Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus #9

July 30, 1986

An irregular publication of the US Orphan Service

Your Orphan Games Honcho is Jim Burgess, 100 Holden Street, Providence, RI 02908-5731, (401) 351-0287.

The USOS is committed to supporting the smooth operation to completion of PBM Diplomacy games and variants registered with the Boardman and Miller Number Custodians. This rag is published with the intent of facilitating the transference of games that have been turned over to the US Orphan Service to be rehoused and providing a forum for discussion of issues pertaining to the operation of the Service. My two assistants are:

Scott Hanson
3508 4th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55408
(612) 874-0082

Steve Langley
2296 Eden Roc Lane #1
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 927-4077

Current News Section

If any of you would like to receive all issues of *YVSC* that I publish, the cost will be $0.25/issue. All players, GM's, and custodians who have an interest in particular issues will receive those issues free. I am willing to work out trades or other agreements on request, noting that the publication schedule of the szine will not be consistent. I also publish a "quasi-szine" called *The Boob Report* that I will throw in for free on any trade deals. The cost of trades is borne by me and causes no drain on US Orphan Service funds. A number of people have asked to receive only those issues that have substantive discussion and not those containing only game adjudications. Issues containing only game adjudications will bear a "1/2" label and go out only to those with an interest in the particular problem involved. The last "1/2" issue (#8 1/2) contained an editorial concerning funding of hobby services and the problems being caused to custodians by Robert Sacks. If anyone receiving this would like to see that one page editorial, drop me a 22 cent stamp. The essence is well contained in the comments of the writers herein.

Steve Heinowski is conducting a survey of all of the games in the hobby to determine their current status. Any games that he cannot find or that are reported to be in trouble will then be referred to me for action. All publishers should have been in touch with Steve or I by now; if you haven't, please send a list of all games (with BN) that you are running to Steve Heinowski, 12034 Pyle South Amherst, Oberlin, OH 44074. Thank you for your assistance in this important task. A follow up report on currently missing games follows below. If you have any information on any of those games, please contact Steve or myself.

USOS Standbies and GMs Willing to Take Games

The USOS keeps a public list of volunteers to standby for orphaned games. It is my opinion that GMs who take over games should not have to exhaust their own standbies to replace resigning players. As with all standby lists, anyone who wants on or off should let me know. USOS standbies (number of games willing to take on in parentheses) are: Dave Rice (1), Keith Sesler (1), Ken Gestiehr (1), Paul Gardner (2), Steve Heinowski (1), Robert Acheson (1), Dan Gorham (1), Dave Ditter (1), Steve Wilcox (1), Mark Luedi (1), Melinda Holley (too many), and Dan Palter (1). I'm beginning to get a little short of standbies. Please volunteer or spread the word. The standby list can be dissipated pretty fast when many games are being placed. Anyone looking for more standbies or who wants to be on a general standby list should contact Elmer Hinton at 20 Almont Street, Nashua, NH 03060.

Another need is for GMs willing to take on orphaned games. I always need volunteers for this essential task. Please let me know if you are willing to take variants as well. The USOS GM list is (# williing to take on in parentheses): Andy Lischett (2), Russ Rusnak (2), Greg Ellis (2), Paul Gardner (1), Geoffrey Richard (1 + variants), John Walker (1), Don Del Grande (variants only), Pete Gaughan (1 + variants), Mark Luedi (2), Conrad von Metzke (1, reg. or var.), Dick Martin (3), John Caruso (1), Elmer Hinton (2 + 2 variant), and Melinda Holley (3 + gunboats). Response has been excellent here. Thanks to all of you! Some of you may be worried about how miscommunication among the USOS custodians might cause three games to drop on you at once (one from each of us). Never fear, I've already thought of that. As coordinator, all requests will go through me first!

Currently Missing Games

The following games are missing from 1981 - 1981W: *Snafu* (Ron Brown), 1981CA: *Plague Times* (Bates), 1981CB: *GD and Sons Dip* (Gregory Dick), 1981CS: *The Chamber* (David Manuel), 1981CX: *Hoof and Mouth* (Don Sigwalt), 1981HB: ????? (Don Woods), 1981HF: *Give me a Weapon* (Konrad Baumeister), 1981HS: *Jihad* (Overby), 1981IL: *Dip by Moonlight* (Eric Ozog), 1981IO: *Sleepless Knights* (Dave Carter), 1981IR: *Anduin* (Eric Kane), 1981IS: *The Schemer* (Fritz), 1981IW: *Field of Fire* (Fry), 1981IY: *Field of Fire* (Fry).

