasel out of having to answer the question. Let us say, then, that Player A is only in the two games--the one you're GMing and the one you're playing. No way to learn anything about his "reputation" by consulting other 'zines. And let us say that the GM in the game you're playing with Player A is a stickler for deadlines. And let us say that you as GM are also loose about abbreviations/ambiguity. But the other GM is a tyrant. And Player A is England, so there is every chance that he will soon be ordering "F Edi-Nor" or "F Nor-Nor" or God knows what. The point is, what if there was information that you could get from your rôle as GM but nobody else could get from anywhere else--is it acceptable to use it?

The unanimous verdict seems to be that it is impossible for any human to prevent himself from being aware of this information, or from acting upon it. I hope that none of you are ever called upon to become Roman Catholic priests or judges. A Roman Catholic priest can be defrocked and indeed excommunicated for acting upon confidential information received in the confessional. I once read a textbook on confession giving this problem: your housemaid confesses to you that she has been stealing money that you keep in your clothes drawer. What can you do? Well, you cannot go to the police (everyone would know that) but you cannot even stop leaving your money in the clothes drawer if that has been your habit because that would be using confidential information in your own self-interest. You cannot fire her, or scowl at her, no, in your day-to-day dealings you must function just as if you did not know this information. It's probably easier when excommunication is the penalty for failing to do so. E. B. Pusey (who was not a Romanist but a Romanizer, although it makes no difference for the argument) advised prospective priests that if they were asked on the witness stand whether a person had confessed a crime to them, (and assuming he had), they could cheerfully lie and say no, because a priest receives information as a penitent not as man but as God; and secular courts are only entitled to question them about their activities in their capacities as men.

When there is a dispute about the admissibility of evidence in a trial, the judge will preside at a voir dire, a little trial within a trial, at which the legal arguments for and against admitting the evidence will be made. Often the whole evidence in question must be made known to the judge in order to determine its admissibility, and even if this is not the case, the judge will certainly have a good idea about just what the evidence would show if admitted. And yet, if the judge finds the evidence inadmissible, he is required and expected to render his final verdict in the trial just as if he had never heard the evidence.

But I agree with you. I can't imagine a Gamesmaster being able to disregard this information. A judge follows a tightly controlled process of reasoning to arrive at a verdict. It is easy enough to simply not consider the inadmissible information in that process--it's just left out. A priest acts toward his housemaid in a way conditioned by habit and well-accepted social rôles. It is easy for him simply to continue with those habits and to continue performing in his rôle even though he knows information that might cause him to want to behave quite differently. But the process of choosing an ally is often non-logical, often intuitive; a decision is called for at the end of the process, but even the person who reached it could often not list everything that affected him. So there is no way to replicate the decision-making process leaving that information out.)) Go now to pg. 8

James Early:

Since your survival depends on the actions of these two players, it seems justifiable to use all knowledge you have of the two players to insure that you live. I would try to talk to both of the players about allying with me against the other, and try my darndest to get Italy and Russia to pressure them in case they do ally.

Randolph Smyth:

Again, I don't see anything wrong with using the information as best you can. Nobody forced them to tell you in the first place, and since they know that you know, they will probably be taking special care to shaft you as quickly as possible. Whatever you can do in return will probably just even up the odds.

I suppose a case could be made for not publicly denouncing them if they had given you the information "in confidence". I wouldn't take such gross action in this case (i.e. if it was totally unknown in the rest of the hobby) for the simple reason that I wouldn't likely be believed, and would simply look foolish/desperate until they chose to drop the masks. But working on the assumption of an E/F alliance in your dealings with other players is a fair ball.

Again, let's vary your scenario a bit: A and B are in your games, but have not indicated any "cross-game" relationship to you or anyone else. Confronted with them as E/F to your G, are you justified in spreading an (apparently false) story about their close cooperation? Sure, if people will believe you. Their relaying of information showing the truth of the rumour should not constrain you from an identical act.

((There's something wrong with this argument; let me see if I can figure out and explain what it is. We'll take a little break here.))

((Back again. There is nothing wrong with spreading an invented story about A and B's cross-gaming so long as you do not indicate, explicitly or implicitly, that your knowledge of their cross-gaming derived from your gamesmastering activities. Agreed. And their relaying information confirming the truth of the story should indeed not constrain you from an identical act. But if your motivation for spreading the story is that the two players have told you as gamesmaster about their cross-gaming, then the act is not identical because the motivation is not identical. In other words, there must be some reason why you would choose A and B as targets of the story in the first place. Desperation perhaps, or A and B's geographical propinquity, or just a desire to cause some ^{random} devilment. If you can satisfy yourself that you would have spread the story about (genuine cross-gamers) A and B even if they had not told you about their cross-gaming, then the story is not tainted by privilege-breaking and is OK. We are getting into heavy casuistry here. Invented stories of cross-gaming are fairly rare, I think. How curious if a gamesmaster/player were to happen to make that rare decision to spread such a charge just for devilment's sake about the very same two players who have told him confidentially that they are cross-gamers.))

David Anderson:

You grin and bear it and try to get Russia's & Italy's help. QUICK!!!

Alan Stewart:

You ignore what they have told you in playing the game, to the best of your ability. You compose your first letters to all the other players as if you had never heard the confessions. You watch closely to see whether A or B refer to their confession in their letters about the game--if they do, the privileged relationship is broken and you can do whatever you want with the information. But you can't refer to it first yourself. No one's perfect--if they do start to attack you, don't blame yourself if you spend less energy than you would otherwise in trying to get them to change their minds, and more in trying to turn RUSSIA and ITALY against them. You do not resign. You do consider changing your house rules to specify that players' statements about game strategy and the like will not be passed on to other players in the game but are otherwise not confidential or privileged.

4. You're in a game with Player A in Anything Goes--a 'zine whose houserules state that "Forgery of orders is allowed. It is the player's responsibility to design a format of orders that will make this more difficult. Give me a codeword, or do your orders up in a special way." It's a bad 'zine, and you're never signing up for another game there. But anyway the time has come where you have decided that you have to forge Player A's orders to survive, and as it happens his orders to you in your 'zine are always in a particular format--a line is drawn diagonally from the top left corner to the bottom right, and his orders are always on the right side of this bizarre diagonal. Now of course, maybe he has a different format for his orders to Anything Goes. But he has told you that he had to design this weird format for use in that 'zine, so he's just using the diagonal-type orders for all his 'zines--he's had a bunch of order forms in that manner run off. The ethics of forgery may still be dubious despite the houserules--but if you decide to do it, do you do it by utilizing the diagonal form that you know he employs? If not, what do you do?

Rod Walker:

Forgery might be legal in this 'zine, but it's not really very ethical. If you're going to do it, do it, and use the format this guy has been using right along.

Andy Lischett:

I would use my "knowledge" of his secret format. He is just as able to change it. If he did change it, one could theoretically throw him out of the game for deception of the GM! Just kidding.

Conrad von Metzke:

Well, the answer here is simply that I would never consider playing in a game where forgery were allowed. I'd be too likely to forget my code-word or 'unique format'. Thus I'd get squashed. ((too sanctimonious to even answer the question, eh?))

Bruce Linsey:

The premise makes this question very unusual. I don't know of any zine run along the lines of your hypothetical Anything Goes. ((I guess you haven't seen my houserules yet. Just kidding. Don't everybody get all hot and bothered.)) But to answer the question, yes, you may use the diagonal form that you know he employs. The fact that you have learned about his style of play thanks to your GMing is no fault of yours. Functionally, this question is equivalent to #s 1 & 2.

Paul Gardner:

Sounds to me that this game ought to be declared irregular. ((Probably. Some would Okay declaring games irregular if they don't like the Gamesmaster's face.)) If so do whatever you want. ((You should see what's under the liquid paper in that last line.))

Jim Finlay:

If forgery is acceptable--a lousy idea--if you're going to forge orders do it right. If you can't see your way to doing so using his format, don't do it at all--what could be more futile than a deliberately failed forgery? ((Gad, it does sound pathetic once you put it that way.)) Do what you're most comfortable with.

Bruce McIntyre:

As for the twit in #4, well, presumably he knew you were in the game, so why would he send you all you need to forge his orders in a game where this was permitted? ((Maybe he trusted your respect for the confidentiality of his orders.)) It sounds more like a trick to me.

James Early;

Why not? The player should have sense enough to have a different format in a zine such as Anything Goes than the one he uses in your zine. If not, he deserves to have his orders faked! He'll quickly learn a valuable lesson.

Randolph Smyth:

Well, I'd never forge orders--as far as I'm concerned it would make the game a variant, unrateable, and thus not worth the trouble of struggling to survive. But using your assumption, I "decide to do it":

Yes, I use the form. Player A knows I know it, and if he's silly enough to use the

Randolph Smyth (cont.)

same format for the zine permitting forgeries, he deserves to be shafted. Here, I have to rely on the basic premise that only the orders themselves are confidential in GM-player correspondence, not their format.

David Anderson:

You may get caught--because of different postmarks--besides--SHAME ON YOU ((Why shame on me? Why not shame on the GM? He wrote the Houserules.))

Kathy Byrne:

This question is asinine & not only would I not forge orders, but I wouldn't play in a zine that allowed it!

Alan Stewart:

The premise for my question has to rank as one of the less popular ones.

Duplicating/copying/imitating the form is an indefensible breach of GM-player confidentiality, much, much, less defensible than forging orders in a zine whose houserules allow it. So what if nobody in the hobby agrees with me? I like to be contrary.

A constant refrain seems to be that the player's senselessness is relevant in deciding whether or not his communications should be kept confidential. I don't agree.

I would invent a 'format' for orders and maybe a new 'codeword', and send it in with a note saying "I've decided it's time to change my format." It would be delicious, but also unethical, to add "because my other gamesmaster knows about the diagonal one."

5. You had to expel Player A (this guy is a real nuisance, isn't he?) from your 'zine a year ago for lying to you as GM. The dispute was acrimonious, and a successful trip to the ombudsman (successful for you, that is) didn't stop a lot of people from denouncing you. You open your gamestart (say--maybe you're in too many games?) and there he is--Player A and you, brought together by fate. Do you resign? If not, how does this incident affect your diplomacy, if at all?

6. Same as number 5--except you never expelled A. You didn't think you had quite enough proof to turf him. In fact you've never spoken to him about it--you hadn't reached the stage where you thought it necessary to confront him and get a denial. But you're sure in your heart that he lied, and has a couple times. What do you do? Any effect on your diplomacy?

Andy Lischett:

5. No, I don't resign because he lied. Yes, I will distrust him more than others.

6. Same as #5.

Conrad von Metzke:

Yes, I resign. In the case of '5', I'd tell the gamesmaster precisely why. In the case of '6', I'd delicately phrase some excuse, and tender humble apologies. But to play in a game with a known crook would obviate the fun.

Bruce Linsey:

5. You resign only if you don't want to play. Otherwise, you use the incident to your advantage as much as you choose. And if your diplomacy fails, then what the hell were you doing in a game with Player A to begin with?

6. If you can use your knowledge against him without violating the player-GM confidence in your communications to the other players, fine--do so. If you can show the other players (to their satisfaction) that your feelings about the guy are justified--and you can do it without violating a confidence--do so. ((I don't see how one can ethically even express your feelings about the guy (in his role as player in a game you're GMing), much less try to convince other players that your thoughts are justified.))