The following games are missing from 1982 - 1982E: *Shogun's Sword* (Alden), 1982AT: *Paranoiac Monthly* (Jack Fleming), 1982HP: *Shogun's Sword* (Mike Barno).

The following games are missing from 1983 - 1983R: *Snafu* (Ron Brown), 1983X: *DW Demo* (Rod Walker), 1983Z: *Dogs of War* (Daly), 1983AP: *Torpedoette* (Sampson), 1983AU: *Sleepless Knights* (Hickey), 1983CB: *Sidneg Archives* (Placek), 1983CI: *Festungs Hof* (Howerton), 1983CJ: *Pink Dragon* (Dan Palter), 1983CQ: *Manifest Destiny* (Sisler-Rauterberg), 1983CT: *Sidneg Archives* (Placek), 1983CU: *Sidneg Archives* (Placek), 1983HI: *Give me a Weapon* (Baumeister), 1983HW: *Snafu* (Ron Brown), 1983HZ: *Sidneg Archives* (Placek), 1983IH: ???? (Chip Charnley).

The following games are missing from 1984 - 1984X: *Give me a Weapon* (Baumeister), 1984Y: *Pink Dragon* (Palter), 1984AA: *Machiavelli* (Lowe), 1984AV: *Festungs Hof* (Howerton), 1984CJ: *Give me a Weapon* (Baumeister), 1984CV: *Hansard* (Sacks), 1984HV: *Coat of Arms* (Woody), 1984IB: *Fusiler* (Clement), 1984IM: *Bersaglieri* (Mainardi), 1984IU: *Midlife Crisis* (Rauterberg), 1984IZ: *Control* (Filban).

And, finally, from from 1985 - 1985P: *Sleepless Knights* (McIntyre) and 1985HW: *Mensa Dip* (Poppe).

Letter Column Section

I welcome comments on any issue concerning any of DIPDOM's custodians. I reserve the right to edit some letters for space reasons so that we remain in 22 cent postage land, but otherwise I will be printing letters with as little editorial interruption as possible. I will interspace letters with comments as they concern me, but I'll try not to editorialize too much. Let's see how it goes (my comments will continue to be italicized).

Ken Peel (7/18/86)

Dear Jim,

I received your issue #8 1/2 of *YVSC* today and your editorial on Robt. Sacks sparked a few thoughts in my head.

Funding. Yeah, there's a need for it, not in massive amounts, but on a regular basis. You may be interested to know that the titular "custodian" of the PDO auction is Woody. You might remember that Mills passed it on to Swider, and Tommy was actually about set (we're talking, now, over a year ago) to do the thing, and then got caught in the crossfire of feuding. It would be no exaggeration to say that the PDO Auction was knocked off by the Holocaust of 1984-1986.

So Tommy, who couldn't stand being in the middle of what he found himself in the middle of, asked himself, "who has the thickest skin in the entire hobby?" Of course, the answer could be no other than the Armenian-by-the-Bay, Woody (actually, Philly is not on a bay, but on a river--as such, it is the largest fresh water port in the country--but I can never pass by a San Francisco analogy).

Woody put out his feelers, and even attempted to verify those submissions offered, but soon, he decided that he had better things to spend his custodial time on--*MOD*, for instance.

Now, as a member of both the last and the new DipCon Committee, and, shockingly, as the one who did the most work for the MaryCon/DipCon Committee (a pretty damning statement for a current burn-out like me), I can fill you in on what happened with the DipCon '86 funds. (I could never stand all those Roman numerals). There was a conscious decision by two out of the three members of the last Committee (I was voted down) *not* to attempt to raise any funds for any purposes other than covering expenses and providing some seed $ for the next Committee. We put only a two dollar surcharge on the '86 DipCon. I think five dollars would have been a little more reasonable, but I understand where Pete Gaughan and Greg Ellis were coming from. Both of them felt that there was no reason that FTF conventioneres should support the services of PBMers. Well, maybe. But I ask, to whom does DipCon belong? Without the postal community, it could not exist. Isn't it reasonable that there is a little symbiosis here?

But granting the reasonable argument of my two former committee members, there is an implicit corollary to their argument: the postal community, then, ought to be willing to protect its own. But is it? The problem, and fallacy, is in thinking that the term "postal community" means a damn thing. "Communities" don't do anything. Individuals do,

especially in the marvelously anarchic world of DIPDOM.