Paul Gardner:

5. In this case--stay in and take the heat.

6. Play on. If you didn't think you had enough to confront him--you're best off to drop

Jim Finley:

Don't resign, just add these facts to the mix when you decide how to deal with this guy.

Bruce McIntyre:

As for meeting up with the GM deceiver (#5 & #6), the incident shouldn't affect the diplomacy at all, assuming that both people are mature enough to realize that a new battle shouldn't be fought on an old battleground.

James Early:

5. Resign. Try to avoid this guy at all costs. Why spoil the game for the other five just because you can't get along with this bum.

6. I think it would be best to resign here, just to be on the safe side. Who knows what could happen if you stay around? The situation could worsen and end up like #5 in which the game will be ruined. If you're not the type to quit a game then go after him in full force! Get rid of him!

((I don't like this last suggestion of yours. So the guy is going to be attacked by one of his gamemasters because his GM is angry at him over a matter that he's never even discussed with him? No chance for the player to even state his case? Breach of GMing ethics.))

Randolph Smyth:

5. Why should I resign--no way. This doesn't seem to relate to GM-player confidentiality since the whole dispute went public. I'd thus treat the situation the same way as I would when meeting any other hobbyist that I'd tangled with in the past--don't count on an ally and be well prepared for an enemy. Or, if you're the aggressive type, start the fighting yourself. No ethical problem here that I can see.

6. If you couldn't denounce him in your zine, you'll likely get nowhere denouncing him as a player either. This seems to reduce to a question of general reputation, then: if you are determined that a given player will not make a good ally, what do the reasons matter? It's senseless to attempt to ally with the guy anyhow, just because a GM-player relationship is responsible for your opinion. ((What is there in the fact situation that suggests that the player would not be a good ally? This looks like a rationalization covering the desire for revenge))

Can you pretend to ally with him, knowing in your heart that it won't last, determined to stab him before he stabs you? Why not? People embark on that strategy all the time, it seems, for no sensible reasons at all! ((You're supposed to be talking to the subscribers of PRAXIS here, Randolph!)) Again, the fact that you have that impulse based on your capacity as GM shouldn't prevent you from proceeding with it.

David Anderson:

5. You try to get along with Player A and besides if he tries to deceive the GM in this game, you will have your problem solved for you. He will be tossed out on his ear just like in your zine.

6. Well, if you have never talked to him about it, FORGET IT. When you think he is deceiving you, bring it right up to him. Otherwise if you wait he will have succeeded and you can't do anything about it then.

Kathy Byrne:

5. I would never throw a player out of a game. So I'll never have this problem. ((Oh, no, you don't get out of answering that easily. What is your ultimate sanction against liars, cheaters, forgers, people who abuse you personally? Everybody has to keep the option of giving somebody the boot-----you're just inviting trouble by not doing so.))

6. If I think the guy has given me a hard time as a GM, I would figure him to do the same to this GM. Therefore he is a real liability as an ally. I'd keep what I know to myself, but I'd warn the GM to be careful as I'd had problems with this player. Somebody has to help the poor GM! ((Your justification for avoiding him as an ally is more reasonable, than the others', but I don't like the idea of "warning" this GM about something that you aren't sure of, or at least haven't confirmed and acted on, yourself.))

Rod Walker:

5. If you go ahead and play in this game, you can be sure "A" is gunning for you. So be gunning for him. If he was a dirty rat in the game you GMD, he was probably one elsewhere. Use his reputation against him.

6. Again, this situation didn't arise in a vacuum. The guy probably has a reputation

Rod Walker (cont.)

of some sort in other 'zines. I'd be guided by that...and, at the very least, be extremely wary of the character.

Alan Stewart:

5. Randolph's right; there is no ethical question here, and the GM can do what he wants without anyone being entitled to tell him that he has done the "wrong" thing. I admire the theory behind the answers of Randolph Smyth, Bruce McIntyre, and Paul Gardner most--there's no reason why a past dispute should prevent you from playing with a guy again. And I wouldn't refuse to play with a guy, or even be out to get him, just because he lied and I had to turf him. But the fact situation states that "the dispute was acrimonious"--this suggests that the guy has not only lied but tried to give me a hard time for doing my job as GM, maybe lying again in the process of covering up the first lie, maybe even calling me a liar. I'd have a hard time keeping my cool enough to play with a guy like that. I'd resign.

6. The crucial fact here is that you've never spoken to the player about his supposed sins. So he has no reason to be out to get you. The question is whether you use the game in order to get the player because of your hidden resentment. The answer is no, you don't, because your grievances against a player regarding his conduct in a game should be handled between him and you only, and only in the context of that game.

A FEW GENERAL SUMMATIONS

Bruce Linsey:

In all of these questions, the place where I think I'd draw the line is when it comes to negotiations with other players in your new game together. You can't out-and-out tell them things that were given to you in confidence, but on the other hand you'd have to be a saint not to let your own knowledge affect you. I understand that this puts you in some very awkward positions--positions where there is no clear-cut "right" or "wrong". But in all of these cases, either you or Player A might well have considered not signing up for a game with the other.

Bruce McIntyre:

The conclusion I've come to because of all this talk is that if players want to avoid meeting up with their GM who has the goods on them, they shouldn't give him the goods in the first place. Write your orders on a postcard, and don't talk up the game if you're gonna worry about what you said later. The onus is on the player if he wants to protect his own reputation from anyone: this includes his GM.

Randolph Smyth:

I'd be reluctant to be described as among those "who know whereof they speak". I suppose I do represent an almost pure "GM perspective", but whether that's better/ more knowledgeable than that of "mere" players is very debatable. ((Those pure players who responded seemed to be even less concerned about GM confidentiality than are the GMs (if such be possible)))

Alan Stewart:

I've learned a lot from this discussion. I'd picked up the idea somewhere that the GM-player relationship was privileged, and I read a lot into that. It appears that the prevailing norm is as described by Randolph: only the orders themselves are confidential. Fully confidential, that is. Then there is a gray area where the GM will happily use information for his own advantage but balk at passing it on to someone else.

Never discuss your game strategy with the Gamesmaster. If you are a novice, do not ask your gamesmaster questions about rules if it is likely that you will play in a game with him: you might think that your uncertainty/confusion will not be used against you, but think again. If you have time, send in a few needless order changes between your preliminary set and your final set, to impress the GM with your diligence in case you meet up with him again. Do not get into the habit of preparing your orders in the same format for all your 'zines--sure, everyone hates forgery of orders, but protect yourself just in case. Never complain about screwed-up adjudications or game delays to the GM if there is any chance you will be playing with him in the future--ideally it shouldn't matter but it is possible that people who resent such complaints might take it out on you in a game. In fact it might be wise to suck up to all playing gamesmasters as a matter of policy (although not in PRAXIS, please).

Solidarity

Lots of helpful responses to the problems I posed in "Solidarity" last time. Now, what would you like to hear about first, carpets and chairs or bedrooms and shopping malls? Interior decoration or romance? I thought so.

Question #1 asked for help in buying carpet for my living room.

Randolph Smyth:

Medicine Hat has three carpet shops; doesn't Toronto have any? I bought mine in department stores (Sears, I think): \$40 for a couple of 6' x 4' throw rugs, but that was around '81 and they were on sale.

Kathy Byrne:

Do yourself a favor, buy yourself a remnant. I bought a 12 x 10 last month. If I move the rug is still good. If need be we can cut it down to fit another room. Mine cost \$200, but it is real thick. You can probably get one for \$75-100. But you can get one for free if you want to ride to Woody's as I was going to take his old stuff & then at the last minute I changed my mind & bought a new one. So my rug is still at Woody's & I don't need it--so feel free to help yourself.

((Woody lives in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. I will now consult my Reader's Digest atlas. 44Cb: that's where the atlas says it is. Let's see...that's near Philadelphia! Yuck. If it were near Pittsburgh, that's a different story: I like the scenery in that area. Or Lancaster, or Scranton--one of the big thrills of the trip to NYC by bus is seeing The Lights Of Scranton By Night. But Philadelphia--no. Besides, I don't drive--whoops, I was saving that for a future "Solidarity".))

Thomas Ockert:

Why buy a carpet? Wander around a carpet place and in the back they usually have thrown-out carpeting. If you know someone with a van scrounge the carpet and do them a favour.

Jim Finley:

I'd get throw rugs and use them on the wood floor (or whatever it is). Carpet is costly and not worth it if you plan to move soon--you can't take it with you and it wouldn't fit the floor plan of your new home.

Steve Langley:

Consider rugs instead of a carpet. In the States I'd suggest checking the yellow pages.

Conrad von Metzke:

How to decorate your apartment: Fer chrissake ((you just barely escaped the blue pen of the Blasphemy Censor Programme, there, Conrad)) decorate it any way you please! I don't live there, you do. Anybody who purchases carpeting when they may only stay eighteen months is an idiot (besides, isn't that the landlord's problem?) ((Not in Ontario))

Mark Weidmark:

I was glad to see you get into at least one meaty issue. On re-decorating your apartment: for sure, what you do is go down to the carpet dealer and buy a few hundred of these discarded patches used as samples (about 0.287 sq m each), and using 3-inch spikes, tack them right over your old carpet in patchwork fashion.

Alan Stewart:

Throw rugs are the answer. Can you believe that I would have gone out and wasted good money on carpet? Money that could have been saved for typewriter ribbons! Luckily I have the subscribers of PRAXIS to set me aright.

I asked for the advice about the colour of my carpet. Beige, dark brown, orange, and gold were the leading suggestions. I favour orange--there is a component of orange in the wallpaper, which would go with an orange rug, although you wouldn't have known that.

A tablecloth was the most popular suggestion for my kitchen table in the living room, although Chris Greaves suggested screwing or bolting a large sheet of plywood or chipboard to the table, and Thomas Ockert suggested trading the table for carpeting.

Let's skip to # 5--can I keep my roll-out chesterfield but deep-six the other pieces in the set? I like the chesterfield, but the other pieces are crappy.

Mark Weidmark:

Regarding the furniture, if the best piece you have is a pull-out couch, STOP!! Don't send those dinner party invitations to Chuck and Di just yet. Go down to Woolco or The Brick and get one of those six-piece suites for \$158, no-money-down and no-payment until March 1987....Now, regarding that pull-out, if you still have room for it, cover it with the fur of some domestic animal--horse is best, but if the Hudson Bay trading post nearest you has only beaver pelts, ignore 'em, and go down to the Humane Society and offer to put up two dozen cats for a month (it should take only 3.7 weeks for your couch to be completely covered with cat fur--calico cats will provide the best blend with your other furniture.)

Kathy Byrne:

Deep six it! Let the place be you. Like my rug, John says it's an attention getter, Frank (my son) loves it and Phyllis (my oldest daughter) says it's PUTRID. ((I'm starting to have second thoughts about orange.)) I like it, and that's all that matters!

Randolph Smyth:

It's tacky, but if you have a choice between crappy and tacky you'll have to call it yourself.

Jim Finley:

Don't worry about it--get the chairs, keep the chesterfield--it's your stuff. Anyone who called anything you chose to do with it tacky would be tacky and silly, themselves. ((I have a lot of tacky and silly friends.)) Get good used stuff if you can.

Steve Langley:

Take a look at some offerings in large furniture stores. It is possible you may find chairs to complement your chesterfield. You may find that it can be recovered to match new furniture. If worse comes to worse, cover it with a rug that matches the rug you put on the floor.