But in anarchy, how does anything ever happen with any regularity? Well, how did the number services, *ZR*, Orphan Service, novice packages ever come about and perpetuate themselves? Simple. An individual (or two) thought of an idea that filled a need, and decided to fill it. That individual(s) then did the thing well enough for long enough that people pretty much learned to depend on it. I hesitate to call the process "institutionalization". That is a term I know all too well from my Z'sville political "science" past. The term I prefer is the simple English term of inertia. That's how most people live out their lives--I know I do (regrets to Andy Rooney).

If something's neat, useful, and maybe even fun, inertia pulls it along for awhile. The PDO Auction was very close to making the cut, I think, but its inertia was all dissipated due to the buffeting of the environment at a critical time. I still think it's a great idea, and if picked up on by the right person in the right way, I know it could blast back on the scene. Maybe Woody would even want to give it a jump start himself.

But to get back to my original purpose, here, we might ask ourselves what funding this hobby needs, and with what kind of regularity. Of course, it depends. If we just patch back our modest funding mechanisms after our near suicide of the last two years, we ought to cover the core services of the numbers, you, and maybe a few other things like novice packages and game opening lists. The key question, however, is whether DIPDOM ought to go beyond that. Should we actively try to maintain ourselves as a collective entity and possibly even expand? Should we, dare I say, act as a cooperative? In the past, by default, the answer has been "no". We have never yet as a community tried to promote ourselves in any coordinated or sustained way. In one sense, that is out of the prerogative of an anarchic society. On the other hand, the very use of the term "society" carries with it certain obligations of self-perpetuation.

I've given some thought to this matter ever since the nearly silent response to a letter I sent many months ago to *It's a Trap*. I heard from three individuals as a result of that letter (in which I raised this very question): Rex Martin, editor of *The General*, Simon Billenness, publisher and editor of *ZR*, and the game opening szines (and custodian of the N. A. Zine Bank), and Linda Courtemanche, who offered her skills at copy editing.

It was an interesting collection of responses. The recommendation of Rex Martin was that DIPDOM could best promote itself in a way that not only would not cost money, but would net money. Presently, we are pretty isolated from other major gaming publications (FRP, Wargaming, Professional PBM). Sure, many of us have some involvement in one or more of the preceding, but the communities are discrete. There are a number of publications, however, in which these communities comingle. We have no presence there, presently, but if a willing stable of some of our better writers agreed to take part in the effort, we could *create* that presence, by writing articles which actually paid, and which actually in the net *added* to the hobby's funding even while promoting us fairly widely.

The point raised by Simon was equally provocative. He raised the problem with the game flyer in Diplomacy sets, and the extreme difficulty potential novices have in gaining knowledge of and access to PBM Diplomacy. The problem is real, and there is no easy solution.

What is in the Diplomacy set today? Most likely a flyer for *DW*, citing either Walt Buchanan ($4/year) or Rod Walker ($10/year) as contact person for *DW*. As you may know, I am a big supporter of *DW*, and I am willing to accept a great deal of the blame for its revival, at least, I assume from your perspective. I know probably as much as anyone outside of Encinitas what happened to, and lead to the downfall of the old *DW*. Who's to blame? A lot of people, but no one as much as Walt Buchanan himself. Walt transferred *DW* to Conrad von Metzke (and of course Conrad was crazy enough to take it) with hundreds and hundreds of outstanding sub obligations, but no money to cover it. "The good name of *DW*," Walt told Conrad, "is all I transfer to you, and all you should need." Well, that's a paraphrase, but it's pretty accurate. And then from Conrad on it was a desperate game of hand-to-mouth. The constant, urgent concern was whether enough new subs and resubs had come in during the previous two months to cover the printing and mailing costs of the next issue. Now, subsidizing a 'zine at $0.40 each or so may be fine with a sub list of 50, but 350 is another game altogether. You just can't do it. From the moment Walt passed on *DW* to Conrad with a several thousand dollar debt, (it was probably only a little over a thousand at the time) the crash of the 'zine was only a matter of time.

But here we return to the concept of inertia. So *DW* crashed. Anyone who knows what was going on (and I think the editors were too reticent to lay all bare for all to see) knew it had to happen, unless there was an unprecedented bail out campaign. Fat chance. But again, inertia. Would we have gained more just by letting *DW* slip massively into the night considering the 'zine's previous standing with TAHGC and all those game flyers out there? Some can reasonably argue that case, but I argue the other side. The concept of *DW* was good. Why destroy it? Let's reorganize it if we can.

Okay, okay, let me get back to where I was before. In the midst of the Great Feud, who cared about things like *DW* and the *PDO* Auction? Hardly anyone. I wrote an early warning letter to *Magus/TNFH* about the plight of *DW*. No response. But Larry Peery was there. He cared intensely. Well, I had to call him and whip up his interest a bit,

but there was never a doubt about it, really. I feel that *no one else* could have revived that 'zine save Larry, even acknowledging his shortcomings (or longcomings, shall we say, but I'd like to see who throws their stones first).

I know that you have a basic philosophical disagreement with Mr. Organization, and I share some of those disagreements--but not all, certainly. *((I haven't been interrupting, but I do have a question here and don't want to lose touch. What are my basic disagreements with Larry again? I've forgotten. I am somewhat neutral on the DIPTAX idea and I prodded and questioned a bit last fall, suggesting that hobby service money be used to help bail out* ***DW****. I found a considerable amount of resistance. You're raising some excellent points, so let's go on.))*

No, that's enough about *DW* ! I meant to raise that issue only as an example of inertia and the importance of the game flyer. Should that flyer only mention *DW*? If it says more, what should it say?? Let me lay on you a few facts. TAHGC only runs batches of Dip games once every few years. The game you pull off the shelf today might have been manufactured in 1979. Or earlier. Or maybe as late as 1983.

In our ever-lovin' flexible world, what contact can we put on the game flyer that might have any relation to reality 3, 4, or 7 years hence? Yeah, John Boardman, but who else? Walt Buchanan, at least, still forwards his flyer stubs to Peery.

To get back to Billenness, he mentioned the importance of improving the quality of the flyer. I called Simon, and explained the difficulty with the time lag. He then suggested that DIPDOM somehow finance a P.O. Box in some major city that would always be certain to have active and willing to help hobbyists. And put that P.O. Box on the flyer as a central clearinghouse for people trying to get into the postal hobby. There is really so much more than *DW*, and speed of response and easy access to materials is so important. But can *you* point to any city for that P.O. Box? Neither can I. *((Actually...I can. I don't want to sound like an egocentric Easterner, but it should be in New York City. More importantly, it should be associated with the N. A. Zine Bank and Simon is about to move to the Big Apple very soon. We could make that one hobby service that has a geographical restriction, access to a Manhattan (or other borough?) P.O. Box. Besides (and Conrad or one of the other postal workers could verify this) if worst came to worse, we could continue to rent the P.O. Box in "perpetuity" and have the mail forwarded to another address. Simple...let's not let a niggling detail like that hold us up))* Can you imagine that the U.K., with a population 1/5 of the U.S. has a hobby larger than our own (and which started 8 years later than our own)? And in the U.K., of course, everyone can basically drive to where everyone else lives in a day's time. In the U.K., there will always be a plethora of active hobbyists in London.

Well, not much more to say. I've said too much already. You've caught me in one of my biannual talkative moods. Wrobel and Martin and Dr. Choo Choo *((??))* and a number of others are dropping by tomorrow for a long marvelous day of gaming. That must have me up. Hey, don't feel like you need to print all or any of this. I really only raised questions. No answers.

I do, however, feel that it's time that we began to take better care of our own and care for our future. As they so tritely say, if not us, who? If not now, when?

Best, Ken

P.S. And ads, too, although articles are far superior! That's where I began this whole thought process--trying to think of how to duplicate the success of Professional PBM--they do it mostly with ads and direct mailings. But I'm now convinced that while such tactics may help, they would not only be expensive, but would be relatively ineffective without a number of other changes.

P.P.S. Rob't Sacks has a screw loose. He's also claiming that he actually submitted a bid for DipCon '87. Actually, all he did is write to Peter Gaughan and say that he *intended* to submit a bid. (That letter had no specifics, no proposals, no nothing.) But then, nothing. He didn't even show up at DipCon/MaryCon. Nor did he forward any proposal to us. I publically stated at the DipCon Society Meeting that I wished he had bid, because then we would have a chance to be at the next Origins.