Chris Greaves:

Keep the chesterfield. Sounds handy. Yes, you can buy a separate set of chairs. Most people are more interested in the people sitting in the chairs than in the actual state of the chairs. Be honest now, can you remember the seating arrangements we had in the apartment?

Alan Stewart:

Well, I'll keep the chesterfield, but you haven't done much to reassure me that I'm doing the right thing.

I'll skip the advice about the colour of the chairs I should buy. People were starting to get cranky at this stage in the quiz. Well, I'll print one response:

Randolph Smyth:

Buy used pink chairs for \$10 each. Don't compromise on price, colour, or number of legs.

In number 7, I revealed that I didn't know how to cook and asked if anyone has or knows of a good simple cookbook for one.

Bob Acheson:

I can sympathize with you on this one. You can always do what gets me by on the two weeks a month that I spend in the city. Eat a lot of cold meat on kaiser buns, washed down with a few bottles of beer. If you aren't too keen on the shit that they sell in the supermarkets, you can get better tasting cuts at your local deli. If I ever want something hot and don't want to spend a fortune at a diner, buy those Le Menu's. At 5 dollars a shot, they'll get you by, and if you're still not full drink some more beer.

Steve Langley:

A good beginners' cookbook is the Betty Crocker cookbook. For one? Scale the recipes down. I have cooked for myself for a number of years (not lately) and Betty Crocker is the only one of many cookbooks that I truly found useful.

Rod Walker:

Get the "Better Homes and Gardens Cookbook". It exists in many editions, and is a loose-leaf binder with a red/white checkered hard cover. It is easily obtainable in used bookstores and is extremely basic and simple (and useful even for advanced cooks). In a word, it's wonderful.

Chris Greaves:

Cooking is easy. Only one rule: keep it simple and taste it often. Winter is a good time to start cooking, because you can concoct all sorts of spicy stews from leftovers ((Leftover whats?)); also you can impress guests with a chunky salas just when they don't expect it....It takes me 15 minutes tops to make a stew--ask Bob Ciborowski!!

Thomas Ockert:

Yes, I had cookbooks, but my 1st and 2nd ex-wives took both copies.

Kathy Byrne:

Cook?!! Save yourself the trouble--get married!

Back to me again. Suggestions for other decorations for my living room included pictures (especially prints painted by Kathy's mother), photographs (especially top quality prints by Tom Ockert), Toronto Transit Commission posters, bookcases, mirrors, prints, posters, furniture ((somewhat vague, what?)), lamps, and plants. Steve Langley's advice was most useful on balance here.

Now, let's go to # 4, where I asked whether it bothered anyone to be entertained in a small bedroom....

Randolph Smyth:

Hey, I don't think the size of the bedroom is of much concern to anyone....

Porter Wightman:

My wife says she's been entertained in bedrooms large and small--but she prefers the living room. Of course I found her in church. (Which is why we're still together after 10 years of marriage.)

Steve Langley:

It doesn't bother me that you have a small bedroom. Small is cozy. What sort of entertainment do you have in mind? If your "party" is small enough, say yourself and one guest, a small bedroom should suffice.

Chris Greaves:

I have no objections to being entertained in your small bedroom, but if my wife finds out, she'll kill one or the both of us. Probably me, for she's never forgiven me for taking your advice and stabbing her in that game we had in our old apartment.

Rod Walker:

Actually, the size of the bedroom in which I'm entertained is of no importance; it's the size of the...uh, rather, it's the quality of the entertainment that counts. I have been most suitably entertained in some very small places. Very.

Kathy Byrne:

As long as the bed is comfortable, who cares how small the room. If the company is good, no one will notice the limited space. Are you good?!

((Mixed reviews.))

Now although some of you were very free with your advice to me, there was only one taker on my invitation for all of you to submit your own set of problem for solution by the readers of PRAXIS. That one person was KATHY BYRNE, and she receives three free issues for this set of problems for your consideration:

1. How to keep the cat from eating my plants?
2. How to keep my three teenagers from driving me insane?
3. How to get these same 3 teenagers to clean their rooms? Do all teenagers like to live in pig pens. ((I did)).
4. How do I get my son to take out the garbage without asking 6 times?
5. How to get Canucks to realize that Americans think Chesterfields are cigarettes?

There you are. Serious, funny, or serio-funny answers are welcome, and (not that the subscribers of PRAXIS should need any such admonition) only those types of answers, so resist the temptation to try anything smart or nasty, because if you do, not only will it not get printed but...well, I was going to say that you would feel the Wrath of Alan but I just noticed that Don Del Grande used the line the Wrath of Kath in the last issue and that's a lot funnier line, so I don't know what will happen to you, but it will be bad.

I did receive some earnest homilies in response to my Shopping Mall 100 plan, but they, if printed here, would be anticlimactic coming after the responses to Question #4. But I'm holding on to them, and may print them in the future.

Random talk (and oh, boy, will it be random...)...Pete Franklin of WWWE in Cleveland (whom I've been listening to while typing up these pages) is the best sports talk show host I've ever heard...Anyone close enough to Cleveland to try to pick him up at night should do so at 1100 on the dial...When I get enough time (which is probably never) I'm going to go to the library and look for back issues of the magazine whose name I now forget and compile my list of the Top 100 rock songs of all time. It will be eclectic...Is it possible to buy a good printer and connect it up to an ADAM computer?...Bobby Ojeda should win at least 15 games with the New York Mets next year; he's looked bad pitching in Fenway Park, which hurts all pitchers' stats...I'm just going to miss seeing Oakmount High tonight. This is a dramatization of the events that took place in Alberta, where Jim Keegstra was found to have been teaching anti-Semitism to his pupils for many years. I'm still amazed that he was convicted for spreading hate propaganda, since honest belief is supposed to be a complete defence to that charge, I think...A person was in the paper yesterday complaining about being hassled by American customs agents. No point complaining, it happens all the time...Why do some photocopiers go nuts if you try to copy material on both sides of a sheet of paper?...Larry Glick and Jerry Williams of WBZ in Boston formed the most enjoyable combination ever of radio talk show hosts, some years ago. I imagine that Larry has retired by now. Jerry was fired, and was in New York for a while, but I don't know if he's still around. Talk radio has never really caught on in Canada as it has in the United States...Does anybody out there have any old 'zines they want to sell? Let me know what you have...The popular Christmas card, "One Man's Life", telling the story of Christ's life in maudlin, sentimental tones, articulates an understanding of the Lord's work that is actually unorthodox and heretical. That doesn't stop it from being popular with orthodox Christians...Now that we have three publishers in Toronto, we need a name for ourselves. Try to stay away from the scatology, please...The St. Louis public library is the only one I've ever been in that allows smoking inside...Dr. Zhu says that when socialism comes to North America, the U.S. and Canadian postal services are the only things that won't have to change. Just the look on postal clerks' faces reminds him of back home...I wouldn't have said that; he did....

Diversions

Bill James

They try to forget that they are unlike the others. They learn to conceal those things that make them different. It's not really things they conceal, but the absence of things. They do not feel the same attractions that others do, and they cannot make themselves feel them. Every day, in the newspaper, on the television, around the water cooler, society cannot let them forget that they are different, that they are unlike other men.

They are a silent minority in North American society: haters of professional spectator sports. Let me speak directly to the silent sufferers in my audience. Despite what you may have heard, the disease is not innate. Would you cure yourself of your condition? I have a cure. Read Bill James' Baseball Abstract.

Bill James is the world's foremost sabermetrician. The engaging barbarism means "practitioner of sabermetrics", "saber" honouring SABR (The Society for American Baseball Research). Sabermetrics is the analysis of baseball statistics. In 1977 Bill James began publishing what can only be called a baseball fan'zine annually and distributing it to a few friends. This 'zine somehow came to the attention of the boys at Ballantine Press, and since '82, they have published the thing every spring.

Yes, Bill James is a statistics nut, with the fascinating ability to separate the meaningful from the meaningless, to make a column of figures act as a servant of common sense. He will teach you how to boil a player's seasonal offensive stats into one number that will allow that player to be compared with every other player in major league baseball. He will show you why fielding percentage is a meaningless stat and what other statistics can tell you how good a player is defensively. He will demonstrate how park effects inflate the achievements of inferior players (Jim Rice) over those of superior ones (Jose Cruz). He will leave you looking at baseball as if you are seeing it for the first time, no matter how long you have been following the game.

But do not be deceived: statistics isn't what Bill James' popularity is all about. Bill James is the best writer on sports in America. Whoever is number two is not close. That's why people buy the Baseball Abstract. Let me give you a short guided tour of his talents.

To become a public success you must be successful in drawing the attention of the public and Bill did this first by being "controversial". He attracted a lot of adverse attention from players he had slammed, and in the intervening years he has sometimes lamented that he is forced to be controversial because of public demand, or that his readers are always reading negative things into his writing that aren't there. Uh huh. First of all, Bill is a master of what might be called the "rip proper". In 1982, he wrote about Cleveland second baseman Duane Kuiper: "Symptomatic of the Indians' problems. It's absolutely incredible that a player this bad could be given 3000 at bats in the major leagues." The same year he had a comment on Willie Aikes' defence at first base: "Makes Dick Stuart look like a gazelle....Couldn't scoop out a low throw with a back hoe....If there is somebody worse than Aikes, he must be playing first with a machete." In 1985, he summarized each player's strengths and weaknesses as part of his commentary on each player. Generally, they looked like this:

10. Joe MORGAN, Oakland

Strengths: Ability to reach base, baserunning judgment.

Weaknesses: Range, hitting for average.

7. Willie McGEE, St. Louis

Strengths: Hitting for average, range, speed, consistency.

Weaknesses: Power, strike zone judgment.

10. Bill BUCKNER, Boston

Strengths: Hitting for average, hustle.

Weaknesses: Power, aggressiveness at plate, age.

But for some players, they looked like this:

12. Doug FLYNN, Montreal

Strengths: Few.*Weaknesses:* Many.

14. Wayne TOLLESON, Texas

Strength: Attitude.*Weakness:* Talent.

8. Bill MADLOCK, Pittsburgh

Strengths: Hitting for average. line-drive power.*Weaknesses:* Sour cream, fudge, deserts of all kinds.

Often, though, the rip is merely a side dish, accompanying some illuminating Jamesian observation on men or the game, like his comments about California manager Gene Mauch in 1983:

Mauch has been managing in the major leagues long enough to have become a legend in his own time. He hasn't become one, of course, but he's been managing that long.

Gene Mauch had a beautiful line last fall when somebody asked him if he wouldn't almost have been happier losing than having to face all those questions about what does it winning ^{feel like} after all these years. Gene didn't like that question either, so he snapped, "Nobody in this room is smart enough to analyze me." Nobody in the world is smart enough to figure out why Gene Mauch does some of the things he does, including Gene Mauch.

Nobody can take a flawed argument apart like Bill James, and when he does so, he does not care who gets hurt. Last year, some old friends of Ken Keltner, Cleveland Indians' star third baseman of the 1940's, got together, pooled some money, and put together a campaign to put their old friend Ken Keltner into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Says James:

A committee has been established which begs us to examine the Hall of Fame credentials of a Cleveland Indians star of forty years ago....The first card [sent out] was shaped like a bat, and said, "We need you to go to bat (open card) for nominating KEN KELTNER to the National Baseball Hall of Fame." The card outlined Keltner's career batting accomplishments and informed us that he had more RBI's than Jackie Robinson, a higher lifetime average than Eddie Mathews and more lifetime hits than Ralph Kiner....