Thanks, Ken, for a generally interesting letter. Even some of your obtuse ramblings brought up important points. Questions are the spice of life, not to mention the building blocks of letter columns. I hope to have lots of comments from the readership (including those people you mentioned who are getting samples), but I have couple of comments first:

1) Your whole letter insightfully addresses the funding problem. There are two parts to it: raising funds and distributing them. We need a consensus most especially on the distribution problem. Moreover, it may be time to think about having a custodian who keeps track of budgets in some informal way. Currently, Sacks claims to do this and it might be the most useful thing he claims to do (ranking in my estimation higher than the actual distribution of money). The ***DW*** *case shouldn't have to happen again. Part of the problem is that we do this as a hobby and record keeping is universally despised for good reason. Only when services are changed over to new custodians does the issue come up and I can tell you from experience that the Buchanan to von Metzke case is no exception. Lots of money* ***could*** *disappear into the hands of resigning custodians without any malice or forethought, but merely through poor record keeping. Sacks is unacceptable in this job, but if a PDO Auction gets off the ground (see below), it seems that one of the organizing committee for that project could stick around*

and take in semi-annual reports. I've been doing them since I started...the next one will come out in the next issue...but I believe I am the exception that proves the rule.

2) I fall on the side of Gaughan and Ellis on the DipCon funding issue. A PBM fund raising project should be national and focused on PBMers. I saw the Atlanticon list and found almost no major PBM players on it. Let's raise our own money, with "individual" projects like the PDO Auction.

3) I am willing to work on "layout" for a game flyer to go to ***TAHGC*** *for inclusion in future game sets. I think this project is a must. Could Rex Martin enlighten us on when the next printing of Diplomacy is likely to be made? I think I answered the P.O. Box question, but I invite other comments.*

I've got one slightly moldy letter up next...sorry for the delay in printing it.

Chris Carrier (6/13/86)

Dear Jim-Bob:

Thanks for the free issue. We have something in common, I think; Terry Tallman told me once that you, like me, were introduced to the hobby by him. *((actually, it's closer to the other way around...))*

Elmer Hinton's letter in the May *YVSC*, where he talks about the law and the hobby, needs to be responded to. I agree with you and disagree with him. This is a HOBBY. HOBBY problems should be solved with hobby forums. Based on the Feuds and disputes I have studied, and upon consultation with friends and relatives of mine who have had legal training, any such dispute would -- deservedly -- be laughed out of court.

In addition, making a threat on a person's assets or livelihood through the courts is an extremely unfannish thing to do -- I call it a Feud Foul. Doing such a thing would have a chill effect on hobby activities and on many people's enjoyment of the hobby, and if such a thing were to happen my sympathies would be wholly with the defendant in such an action, regardless of how good a case the plaintiff had.

The threat of lawsuits is the curse of the commercial PBM hobby, where I have the bulk of my PBM experience. Usually the procedure when a big company wants to intimidate a small one is to write a letter threatening a copyright violation lawsuit, even though such a suit would be laughed out of court. The smaller company has the option of retaining a lawyer or folding. As a typical small firm is just a hobby (I had gross sales of about $2000 last year and came out about even) and a typical retainer is in the $500-$1000 range, you can see what the mere threat of a suit can do.

Should someone send me a letter bomb, though, I would press charges. But the person sending the bomb would be the person guilty of the Feud Foul, as he would be doing it to damage, not my hobby career, but my non-hobby life.

Sincerely, Chris Carrier

Thanks for an interesting comment. As a member of the professional PBM community, one would think that Elmer would agree with you. Next up is a very disturbing problem that comes up regarding 1985CM, a game I rehoused from ***Liberterrean*** *to Howard Christie's* ***Stabback*** (Paul Milewski is Italy)

Paul Milewski (7/22/86)

I read in utter bewilderment that Howard Christie has concluded, on the strength of a conversation with Allen Calhamer at DIPCON, that Melinda Holley (Russia) cut her own support (A SEV S A WAR-MOS cut by F RUM-SEV). For those of us who have not studied the rulebook carefully, on page 5 of the 1976 rulebook, the last sentence of IX.6 reads as follows: "A player may not, by attack, cut support being given by one of his own units (see X, CUTTING SUPPORT)." No disrespect to Mr. Calhamer intended, but it has been my observation that he confuses what he wishes he wrote in the rulebook for what he actually wrote in the rulebook. I also wish to remind everyone tthat Mr. Calhamer appears to be the person primarily responsible for the subsequent revision of the rulebook nobody uses, in which he botched up the convoy rules thoroughly. In my opinion, the most unfortunate thing about Mr. Calhamer expressing his opinion is that anybody takes him seriously.

I resign, Paul

This letter is disturbing to me on a number of levels. First, as the USOS person who placed the game with Howard, it upsets me that any player feels it necessary to resign. When games are placed with new GMs, I always worry about house rule incompatibility. The problem in question may or may not be a result of such an incompatibility, but it happened on the first turn after the game was housed with Howard, so I feel at least partly responsible. On that basis alone, I would ask Howard to reconsider his decision or at least be willing to submit the problem to an ombudsperson. Secondly, there is the rule question itself. Would any of the rule moles out there care to comment? Finally, there is the question of how much control the inventor of a game should have over the rules after the fact. A complimentary issue is going to Allen Calhamer and I would appreciate his comments as well. The next publication date for ***YVSC*** *is set about two weeks after you all should be reading this, so get your comments in quickly.*

Fred Hyatt (7/19/86)

Dear Jim-

In my view, far too much attention is paid to the grumbling and hysterical outbursts of Robert Sacks! In your recent "Editorial" you suggest that he be ignored. That is probably the only way to deal with him. He will not "go away", and will probably set up

a complete roster of hobby services staffed by his own "appointees". If that makes him happy, who cares?! Let him enjoy playing "King of Dipdom" while the rest of us get on with the job of running the various hobby services.

As you point out, he is a source of money, and as such, has a real power base. The solution to that is simply to refuse to accept his donations. (In my case, he has already appointed an "MNC", so I would get no funds anyway. In any case, I will finance my MNC functions out of my own pocket rather than be beholden to Sacks for funds).

The funding of the hobby services *is* a major problem. We cannot rely on donations, and using our own funds is unfair, though I have already stated my intention to do so if necessary. What the solution to the funding problem is, I cannot pretend to know. I do know that there is no permanent solution; there will always be financial crises and they will be dealt with as they arise.

Do not engage in a confrontation with Sacks! Simply ignore him!

Cheers, Fred Hyatt

PS-"ORPHANS" always get to me! The enclosed should help a little.

Your $20 donation is more than generous. I will consider it a loan until the USOS gets back on its feet. Then I can help out the Miller Number Custodian. I, too, would rather put my own money into this than accept money from Sacks. It just so happens that, at the moment, I don't have any.

Paul Gardner (7/19/86)

Hello Jim,

It doesn't seem to me that the funding for the USOS ought depend on money collected at a con, given the regional nature of the con (speaking in general). Not knowing how Sacks got the money at AtlantiCon, or on what pretext, it's not easy to make judgments on his use of the $. It might be interesting to ask someone who's been to AtlantiCon. In any case, the Sacks thing only point out that the hobby as a whole could use some sort of funding device for its services.

As a player, one of my first GM's (Ron Brown or Jim Bumpas - I don't remember which) introduced me to the idea of sending a $1 donation to the BNC at the start of a game. *((for those of you not familiar with Larry Peery's DipTax idea, this is essentially what Larry suggested, with the word "tax" connoting a compulsory aspect that many find objectionable))* My thought is that each year we have what, 100-125-150 new games in N. America? That's over 700 players. If $1 from each gamefee/player went to the BNC, that's $700+ per year potentially. That money could be sprayed around. In fact, there may be too much at that rate - if everybody pays - which is unlikely. We know what the hobby feeling toward a DipTax is - obviously some people will see this the same way. However, if it is presented as a voluntary act - call it a "service donation" - strictly to help pay the cost of doing BNC and USOS work... Far from being unreasonable, it seems that since all players and pubbers (GMs) need or are involved in the work of the BNC and all pubbers/players could potentially need USOS work (and since folding zines rarely come up with $'s to relocate it could be thought of as insurance money).

One large drawback that I see is that of how the money should be handled, and by whom. It really calls for a lot of bookkeeping - too much for the BNC to do. That leaves it up to having a treasurer - another service person who would do only that - take care of the dough. There could be a problem with keeping records straight (and bogging down the BNC with extra paper work) if the money went straight to the BNC (with requests for a Boardman Number), but if it doesn't there'll be questions about who sent what - more records problems. With a voluntary set up there's no reason why records should be kept -- but then people may be more willing to send $'s if it just goes off with the number request. So, you could go round and round about that.

Personally, I don't see game fees having to increase for this. For mine ($5.00 - $2.50 of which is a refundable NMR deposit) I would just restructure the same amount - make the NMR deposit $2.00, the part I keep $2.00, and send the last $1 to the BNC/USOS.