The logic of the argument proposed by the committee is, as the logic of advertising tends to be, almost comic in its transparency. The comparison to Jackie Robinson's RBI count is an obvious red herring, since Jackie Robinson is not in the Hall of Fame because of his credentials as an RBI man; likewise Eddie Mathews is not a Hall of Famer because of his career batting average, and Ralph Kiner is not in because of his career hit total. By the same logic, one could argue that Walt (No Neck) Williams should be in the Hall of Fame because he hit more home runs than Rabbit Maranville, stole more bases than Harmon Killebrew and hit for a higher average than Luis Aparicio.

But all is not stridency and polemic with James; whimsy and charm is part of his appeal too. There is a star Kansas City centre fielder named Willie Wilson; in 1982, James wrote this about the New York Mets' own centrefielder, Mookie Wilson:

Talk about your eerie coincidences. His real name is William Wilson, but they can't call him that, for obvious reasons. There is another major league player who does and doesn't do exactly the same things that this guy does, and who is the same age and color, and that man's name is Willie Wilson. To use the same name would invite unnecessary and unattractive comparisons.

Edgar Allan Poe wrote a story about a man who was haunted by another man of the same name, same build and talents and face. The idea was that you were supposed to catch on that his personality had split, and he was merely projecting himself into another character of the same description. The two men's names? William Wilson. Swear to God.

And when James is writing about something he cares about, when he writes about his feelings about the game, that is when he soars into the sublime:

The way in which baseball statistics are understood widely is as a form of language. Suppose that you see the number 48 in a player's home run column. Do you think about 48 of some thing? Do you think about 48 cents or 48 soldiers, or 48 sheep jumping over a fence? Absolutely not. You think about Harmon Killebrew, about Mike Schmidt, about Ted Kluszewski, about Gorman Thomas. You think about power.

In this way, the number 48 functions not as a number, as a count of something, but as a word, to suggest meaning. We all know what .312 means. We all know what 12 triples mean, and what 0 triples means. We know what 0 triples means when it is combined with 0 home runs (slap hitter, chokes up and punches) and we know what it means when it is combined with 41 home runs (uppercuts, holds the bat at the knob, can't run and doesn't need to.)....

When the numbers acquire the significance of language, they acquire the power to do all of the things which language can do: to become fiction and drama and poetry. 191 hits with 27 homers is one thing--it tells one story--when that season comes at the end of a struggle but is greatly different, and tells a different story, when it is turned in by a 21-year-old kid who then fades gradually away....

Am I imagining things?

Do not the numbers of Ted Williams detail a story of fierce talent and, by the char of their ugly gaps, the ravages of exquisite frustration that ever accompany imperfect times? Do not the numbers of Roberto Clemente spell out a novella of irritable determination straining toward higher and higher peaks until snapped suddenly by an arbitrary, but now inevitable machina? Do not the stressed and unstressed syllables of Willie Davis' prime (.318, .254, .285, .245, .294, .238, .284, .257) suggest an iambic indifference? Is there not a cavalcata in Pete Rose's charge? (.310, .310, .310)? Is there no union of thrill and agony in Roger Maris' numbers? How else can one explain the phenomenon of baseball cards, which is that a chart of numbers that would put an actuary to sleep can be made to dance if you put it on one side if a card and Bombo Rivera's picture on the other?

I hope that's enough to convince you. If you are a lifetime sports-hater, perhaps you are tired of being left out of the mainstream of North American low-cultural life. No longer will you have to try to ignite an artificial spark of interest when your boss discusses the latest scores. If you grew up a fan, but have backslid, wearying of the pedestrian junk that passes for pre-season analysis and writing on the newsstands, Bill James can recapture for you the joy and freshness of baseball as you first discovered it. If you are a figure filbert, give Bill a chance to bring you under his power as he attempts to prove what he likes to refer to as the Known Laws of Sabermetrics and attacks rival theorists. If you are a betting man--read what Bill wrote about the Chicago Cubs before their "upset" of 1984, or about the St. Louis Cardinals before their "upset" of 1985.

The Baseball Abstract always seems to come out about May. I never order it an advance--I enjoy checking book stores every few days, and the anticipation of it. I wonder where I will be when I see the first copy, and what the cover will look like. Last year it cost \$7.95 in the U.S., \$10.95 in Canada. It's softcover. The quality seems to decline almost imperceptibly year by year, as Bill farms some of the analysis out to junior sabermetricians, so go to your used bookstore and search for back copies. Next year will be goo/, though: Bill is a Kansas City Royals fan (he lives in Lawrence Kansas), and he's been waiting a long time for a World Championship. I don't know what he will have to say about it--but I'd hate to be Joaquin Andujar when he does.

Demystification

21

German Openers
by Marc Hurwitz

(In order of preference)

1. Anglo-French-German alliance. Usually proposed by Germany, it places him in a potential nutcracker. It can sweep the board but is very unstable. The trick is to arrange for one ally to stab the other ineffectively, then pick up the pieces.

I list it first because if it is proposed by either France or England it is an unrefusable offer.

2. Italian/Austrian/German alliance. Also known as the "5th corner of the board" strategy. This one is the most fun, as it puts the bottom 3 into the top 3 position-wise. It is also important to keep it secret. The alliance usually requires a public German alliance with England or Russia. However, all three allies must be especially punctual with moves.

3. Anglo-German. The natural strengths of the alliance are natural trust, choice of targets, and good long-term potential. From the English point of view, the Anglo-German alliance is slightly weaker but much more stable than an Anglo-France. It makes for a longer game. The alliance works best if either France or Russia is distracted by an attack on another power. For example, let's say Turkey attacks Russia, and a stalemate arises. E-G carve up France, then stab Russia in the back.

4. German-French. A toughie. To take out England requires either a powerful French stab, or else large German navies. The latter brings the problem of "vell, vat we do now wit der Kreigsmarine?" The former finds France perfectly positioned to attack Germany and poorly positioned for anything else. Frankly, the only way the alliance stays long-term is if the allies like each other personally.

5. German-Russian. Russia is a weak ally because it has so many other fronts. A German-Russian-(Turk, Italian, or Austrian) can work. Usually the G-R is Germany's sole response to an Anglo-French steamroller. It is at best a stop-gap measure. Germany must be very persuasive with the 4 other powers to stop an F/E alliance.

6. German-Italian. This was tried in 1939 (actually put into effect in 1940).

7. No alliance. This works only if Russia, England and France are likewise blithe, carefree spirits.

Now, Germany should never turn down an alliance. Preferably it should have 2 or 3 at once, and choose with impeccable timing which one is "real". A good German player never stabs in the first few years because his neighbors are likely to be around for a while.

Next issue: "The Search for Living Room".

((Thanx Marc for an excellent article, and three free issues to you.

I met Marc at Origins. We were in a game together. He was wiped out early as AUSTRIA, I was doing well as FRANCE. Eventually we got to the point where there was me, with 13 centres, and four other powers. Two were out to stop me because I was biggest. Two were remnants of powers I had stabbed viciously. My remaining ally then had to leave. The other four began to get in the habit of walking away to talk together as soon as the results were adjudicated. I was getting mentally tired, and couldn't come up with the right tactics. Marc, who stayed around to act as a quasi-gamesmaster, and I would stay at the table and Marc would feed me all the right moves to stave them off as much as was possible. After Marc's brilliant moves were ^{read} out, the others would look at one another, and Owen Shine, eventual Best Russia, would say, "Look, how do you think the guy got to 13 centres? He's good!" Anyway, I eventually broke up that

alliance, we wiped out the small powers and I settled foolishly for a 3-way draw.))

The Party Line

Notwithstanding that I have previously gone on the public record as opposing the chopping up of letters, your letters to PRAXIS will appear in at least four different departments this issue. (PRAXIS is the opposition of theory with practice, as I may have mentioned before.) Most comments upon "False Consciousness", "Solidarity", and "The Party Line" will appear elsewhere. The answers to my gamesmastering quiz have been hived off from the parent department "The Party Line" into "Synthesis", PRAXIS' first spin-off department.

As is customary, comments by the editor will be placed within double parentheses, which look like this: ((and like this:))).

As I glance through the letters that will appear, I notice that this department will be fairly dull this time, partly because it is stuck with the leavings after other departments have gorged on the feudin' and the carpet-buyin' and the pickin' up in shopping malls, and partly because I am sufficiently vain to print, in its entirety, anything that anybody said that would be interpreted as praise of PRAXIS #1. However don't worry because I think it very unlikely that this department will be boring for long.

Randolph Smyth:

Praxis has just arrived here, and after a preliminary read, I'm delighted. Despite your self-put-downs on the first page, I don't know of any Canadian zine that has got off to such a good start (for my money, it even edges out XL #1, since my main interest as a reader is articles and polls).

((Well done, Randolph. That was sufficiently plausible that I could convince myself to believe it. Thank you.))

David Anderson:

Well, I hope you send in your moves in on time!! Hey, I'm ~~a not-so-great~~ American player, but I really cannot afford to join another zine right now. Oh, but, how I would like to. I'm in 20-odd scattered games, but if it were four weeks' deadline...because I'm in Canadian Diplomat and it's 6-week deadlines. Y-A-W-N.

Who exactly is Dr. Zhu? Are you pulling our leg or are you serious. I really mean, but, gee, it's sort of silly. DR. ZHU--ZOO?

((Dr. Zhu shares my apartment with me. He is a Ph.D. in theoretical physics. No, I should say he has such a degree--we should not identify people with their accomplishments.))

Marc Peters:

Praxis looks good! I'm suitably impressed to help you out by signing up in one of your games. Good luck in getting a few Yanks in your games. Seems like your southern neighbours are taking a bit more interest in Canuck zines these days...

Bob Acheson visited Madison a few weeks ago. Interesting guy, and a lot of fun. I've met three Canadian dipsters and would like to meet more.

Mark Weidmark:

Goooooooood luck!

I mean, you didn't do any market research for this thing, did you? Like, if you went out and spent \$5,000 for a mailing list, the 80-odd people on the Sleepless Knights circulation roster probably fail miserably as a target audience. The only

reason people read SK is for the space fillers.

((Fear not. I sent out about 255 samples of PRAXIS. And how dare you attack ~~Brand X~~ Sleepless Knights like that?))

Ethics? You want to talk about ethics!?! Who do you think you are, Harrowsmith magazine or the Kingston Whig-Standard? Look it, the great ethical question of December 1985 boils down to this, and only this: having invested billions of dollars into Darlington and other nuclear plants that will eventually spell the doom of mankind, do you think it was ethical of Ontario Hydro to put further millions into "Heat Electrically!" advertising without providing a subsidy program for the erection of false chimneys on all homes and apartment buildings?

((The Globe and Mail published a collection of letters to its editor earlier this year under the title, Shocked and Appalled. In it, there was a very funny letter from one Mark Weidmark from Brockville, Ontario. Was that yours?))

Fred Davis:

I'd very much like to receive PRAXIS for BUSH. I liked the set-up of your zine very much. I also liked your writing style. So, please consider us as Trading, and said trade to continue after /your game/ ends.

((Sure, I'll be willing to trade! But...hey, wait just a minute--I've already paid to receive BUSHWACKER until my game ends. So you want me to trade PRAXIS for... nothing! No deal! But I'll probably send you free copies for a while.