I like this plan in general and see no reason why it can't be implemented, but I'll wait to see how folks react in *YVSC*.

- Paul

PS - Till something better comes along, I see nothing wrong with your accepting some contributions.

Thank you very much for your $10 donation. I've long wondered how much of the DipTax opposition was a result of having the word tax in it...not to mention that it was Larry Peery's idea. Honestly, I don't see any difference between your plan and Larry's. Do you, Larry? I know Larry is busy with ***DW****, but I hope he can find the time to contribute a letter to this discussion.*

Fred Davis (7/27/86)

Dear Jim,

I completely agree with your Editorial. Sacks has been a thorn in the side of the hobby, and especially of the variant subhobby, for at least the last 14 years. I don't know whether you read my "Short History of Variants" in *Diplomacy World,* in which I pointed out that his obstructionist tactics delayed the reclassification of the Dip variants for about four years, as he said it had to be done *his way* or not at all. This is typical of the way Robert has reacted to everything in the Postal hobby. Things must always be done his way. When he doesn't get his way, he attacks his opponents with lies and personal smears, and invents mythical supporters for his side of the

argument. While there may be other nominal members of the New York Game Board, I do not believe it has any real support from anyone besides himself. Certainly no one else in the Postal hobby has a real connection to the NYGB, although Robert sometimes engages in the fantasy of "appointing" people to non-existent posts, like appointing "Karel Alaric" to be the One True MNC. (I've rec'd copies of the recent correspondence between Simon Billenness and Sacks. Typical Sacks behavior. He hasn't changed one whit since 1976.)

One point that needs correcting. I do *not* trade to receive *KGO*. Sacks is so grateful to be able to list *Bushwacker* on his list of Games Openings that he's been sending me *KGO* gratis for about the last 8 years, or whenever it was that he was kicked out of *DW*. Al he asks is that I send him a copy of *Bush* when I announce a new game opening. I also send him a copy whenever he's mentioned in there. Funny, despite some of the strong things I've said about Sacks in *Bush*, he's never cut trade or threatened to do so. Perhaps he's a masochist.

At the 1982 DipCon, held here in Baltimore Co., Sacks virtually destroyed the annual business meeting with his one-man show. I called him an SOB to his face. Yet, half an hour later, he was coming around to Walker and me like a third-rate Woody Allen, trying to be friends. It seems as if all insults, as well as all arguments, simply roll off him like water off a duck's back.

Many people, especially foreigners like Billenness, and Walter Haas of Switzerland, have tried - Chamberlain-like to reason with Sacks. They waste hours, if not days of their time, corresponding with him before they realize that you cannot reason with Robert Sacks.

You asked how come Robert has so much apparent power with the AtlantiCon people. All I can tell you is that he, sometimes alone and sometimes in conjunction with John Boardman, has been the Diplomacy Tournament Director at AtlantiCon for many, many years. How this began I do not know. Perhaps he simply volunteered his services. While the rest of us have other interests in life, Sacks seems to have none outside of Postal and FTF gaming, so he may have been working at this while we were sleeping or doing other things.

I do know that when I was a member of the 1982 DipCon Society Committee, along with Mark Berch and Herb Barents (with Rod Walker an ex-officio member as *DW* editor), we heard a rumor that Sacks was going to try to get himself named as Diplomacy Tournament Director. We had to make it clear to Wes Coates, who was our liaison with the AtlantiCon people running ORIGINS, that the DipCon people chose their own Tournament Director. Apparently, Wes Coates has let Sacks run the Dip Tourney at every meeting of AtlantiCon except for 1982, when it was under the control of the DipCon Society Committee. Mark Berch was Tournament Director that year.

I have heard some people say that Sacks was a good Tournament Director. Others have said that he was a *terrible* director, interfering with games by refusing to accept agreed-upon draws. I've been told that the 1985 AtlantiCon tournament, at which both Sacks and Boardman served as GM's was rather well done. (Boardman is supposed to be a very good GM). I haven't rec'd any opinion on the running of their 1986 Tournament. However, I note that only 35 people entered the '86 AtlantiCon Tournament, compared to the 60-odd people who participated at DipCon a few weeks earlier. And, of those 35 names, I was familiar with about two of them. *((ditto, one of them being Paul Kenny, one of your subbers, who finished second. He's receiving this issue and perhaps he would be willing to provide us with his opinion?))* Most of them appear to have been locals from N.J. and N.Y., rather than Postal players.