((I like your writing style too. In particular, let me note that your article on your life and times with the Social Security Administration in the last XENOGOGIC was forthright, funny and humane, and I hope everybody who knows you makes it a point to acquire a copy and read it.))

Kathy Byrne:

Thanks for the sample of PRAXIS.... The zine looks good and it was interesting to read.

A word of advice--I do 2 GMing questions a month--I get at least 3-5 pages (typed) response to these 2 questions. You better be prepared to send out 50 page issues if you intend to ask 6 questions a month. You're biting off more than you can chew--wait and see!

((No guarantee of six questions per every five weeks. Not that I'm worried about the size of the 'zine--it just takes me a long time to think them up!))

By the way, where is my Canadian Maple Syrup? I am still waiting for it.

((If you want the truth, I bought it on a Friday afternoon and lost it in a bar on the way home. But never fail, I will send some eventually.))

Dwight Gooden turned 21 yesterday! Only 21 and he is probably the best pitcher in baseball at this time. You know last summer (actually late season) when I organized my Dip field trip to Shea--Dwight pitched and he also hit his first major league HR. When he won the Cy Young they asked him what his goal in baseball was, he said to be the best hitting pitcher ever! He said he's not worried about his pitching, but he has to work on his hitting! Anyway, the reason I wrote the above is because I am a baseball fanatic and your comments on lots of baseball talk is really the reason I subbed to your zine!

Sorry the Blue Jays didn't make it, but like the Mets they gave us a good season and we both should be satisfied.

(Message received. It's easier to write a lot about baseball during the season, but I'll try to provide some snacks for the hungry fans until then. There is something about baseball elsewhere in this issue. I can't even think of a smart crack to make about Dwight Gooden--he is undoubtedly the best pitcher in baseball. It sure ain't Dave Stieb anymore, and won't be again until they give pitchers credit for whining, bitching, and kicking the resin bag after your teammates make an error.))

Thomas Ockert:

Well, I have played Diplomacy 2 (two) times in my 34 years of persistence on this material plane. For the past 3 years I haven't even owned a copy of the game, yet deep from the void, unbidden, every couple of months someone OUT THERE sends me their latest, bestest, most unique 'zine. Respond please, they exclaim.

Well, lucky you. This will be the first time I respond. Qualify that--I don't know about game rules or houserules (uh, ordinances). Say novice, and you'll have me pegged. At least I own a copy now so I can look at the pretty board.

I don't snob science fiction, nor fantasy, nor wargaming. Indeed, my play-by-mail status would be greatly humbled if I didn't play other games. And though I am not invincible, I am competent and thorough. In addition it has been by honour to have published a couple of scenarios, a short story, and a couple of game reviews. Which calls my attention to a game called "Supremacy". It is great. Play tested and proven.

((Not to mention Canadian. I've seen the board and heard the inventor very briefly at a con last year. It has a highly attractive board, and looks like fun.))

Evans Givan:

By some strange quirk of fate, your new zine and game openings came at just the right time, for me. I have been practicing the Ken Peel method of dealing with the great feud for quite a while. As a result, I don't get many zines. Or play in many games.

I'm looking forward to being one of your loyal "hot dog eaters".

((Everybody seemed to get a kick out of that phrase. I was brought up in a town right on the American border. Nearby there was another town, which depends for its every existence on American patronage of an amusement park and American summer cottagers. Paradoxically, in that nearby town, prejudice against Americans was rife and they were indeed known as "hot dog eaters". Paradoxical perhaps, because without Americans that town would have literally become a ghost town; not paradoxical because people turn on those on whom they are forced to depend.))

Bruce Linsey:

There is almost nothing I find so exciting as opening my mail to find a spanking new Diplomacy zine, a first issue all ablaze with enthusiasm. Congratulations on a fine premier issue, and best of luck. Of course I want to be a part of Praxis.

So, the editor's mood is "euphoric", eh? I know exactly how you feel. I'll bet that euphoria increased still further when the subscriptions began coming in. How many copies of #1 went out? ((About 255)).

Praxis took me totally by surprise. Had you told anyone of your plans? ((No, no-one. This preserved deniability in case the first issue was a bust. PRAXIS? What are you talking about? I don't know anything about PRAXIS--an elaborate prank, I suppose.)) I see you've been planning this for a long time, you sneaky devil you. You remind me of me--like to deliver the Big Shock and all.

There was a good deal of interesting material inside. I was surprised to learn that Algoma's population is second-lowest among the Ontario electoral districts, given its location. I'd have thought that a district from farther north would qualify for that honour--or is the entire northern section of the province lumped all together into one district?

((An astoundingly perspicacious observation, considering that it is an eminently sensible point and that as far as I know, no person in the province except me has noticed it. More likely that others have noticed it--but they say nothing because it is in their interest to preserve the status quo for one reason or another. There is no reason why ALGOMA (30,882) should have a lower population than COCHRANE NORTH (42,461) or KENORA (47,062) or LAKE NIPIGON (32,474).))

I liked your proposal to bring "half-baked tactics articles" to the pages of Praxis; however I just hope your own two articles don't end up scaring off their potential authors.

Bruce Linsey (cont.)

For the record, I thought both pieces were quite well-done--especially the "Feigned Incomprehension" article. With a few minor twists, that article could have been written by none other than Randolph himself! I hope you'll do occasional writing of this nature in the future-- to me, it's the most interesting sort of reading the hobby has to offer, and Randolph doesn't publish articles often any more.

((People feel intimidated about writing psych-tac-strat articles because the standard of comparison is so high. Personally, I would much rather read about somebody trying to describe, say, how he decides which way to go after his first enemy has been eliminated, even if the article hasn't finely crafted and polished, than I would read about somebody jabbering on about decorating his living room. The relevant questions are, (a) does anyone else feel this way? and (b) what can we do about it?

For the record, I believe that the long-term future of strat-tac articles requires that the mid-game be analysed as thoroughly as openings already have been. That is, all the situations that FRANCE faces after defeating ENGLAND could be reduced into a given, although large, number of scenarios. (Strong RUSSIA and TURKEY/ RUSSIA fighting TURKEY/ RUSSIA and ITALY taking out TURKEY, AUSTRIA being gone, etc.) The merits of each conceivable option (attack ITALY/attack GERMANY/ join GERMANY in a Scandinavian campaign against RUSSIA) and the preferred tactics could be assessed-- not generally, but with reference to a set of specific board positions. People, rightly, want specificity in psych-strat-tac articles. I have no doubt that if the postal hobby still exists fifty years from now people in mid-game situations will be able to refer to articles examining their specific plight even as people can now do in the W'00 board situation.))

Again, good luck with Praxis. I look forward to a few years of entertainment, aggravation, and scholarly debate (just so you know what your new subscribers are expecting from you...). And, I'll see you at BRUXCON!

Dan Stafford:

Great looking new zine you have there. Included is \$5.00 in the currency of the hot-dog eaters for a sub. Which brings up an interesting point. Is it easier for your Mountie types to handle checks on U.S. banks, or yankee dollars?

(Either is O.K. My bank doesn't impose any service charge on cashing U.S. checks, although I bet they'll change that policy once I deposit my sub cheques (that's the way we are supposed to spell the word, by the way) later this week. But I occasionally drop over to Buffalo and it's nice to have a little folding money to take with me. But again, I can't take responsibility for money sent through the mail. In sum, if you want to send U.S. money, don't let my conversion problems dissuade you. Thanks for asking.))

So who are you anyway? I was under the impression that you were a novice. After all, if I haven't heard of you, then you can't be anybody important. And yet, your article about novice players was quite good. Maybe it takes one to know one.

((That thought was running through my mind when I decided to write the article. I think that people forget and cannot fully recapture the mental attitude of a novice. Once you have learned the game, you enter into a state of Experience which cannot be fully evaded. Consequently I feel entirely qualified to tell experienced players how they should write letters to novices.))

I do have one question. Just exactly how many is 50% of 7 for a season separation? 3 is pretty steep as far as I am concerned, but 4 is downright out of line. Oh well, it's not my problem.

((It has to be at least 50%, so it'd be 4. I don't adhere to the season-separation-on-request theory (well, I guess that's obvious). I feel the game ought to keep rolling along, and that people ought to use conditional orders. I'll change that criterion on the unanimous vote of the players to any of my games, though.))

Ken Peel:

Well, we've certainly never crossed paths before, but it looks like your 'zine may turn out to be on the interesting side, so I would be most pleased to try it out as a charter member. To facilitate this process, you will find enclosed the requisite \$5 for 10 south-of-the-border issues. That should put us on parallel paths for, say, about a year?

((Yes, so I figure it. We have crossed paths before, sort of, when I applied for and got a sample of your fine 'zine POLITESSE. Thanks for the copy of your latest issue, as well.))

John Michalski:

Thanks for the free issue. It looks very good, and I'd sub if I were still active in postal Dip.

((Well, what do we have to do to convince you?))

Steve Langley:

Thank you for the sample copy of PRAXIS. If you live up to its promise, there may be three fine Canadian zines.

I regret that I will not be playing in PRAXIS. I like to play Dip but I also know my limits and I am at them at this time. What, by the way, is white press?

((This is a trick question, as I know you know what white press is, at least by your own definition. A couple of days after I got your letter I received my copy of MASTERS OF DECEIT, in which you discuss the definitions of various kinds of press. I don't have it in front of me but I respectfully disagree with your definition. White press is labelled in such a way as to identify its author, whether it be from a home supply centre, or a home province, or any supply centre or indeed province occupied by you. Grey press is datelined in such a way as not to identify its author, but not to misidentify itself as being authored by another player. Black press permits such misidentification.))

On first blush your interests and mine have little interesection. I am not terribly interested in politics or baseball and am very interested in both computers and science fiction. Still, we do have something in common around the edges.

((Theology is another of my interests. Politics, baseball, theology, law, television--that about wraps it up. Oh yes--two more--poetry and English Literature more generally. Dull, n'est-ce pas?))

Chris Greaves:

Imagine my surprise when, on wading through the waste-paper basket in my study I recognized your handwriting on some of the junk mail which emanates from Canada's vast and ever-shrinking forests.

By now you will be pondering what to call your second 'zine, for in my limited experience, the interval between the first and second issues is strewn with sleepless nights, spent wondering aloud such thoughts as "Why am I doing this?" and "Why didn't I do it some other way?" and so on.

((As for a name, how about PRAXIS #2? And I didn't really have any regrets about #1--a few lines I thought I could have thrown in to make some parts a little more punchy.))

I skipped the bit about "what will be in the zine" for a couple of reasons. One is that the content might well be determined by the contributors rather than the editor (publication of this letter in its entirety will be a measure of that !) and another reason is that, like most of your friends, I'm pretty indiscriminate in my reading tastes.

I think that you're a little off-target with your thoughts on Lewis. While it's true that his comments may not be politically aligned with yours, no-one in their right mind assumes that every Anglican subscribes to Garnsworthy's views? As a non-Canadian (there! the truth is out!!) I don't feel that Mulroneu manages to state the case of all Canadians, any more than the majority of us believe that all female Texans are

called "Sue Ellen" or that all San Franciscans are gay. Or that my views represent those of the Toronto FTF players. (Did that get our group another plug?) Actually I'm rather glad that the church thought to have a say in the state politics of funding for church schools.

((I'm not. I quite agree that individual Christians, including archbishops, have a right and indeed a duty to apply Christian principles to political issues and to speak out, no matter how barmy these people may be. If he was not trying to represent his views as those of all Anglicans, why did he try to get the Synod of Toronto to endorse his position? That type of official endorsement should be reserved for matters on which the church can speak dogmatically, speaking for the whole body of Christ. Garnsworthy would make the church act like a typical sleazy, slippery, graspy, greeding, cigar-smoking, back-slapping political pol except that people are supposed to have respect for this pol because he wears clerical collar. Strange that an issue affecting the church's material self-interest would be the only one to provoke him to such rage.))

Until the TTC starts putting a dictionary in every streetcar route, please don't use words like nefarious.

My fond regards to Dr. Zhu.
((He sends the zhame to yhu thoo.))

Ron (Canada) Brown:

Welcome to the land of publishers. Delighted with PRAXIS. Looks good and enthusiastic. Just what the Canadian hobby needs. (Not that the others aren't good-- they are--but more quality never hurt,eh?)

Don't worry what your zine's gimmick will be. That will sort itself out in time. I think zines tend to reflect the personality of their publishers more and more as they gain self-confidence. In Snafu's case, I didn't hit my stride until the mid-20's. Come to think of it, that's when No Fixed Address matured as a zine too--about issue 25. I guess one's initial enthusiasm isn't enough to carry a zine past No. 20 or so (most fold by then), so the publisher has to start ^{drawing} on his own personality to keep it going.

((I hope that none of you are holding your breath waiting to see any more Alan Stewart "personality" than you've seen to date. What you see is what you get.))

I like the way you're naming games. Are you a poli-sci major? (Maybe you said what you study or work at, but I don't recall.) My only beef is that you left Nepean off your map of Ottawa-Carleton. Not your fault. I've been searching for a map suitable for publication that shows where Nepean is for years and haven't found one yet. I don't know why maps of the region always figure dinky little towns like Kanata or Rochester, but never have the second largest city in the area on them. Maybe I should call my city hall to complain?

((Ah, I cut Nepean out of my map deliberately--it is not part of the revised electoral district of CARLETON. Indeed, the revised proposals would create a riding called NEPEAN, honouring that great city with the weird name. Although if you live on Chesterton St., (near the Stewart Farm?) you will not be in the revised district of NEPEAN, because NEPEAN is now too big to be subsumed within one electoral district. You would be placed with parts of the cities of Ottawa and Gloucester in the revised OTTAWA-RIDEAU. Some people living in your area of NEPEAN seem to be mad about this-- what do you think of it??))

Re your editorial on Archbishop Garnsworthy. Would you rather the church remain silent on morality and public policy? I have no strong opinions one way or the other on the issue in question, but I would rather have my archbishop speak out and be wrong than to have him turn a blind eye to the world. You seem to be saying that the church was silent in the past, so it should remain so!

((If you like archbishops who speak out and are wrong then Garnsworthy is definitely right up your alley. His successor, Bothwell, is of the same ilk too--he is from my native region of the province. Why is he following me around?))

Though it has nothing to do with your comments, I'm an Anglican too, so I think I have a right to voice my opinions regarding the archbishop. Do you get CrossTalk? If you do, you'll realize that the church is waging a low-keyed campaign against the

Ron (Canada) Brown (cont.):

reintroduction of the death penalty, yet I have heard nothing about it on the news. The point is, the church does speak, though we may not always be aware of it.

((Another example of the church speaking out on something it should be keeping silent about. Although I am an abolitionist (though one feeling myself slipping toward acceptance of capital punishment as time goes by) I think it is completely wrong for the church (as opposed to groups of concerned Christians) taking any stand on it. Christian arguments can be made for both points of view, so the Church ought to stay out.))

(By the way, I ((this is Ron again)) attended a dinner with our local MP, Bill Tupper, as a guest speaker a few weeks ago. Now Tupper is about as conservative as one can get. (Reminds me of George Hees), yet he too spoke out against Davis' method of rule by decree as was evidenced in the school funding case. So, it's not only our leftish church leaders who were appalled at Davis' method of government, though few would use the inflammatory language attributed to Archbishop Garnsworthy.)

((First, the language wasn't "attributed" to Garnsworthy, he said it, at a press conference specially called for the purpose, and he has repeatedly refused to apologize for it. Second, Davis issued no "decree". Garnsworthy, Tupper, and anyone else who says he did simply don't know what they are talking about. However, it is true that many Progressive Conservatives opposed Premier Davis's decision (although 90% of them were too gutless to say so at the time.) Davis had a bit of a messiah complex himself and found nothing objectionable in changing established party policy without consulting even his cabinet, much less the ordinary joes and janes who form the party's cadre. But all this has nothing to do with Hitler and is nobody's business except paid-up members of the Progressive Conservative party. If they had spoken up earlier, over Suncor, over Bill 7, over Davis' unconservative toadying to Trudeau which allowed the Americanization of our constitution, then the separate school mess wouldn't have happened and the Progressive Conservatives would not now be in opposition in Ontario after forty-two years of rule.))

Conrad von Metzke:

Not to provide you an excuse for self-adulation, but PRAXIS is one of the nicest surprises I've had in quite a while. Well-set-up, highly literate (something I always appreciate), varied, boding quite well for the future--that's how I'd sum it. (You did make one error of grammar, however; and my trivia quiz to you is, find it!)

((In "The Party Line", question 4, last line, "that" should have been "which". What do I win? Were there others?))

((I'm glad someone noted this error. I inserted it intentionally, and if none of you had caught it I would have berated you.))

Paul Gardner:

Thanks for the sample of Praxis. A very interesting zine in that I can't fit it into any obvious categories other than that it seems to fit your personal interests--which I feel is the safest turf for a zine--stick with what you know. Very well, here's \$5 for a sub (if I remember to enclose it)... I'm afraid I'll have to stay out of any new games despite the temptation (I believe your naming individual games after electoral districts is a first in dip).

Your demystification department was quite good. I'll put that book on my must read list. These days, though, it seems that if you write letters at all, you're ahead of the rest. Such elaborate scheming often doesn't fit in.

I'm not sure that I completely agree with your novice article. Part 2, yes no problem, but in Part 1 you overlook that novices come in all shapes and sizes. Many just aren't ready to commit the time for letter writing. These are the other half from the enthusiastic type you mentioned. A lot of them just don't make it. Many are in high school entering college and going through all these transitions.

All-in-all a good looking first outing. Hope to see more soon.

((An interesting article might be written about different types of novices-- how do you recognize them, and how do you deal with the varying types? Or perhaps wer'e back to the other side again--as a novice, what do you write to convince the other players that you're not one of these bad novices who have to be eliminated?))

Robert A. O'Donnell:

Hello and thank you for the first issue of Praxis; I enjoyed reading it. How did you get my name and address? Who gave my address to you? I should really like to know that piece of information. ((Why, are you on the lam from the law, or something?)) Could you please write back and give the information to me? Inside you will find a SASE for your replies to my questions.

((Indeed I did, but unfortunately letters addressed with Yank 22¢ stamps don't cut much ice up here. I got your name off somebody's mailing list--I'll try and figure out whose and put a little note on the back of your 'zine.))

Jim Finley:

Hidehi! I shall indeed subscribe to Praxis, and play in one of your games--doesn't matter which. I hope I get in in time.

To be sociable, tell you about my self, address points you made in the first issue, and do some blathering:

I'm 27 years old, a U.S. marine, and intensely proud of it, a father of two sweet kids and twice as proud of them, a permanent parttime student, and dabbler. I enjoy FTF and PBM Dip--like the game, like to write and read press, write articles once in a while, am bored to a coma by feuds and refuse to read anything about them.

I'm more or less single. My wife Robyn (also an excellent Dip player and hobby member) and I split up last year. It was an amicable and civil break, and we have a great deal of respect and regard for each other. ((Hmm, why didn't I read this before I started typing? This should be in "Solidarity".)) We just found ourselves grown into different people from who we'd been and expected to be, and no longer compatible. I'm here, she and the kids are in California.

I've been in the Corps a bit over nine years now--in August I was magically transformed from a sergeant into a lieutenant. I've been an infantryman, computer operator, drill instructor, marksmanship coach and career planner (the guy who gets people to reenlist.) I'm trying to get reassigned to computers now that I'm an officer, and hope to be sent back to California where my kids are. Chris is 4, Jessica will be 3 next month.

I'm engaged to be married this summer. My fiancée, Cathy, is a fulltime student, currently at Smith College in Massachusetts. I think she's great--why else would I marry her?; she has no interest in Dip, however. Her only flaw--

My hobbies are reading (anything, but I prefer humor, history, fantasy/science fiction and militaria), listening to music (rock & roll, classical, progressive jazz, some 60s stuff), exercising, drinking beer, going to school, cooking, and sleeping.

Right now I'm midway through a professional school, The Basic School, for new officers. It lasts 6 months; having begun in September, we graduate in March.

Please excuse the notebook paper and the sloppy writing--I'm cheap, I'm tired and it's late.

Good luck with your zine! Hope to hear from you soon. Take care.

P.S. I write articles occasionally, but until March I'll probably be too busy. Would you want any? History, humor, etc.

((Yes, I would, especially if they are written as well as the rest of the letter. I think I have a find here: don't write articles for anyone else. Exclusives for PRAXIS only.))

Bruce McIntyre:

I don't really have the time to write this, but then when another CANADIAN zine appears, you make time. Welcome to the ranks of publishers (oh no, he says, not another variation on that theme!) and the elevated ranks of Canadian ones at that. Praxis is for me a personal turning point: I've now been sent more "first-issue" samples (Praxis, It's a Trap!, and The Canadian Diplomat) than "last-issue" ones (Snafu!, and--what a sample--Voice of Doom). Enclosed a cheque: I wouldn't miss this for the world. Care to bet that five Canadian zines make the top ten in the Runestone next year? ((8-1 against)).

Bruce McIntyre (cont.):

How 'bout six in the top twenty? ((5-2 against. Both odds quotations are based on what we know now. Something may be happening in the near future that will change those odds, though. Would you like me to tell you all what it is?))

((Thought so (heh, heh)))

The feigned incomprehension example you've printed made me mad just to read it. If I were playing against this guy (FRANCE), I'd suicide against him and hope England helped me out. What else are you going to get from this "ally"? If I propose something, I expect to hear about it from my proposee--I don't want him to agree without telling me what it is he's agreeing to. Of course, if I'm Germany and England isn't writing, I'm not going to send France an "ally to ally" letter without some specific order sets for Spring 1901. How 'bout that?

((That be jes' fine. However I put it to you that

(i) in conditions of time constraint, as the deadline approached, it is not unknown to write/receive a letter that does not spell out everything that has been agreed to, but purports to agree with a proposal made by the other side

(ii) you would be foolish to suicide against France on the basis of this one incident in the "hope" that England would help.))

Good luck with the venture, you've certainly gotten off to a good start!

Jeff Bevis:

I seem to have caught the bug as far as getting in to more Dip games, and your 'zine looks to be well done as well as interesting.

So enclosed is my \$5.00 American. I assume in Toronto you can x-change rather easily? (Yes, indeed.))

((Unfair to Jeff to put this in here. Most of the letter would go to other departments. I guess the phrase "well done" just caught my eye.))

Pete Birks:

I've just received PRAXIS #1, which I assume is an invitation to trade. Fine. Enclosed is GH 126. I hope you like it.

((Indeed, I loved it, and am happy to trade, although I must warn you that you're getting ripped off. GH (Greatest Hits) 126 was forty-six pages of great chat. I liked the article about your being caught in the Brixton riots!))

James Early:

Praxis looks to be an above average zine. ((Thank you.)) I read it cover to cover. ((You're getting warmer.)) I especially enjoyed "The Party Line" and the article on novices. I can't wait to see more.

Let me introduce myself. I am 17 years old and a senior in high school. I plan to study electrical engineering in college and I will probably attend the University of Texas at Austin. I publish a zine called The Razor's Edge (samples enclosed), which is mainly devoted to games (although there are a few articles and contests). I admit that it is just an average zine and that I don't have the time to make it great. Anyway, you can sub if you like, but don't feel obligated. ((I enjoyed the samples very much and like the look of your 'zine. Do you think you'll be running any more Final Conflict games? I'd like to play.)) I've played PBM Dippy for a year and a half (so far two eliminations and a survival. Great, huh?) ((I believe that novices should, ceteris paribus, play a lot more than the one or two starts that are counselled in some wimpy quarters. A lot of people would drop after playing to two wipeouts and one survival. More starts gives more chances of achieving an encouraging outcome.)) My special interests are in politics, science, and Christianity. ((Well, we share two out of three, but science is all ugly bugs and dirty smells to me.)) I noticed that you are running your games after Canadian political districts, so obviously, you have some interest in politics. What is your opinion of Mulroney? Reagan? Gorbachev? I'd like to know. ((All in good time. We'll pick it up with James' conclusion next time.))

False Consciousness

The purpose of the first "False Consciousness" was to serve as an Awful Warning by alerting potential subscribers to the type of opinions I held in anticipation of the day when I might be called upon to express them. That is, I had no particular animus against Ken Peel's "Call to Contain the Great Feud", but I thought I should let you all know what I would have said if I had felt called to comment upon it, so that people who didn't like it could say "Phew, I don't want any more of this." "False Consciousness" #1 served this purpose admirably. Some people didn't like it, and would have been much happier had it not been included; some people would have subbed and applied for gamestarts if it had not been included. I could have guessed that when I published it, and thought it better to enlighten people in advance rather than luring people into subbing and then, in issue #3, suddenly launching into some diatribe that turned them off completely.

Anyway, I don't have any complaints about Diplomacy life this issue, but I do feel an obligation to let people express their reactions to FC #1. I have printed everything that smacks of a reasoned attempt to address issues canvassed last time. Here and there I have removed something that struck me as needlessly provocative, sometimes [inserting less provocative words and bracketing them like this]. Nobody wrote anything especially objectionable, either on or off the record, but I'd like to keep any discussion on these inflammatory issues as cool and collected as possible.

Oh yes: I chose Ken Peel as a target for FC#1 deliberately, because he struck me as being too rational and moderate a person to feel that because I had disagreed with him, I had to be made a permanent target of ritual execration. And I was right!

Ken Peel:

Well, we've certainly never crossed paths before, but it looks like your 'zine may be on the interesting side, so I would be most pleased to try it out as a charter member....Just steer totally clear from you-know-which feud, eh? You wouldn't believe some of the crap that is coming down from both sides on that thing...and you think the submissions in NFA are bad? I beg to differ on the Chris Carrier thing. Yeah, parts of it are fairly funny, but Carrier is an odd and troublesome character. He met Terry Tallman in professional play-by-mail gaming, and Terry happened to send him a NSWG w/ Bad Doggie. Carrier is a true feud fan and voyeur. Fascination with feuding is Carrier's only reason he is here, and his only real participation in our community. He spends a lot of time on long distance telephone calls digging up leads on the latest goings on in the world of megadip. His joy with feuding goes way beyond the concept of laughing at it so that one doesn't cry at it.

((I read your letter about fifteen seconds after getting off the phone with Chris Carrier and this paragraph stuck out like an accusatory finger. FNC, a Beyerlein Number for Peel-Carrier, please?))

So much for my little sermon. You certainly had your own in regards to my own little modest suggestion. Let me try to clarify a few points. Your second paragraph in "False Consciousness" has a condescending tone that I mildly resent. I realize that you were just trying to make a point, and did not mean to imply that I am necessarily naive and wet behind the ears in all respects, nor that my circular was motivated by a self-serving desire to go down in hobby history as having ended the great hobby holocaust of '84, '85, '86 (etc.)

((I certainly did not mean to imply either of those things. Nor did I think that your argument should be treated with condescension--against condensation, perhaps,

((because it's all wet!!! Thank you, thank you. That was vintage Alan Stewart humour, ((such as it is. Wahahohoha.))

As you might have noticed from the circular, I never claimed to be advocating actions that would actually "end" the feud. Only those directly involved can do that. All I did was call for individuals to take actions to contain the feud, as efforts to actually end it had failed and it appeared that a new escalation was in the works. First, I urged all those who share my disgust for the feud and what it has done to our community over the past year to do what many have already done either by cutting back on their zines or by dropping out altogether: vote with your feet and resign from the 'zines that give prominence to this feud. Even though such actions may not result in even one 'zine ending its enthrallment with this monstrosity, it at least will contain the feud away from those who are tired of it. More than anything else, such actions would be to make a point. And eventually, one might hope, the point would not be lost on those who continue to insist on propelling this feud forward (which is certainly their right, but it is our right as well to refrain from being their captive audience.)

((You make a valid point when you mention that you were not promising an end to the feud as the result of the proposed boycott. There are still immense practical problems with the proposal, though, and I have a hard time imagining it resulting in amendment of any 'zine's editorial policies. And if no 'zines's editorial policies are affected, then the only people who are hurt by the boycott are...those people who are sufficiently aroused against feuding to give up some 'zines they would otherwise like to get as the necessary price for forwarding the great cause! As a general principle, a boycott is not worth proposing unless it has reasonable chances of success, because if it fails the cause motivating it is inevitably damaged.))

Perhaps on the second point, I could have phrased the header better. Just as with the first point, I do not support any gangland or lynch mob actions against anyone. The individual actions I urge are those of the primary participants in the one great feud. All of this flyer applies to this one, albeit complex and intense, feud. I believe you set up a straw man to attack this proposal with your "designated goon" analogy in hockey (whatever that is). ((Hockey? It's a sport played on ice by twelve players wearing skates, but that's not important right now. Sorry, I just sat Airplane Two the other night and it's been playing back in my mind. Didn't mean to interrupt.)) But I assume you merely misinterpreted what I had to say. You object that the key players in this feud should not feel concerned about what effect their participation and feuding actions may unjustly have on their hobby custodial projects. Again, I don't urge anyone to lead a charge against hobby projects headed by those involved in the great feud (such as the two you mentioned.) I do not, however, wish to ignore the fact that in many cases such collateral damage does occur. For instance: I never had any objection to any of the things that Bruce did as semi-Zine Register custodian. In fact, if someone hadn't stepped in at that time, we might have very well skipped that year of the ZR. But even with that said, the healing process under Simon Billenness is a wonder to behold. In a similar sense, do you doubt that the office of the BNC might not have been damaged by being sucked into the feud if Bill Quinn was involved? Would it not be the honourable thing for him to pass it on if he felt that he had to jump into the thing with both feet? You see a danger to innocents by such a thing being considered the honourable thing to do. When I look at this feud, however, I see very few innocents.

((Well, I did not imply that you supported or encouraged gangland or lynch mob actions, but rather that your policy would have the unintended consequence of encouraging such actions. In hockey, "goons" are sometimes sent out to engage the other side's best player in a fight. Both players will be off for five minutes, or if the goon is lucky, for more. Your team has lost only the unskilled goon, while the other team has temporarily lost its best player. Rick Vaive, The best player on the Toronto Maple Leafs, is in fact out right now with an injured hand--the injury occurred in doing batt' with a goon. I don't think this is a straw man at all: you get the two parties to agree that they will keep silent or give up their positions, and--well, I spoke in FC#1 of spearcarriers being assigned to attack these custodians. No assignments would be necessary--people would be lining up outside the post offices the morning of the day the agreement went into effect, because if you can provoke somebody into one fit of anger with outrageous accusations he or she has to give up the office.))

Ken Peel (cont.)

((Ken, I never "object/ed" that the key players in the feud should not feel concerned about what effect their participation and feuding actions may unjustly have on their hobby custodial projects". The problem of collateral damage is a real one--and I feel that the danger is escalating, for reasons I'm not going to get into. But the fair thing is to require that custodians not allow their feuding to affect the job they do as custodians--as simple as that. I have not seen any persuasive evidence that either of the two custodianships in question has been hurt by the actions of the custodians themselves: As to damage caused by other people's actions--why should the custodians be held responsible for that?))

So much for my two cents' worth, Alan. As all pubbers learn very soon, we are judged differently than non-pubbers because of what we say in print. It looks like your 'zine has great potential, and I hope we get to hear more about your political involvements. In as far as the great feud is concerned, I urge discretion to the nth degree. Bet you hadn't guessed.

((You're so right about the difference between pubbers and non-pubbers: one minute nobody cares about your opinions regardless of how many letters you write or games you play in, and the next minute every word you utter is scrutinized as if emitting from the mouth o'an oracle. And discretion? Well, I'll do my best. My mother always used to say to me, "Alan, don't be so outspoken."

Thanx for your thoughtful comments, Ken. As I said last time, you deserve applause for undertaking the project.))

Randolph Smyth:

"False Consciousness": interesting question about Canada being Linsey country. True, but I'm not sure it's due to any particular Canadian-ness. My impression is that most of the U.S. is also Linsey country, and non-Linsey country is geographically restricted to pockets surrounding some vocal publishers (e.g. NYC, west coast states). My theory is that the anti-Linsey forces don't really have much interest in convincing the hobby beyond their small circle of personal friends, while Bruce has tended to apply his arguments with a broader geographic brush. For instance, during the debate over the future of the Runestone poll, nobody ever took the trouble to document their criticism of Bruce, just sent me a lot of little anecdotes. Enough to make me wonder about my decision, but nowhere near enough to make me reverse it. You may conclude that they never really had a case at all, but I suppose it's equally possible that they just couldn't be bothered expressing it to me (perhaps on the theory that I was a "Linsey clone" anyhow.) However, I'm scarcely more sympathetic to their side based on the second theory rather than the first, since it would imply that the hobby is being divided out of disinterest as much as anything else. Many allegations should be provable, but far too few have been proven--that's the basis of my "preference" for Bruce, such as it is.

((I don't think that non-Linsey Country is as geographically restricted as you suggest. It's only natural, I suppose, for people to want their word to be taken at face value without the need to supply a mass of documentation in support of it. But persistent refusal to supply evidence out of pique at one's word not being automatically accepted is a disservice.))

John Michalski:

I wish to take exception to the errors you listed in False Consciousness, the feud article. I agree with your custodian commentary, but must disagree with others. Let me take them in order.

1. "Viciousness starts when other people defend their friends." Bullshit. Viciousness starts when people step beyond name-calling or insults. Writing to feuder relatives or employees is viciousness. Sending death threats is viciousness. Supporting your friends in somebody's hobby letter column is not viciousness.

((I should have said "The damage of feuding becomes irreparable when people start to get involved just to defend their friends." The ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ damage to the hobby and hurts to people caused by the collateral feuding has been greater than would be justified if all of the original allegations made against the principals were true. Escalation for

John Michalski (cont.)

((escalation's sake becomes the governing principle.))

2. The Berch-Langley side-feud is...plain dirty. Wrongo. The Berch-Langley feud is a perfectly classic hobby feud: two people using a hobby forum (forums) to call each other names in the best and most imaginative terms they can. This is as clear-cut a feud as the hobby has ever seen.

((Alright, you got me again. The Berch-Langley feud is not as dirty as the source feud, but it is as uncontrolled, as unrestrained by reason or fairness or judgment, as irresponsibly conducted.))

3. The Berch-Langley feud is based on issues of no importance. Missed the mark again, Maple Breath. The Berch-Langley feud is based on personal dislike and personality clash. Except in the case of the Great Feud, personality and dislike are the sole issue in all hobby feuds. The rest is just ammunition ("issues", "facts", "testimonials", "evidence", "logic" (sic), bounty offers, etc.)

((No, I stick by my story here. This one is more trivial than a feud of independent origin could ever be. Sure, I suppose you need some personality clash to flame a legitimate dispute into a feud, but I think that spin-off feuds have tangential relationships if any to legitimate disputes.))

4. Why is Canada Linsey country? It's one of two reasons: either Canadians are the smartest and best people on earth, or, they're the dumbest shits on Earth....

((For those of you who haven't been around for that long, John Michalski published a great 'zine called Brutus Bulletin for many years. I thought that if I was provocative enough I could get him to write a letter for my column...))

Bruce Linsey:

I also enjoyed your "False Consciousness" section. Your paragraph about the "designated goon" is precisely one of the arguments I gave Ken Peel against his proposal, only you worded it much better. I mean, if I suddenly decide that I don't like Custodian X, then all I have to do is accuse him of [a reprehensible feud action] and if he should as much as point out that [this feud action is impossible], he's got to give up his custodianship! That is the biggest reason that I do not agree with Ken's proposal, aside from its sheer impracticality: how many people are actually going to give up No Fixed Address or Whitestonia, e.g.?

I've often wondered why Canada seems to be "Linsey country", as you put it. While I wouldn't have categorized Dave Carter as being on my side (he's more neutral), it is true that I don't have a single enemy in the Canadian hobby.... In my opinion, this is probably due more to a random fluctuation than anything else: there are so few Canadian publishers that the chances of all of them going one way or the other in the feud just at random aren't really all that slim. Add to that the fact that Canadians seem to enjoy the hobby more for its intellectual aspects (as opposed to people from the densely-populated U.S., who tend more toward the "socializing" end of the hobby) and you have another clue. My approach is more "intellectual" than Kathy's, who is in turn much more a "socializer" than I am. There are geographic regions of the U.S. where I find myself strongly supported as well. In the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains areas, I have numerous friends and no enemies except ((Robert)) Olsen that I know of (there may be an occasional closet case). On the other hand, the entire Pacific coast is an extremely mixed bag, and Kathy naturally does better in the New York City area, not to mention nearby regions such as Pennsylvania and New Jersey. It is a curious phenomenon.

((I thought that I might get a rise^{out} of Dave Carter by listing him on your side, but Dave is too nice a guy to respond to any slight, no matter how grievous. Yes, I agree he is more neutral (some people wrote in to defend him from my charge). And that change makes the possibility of randomness accounting for the pattern much more likely.))

((I think you struck gold when you mentioned the differing attitudes towards the socializing aspect of the hobby. Canadian publishers definitely have kind of a "family" feeling towards one another--a lot of mutual plugs, and the like, and general warm feeling. But very little interest in spending a lot of time visiting, or talking to, or clubbing it up with one another. The kind of family where you would do anything for the other members but you don't really want to spend that much time together, if you know what I mean. Definite cross-border differences in how Dip socializing is treated. Could be relevant

Chris Greaves:

Feuds. Boring Boring Boring. Ken Peel has the right idea. We use it on all small children: "just ignore them". ((Am I to take that to mean that you intend to treat Hazel like a feuder?)) The English use the same technique on nations they don't really like. Dropping the whole subject, in every possible way, would put an end to it. I'm prepared to start a Feuder's Zine so that--what am I saying? It must be the coffee.

I agree with your view of feuds being inflamed by people's friends. Maybe a feuders' zine wouldn't be such a bad idea after all! And how can we best draw Robert Acheson into a feud?

Rod Walker:

Your comments in "False Consciousness" were very well taken.

((That's the way I like 'em: short and sweet.))

Ron (Canada) Brown:

Generally I agree with your comments on the feud. The reason most Canadian publishers appear to side with Linsey? I think (and I can hear the Yanks howling already) because Canadians have a finer sense of justice than Americans do. We are more closely tied to the British concept of "fair play" while the Americans tend to view justice as a form of revenge--at least that is the view they present to the world through their movies and television shows. So, when it comes to "differences of opinion" (to put it politely), we tend to have a more dispassionate eye. We tend more to "weigh the evidence" than to get out our sixguns and saddle up the horses when he hear of rustlers in the next town.

Historically there are reasons for this beyond the closer British ties north of the border. There's the simple fact of survival in this clime. Those who succumb to extreme emotions tend to freeze to death.

Conrad von Metzke:

Regarding the Great Feud, in general I agree with your comments. Ken made a noble try, and for my part I want nothing much to do with the adamant feuders, but there won't be any boycott, and nobody will relinquish or be successfully removed from a hobby service position. It just ain't logical.

However. I think Ken's point, reading into his exhortation to withdraw from journals 'infected' with feuding, is that a thing of this sort invariably dies without constant fuel. If gamers and publishers would simply wash their hands of the matter, and refuse to condone any further pursuit of the matter, it would wither rather quickly except among those few who have already crept over the edge. I laud that aim, and will support it completely. Lord knows, if I open a journal and find Feud crap therein, I lose interest instantly. Hell, I have enough on my hands without that silliness. Also, I remember well the pointless ulcers of my own past feuds. I've grown up. If others haven't, tough luck for them; they can bloody well go inhabit their own petty little world.

((I admit to being instinctively unsympathetic to the 'wash-our-hands-of-feuding' position, because it is so similar to the positions you see in everyday life: "wash-your-hands-of-the-responsibility-to-report-crimes", wash your hands of your neighbour's problems, of the need for political involvement, of the fact that much of the world is starving, of the need to get involved, of the need to act justly and speak out against those who don't do so. Where wrongs have been committed, where people are unjustly attacked, no, I don't believe that the best response is "Well, time to wash my hands of this." It's the old story: sometimes people just don't want to get involved, because it's safer and more comfortable to just peek out from behind the drapes and look out the window and watch.))

((But notwithstanding all that, yes, there may come a time when the only solution is for people to wash their hands of it and demand that others do so as well.))

Paul Gardner:

As for "the feud" just the fact that someone is trying to end it is a good sign. I haven't seen any feud stuff an a while--which is a good sign in itself--but then I don't sub to the main feud zines.

Kathy Byrne:

I'm enclosing a sub check hoping that you don't plunge into feuding.
((Me? No chance.))

Chris Carrier:

Thanks for the RWA nomination! I had considered Illuminated MegaDip funny but not RWA-class material until you mentioned the award!

Please send in your nominations for Feud, Feud Letter and Feuder of the Year.
((I gather that I missed the deadline for these important awards, which is probably just as well, I suppose.))

Jeff Bevis:

One thing I do have to ask and I'm not too concerned over showing my novicehood, is this: What is "the Great Feud" and (if you weren't being sarcastic), how could any controversy relating to the game almost "have finished the hobby"?

((If you don't know what the Great Feud is, then, in my opinion, you occupy a very desirable state, and I would be the last one to attempt to dispossess you from it. I do not think that TGF is likely to finish the hobby but many respected people have said that they think it might do so. Further, I wasn't being sarcastic with my comment. I have no doubt that if someone were to come up with a way to resolve The Great Feud he would (although somewhat hyperbolically in my view) be honoured by future Dip generations as a saviour of the hobby.))

Bob Acheson:

I think that you should expand on your comments in regard to "This is a particularly Canadian attribute, I have noticed, and I think that the reasons for this can be found in the Canadian national character, but I digress."

C'mon Alan, you've piqued my interest, now expand on our national flaws.

((Did I say that it was a flaw? I am reluctant to start ascribing different behaviours to differences of national character; the whole idea of "national character" is a somewhat dingy and dangerous one, and redolent of xenophobia and mindless chauvinism. However I do think the difference of approach is due to the differences between the American and Canadian national characters, and I stand by my statement.))

James Early:

...the thing about the feud was hilarious. I can just see Kathy and Brux hugging and kissing!

((Why is this so far-fetched? Reagan and Gorbachev seemed to get along very well, as did Gorbachev and Thatcher. Maybe what we need is a full-fledged summit meeting. Any Henry Kissingers out there? But actually the only reason that Reagan and Gorbachev met is that in their cases they both recognize that the dream of an "alternate world" where one would not have to come into contact with the other is impossible because of nuclear weapons. Dreams of an alternate hobby, however damaging to the real hobby as it genuinely exists, can be maintained for a long time and may even be capable of achievement if people are bitter and single-minded enough.))

Alan Stewart:

So that's it for False Consciousness #2. As Don Rickles used to say, I apologize to anyone who I haven't offended. Recently I was reading some back issues of a 'zine dating from before the start of The Great Feud. What a comparatively pleasant hobby it was then! No them-or-us mentality, no sense that everyone in the hobby had to be placed in one or another camp, no censors scrutinizing every line you write waiting for the opportunity to seize upon one or two words and pronounce the verdict -- Guilty! and the sentence, which is usually a Death Curse much as was imposed by the primitive community described by Jean Auel in The Clan of the Cave Bear.

The way to respond to Death Curses is the same way that Ayla responded--to ignore them and persist in believing that you are alive, despite all evidence to the contrary. By

The Withering Away

In this department of PRAXIS, you will generally find the last page.... This time, hobby news! Congratulations to Ron (California) Brown, who tied a National Football League record by running two kickoffs back for touchdowns when the Los Angeles Rams defeated the Green Bay Packers 34-17.... It's nominations time again for the Don Miller Memorial Award and the Rod Walker Award. The DMMA is for service performed for the hobby in 1985. Last year's winner was Robert Olsen.

The RWA is for the best individual piece of Diplomacy-related writing in the hobby during 1985. The deadline for hobbyists's nominations is January 1, 1986. This obviously doesn't leave enough time, which is an annual problem with this award. The show is run by Larry

Peery, P.O. Box 8416, San Diego, CA, U.S.A. 92102. I have already written to Larry asking him to extend the deadline for nominations. Why not do the same? Once the nominations are in, Nominations Committees for each award will vote and select the five finalists, with the winner of each award to be selected by a vote of the whole hobby. (You can also send your nominations in to members of these committees, Larry's flyer says, but unfortunately he hasn't mentioned who they are.) Anyway, I like the Rod Walker Award is in particular (Bruce Linsey was last year's winner, by the way). I have already nominated nine pieces of writing for the Walker Award. Five of them are by subscribers to PRAXIS...but I won't tell you who I've nominated at least until the final ballot is released. You don't want my nominations to be the only ones do you? So nominate your own favourites, and send Larry a copy of the article. Oh yes, and get him to extend that deadline. Write today!

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I don't know you and you aren't getting PRAXIS at all. Sorry. _____

Rod,

- (1) I'm honoured to have you as a subber.
- (2) Will respond to your feud letter soon. Your analysis is unusually sensible, but I don't agree with your conclusion.

Alan