I have been looking through my files, hoping to find a copy of my last letter to Wes Coates. In 1985, there was another rumor that AtlantiCon was going to bid for the 1986 DipCon - in opposition to MaryCon - and that if such a bid was made, it would include a proviso that Robt. Sacks would run the Diplomacy Tournament. I wrote to Wes care of the AtlantiCon P.O. Box, as I could no longer find his Maryland address. This may have been around February or March of 1985. I reminded Wes that the DipCon Society Comm. picked the Diplomacy Tournament Director, and that since Sacks was not on the Comm. he would have no say on who that would be. I never received a reply. I'm sorry I don't have a better address for him. If you still have the 1986 AtlantiCon flyers, I suppose you could write to him at the P.O. Box shown, and ask that party to please forward your letters to whomever is in charge of picking the Tournament Directors for AtlantiCon. You probably know that they have already announced that the 1987 AtlantiCon will be held in Baltimore again.

If you write, you can certainly let him know that the other Diplomacy Custodians are also opposed to Sacks handling and distributing this money through the so-called New York Game Board. Obviously, Simon Billenness agrees with you, and I know from letters and private conversation that the new MNC, Fred Hyatt, would also agree. You could say that unless this monetary authority is taken away from Sacks, the Postal Diplomacy hobby will give publicity to the 1987 AtlantiCon. You could suggest that the funds be turned over to the 1987 DipCon Society Comm., but I don't know that there'd be any legal basis for their doing so.

By the way, Sacks now alleges that he submitted a bid to this year's DipCon Society Meeting on behalf of the NYGB to host the 1987 DipCon, but that Pete Gaughan, plotting against him, refused to honor the bid. I have a letter from Gaughan denying that Sacks ever submitted a bid, although he did send him some letters. *((see Ken Peel's letter elsewhere in this issue,*

for Ken's viewpoint on the matter))

What we can do is to see how many of the hobby's Custodians would agree not to Trade with Robert Sacks for *KGO/Lord of Hosts,* and agree not to sign any sort of agreement between him and/or the NYGB which would in any way give any implication of recognition to the authority of the NYGB over their Custodianship. We could also agree to cease mentioning Sacks and the NYGB in our publications. Perhaps a form could be sent to *each* Custodian and to the Publishers of the key zines in the North American hobby (e.g. *Diplomacy World, Diplomacy Digest, Costaguana, Europa Express)* to see how many people would voluntarilysign it. Perhaps all of the Top Ten publishers on the 1986 Runestone Poll could be included. Maybe all publishers should be asked to voluntarily sign this, but I'm sure at least two of those pubbers would object and perhaps raise a howl.

Anyway, if Sacks' name and zines simply don't appear in the *Zine Register* and other publications, he may eventually fade away as his older players depart.

I'm glad that you brought the issue of Sacks up. For several years, going back to about 1974, I've thought that the American Postal hobby would be a better one if we could somehow get rid of Mr. Sacks. However, you are the only person who has gone beyond wishful thinking to suggest some action on this point.

Best regards, Fred C. Davis Jr.

I agree with your last two paragraphs and I thank you for the compliment, but I have to say that I would be one of those to refuse to sign a form publically renouncing Sacks. I will publically renounce Sacks as an individual, but not as a custodian of the USOS. In fact, my assistant, Scott Hanson, states elsewhere that he will be accepting funds from the NYGB on behalf of what Sacks chooses to call the Orphan Games Project. Us custodians and pubbers are an independent and cantankerous lot and you can bet that any organized attempt to distribute "forms" that call on people to effectively join a group against Sacks will be opposed by many on philosophical grounds alone. You've been around much longer than I and know that at least as well as anyone. Why do we need an organized "policy"? In essence, anyone who has dealt with Sacks for any length of time knows the score and we happen to have experienced custodians at the moment who basically agree with each other. To my mind, that's enough. Let everyone deal with the facts in their own way and for gosh sakes let's stop wasting so much emotional energy on Sacks. He's not worth it.

Your discussion of AtlantiCon cements my opinion that we have no right to approach the AtlantiCon organizers at all. They would laugh at a threat of "no publicity" given the overwhelming response to the publicity we gave them this year. We might want to inform them that our poor turnout at the 1986 AtlantiCon may be a result of Sacks' presence as Tournament Director (I know that's why I didn't consider going), but they have the perfect right to run their convention as they wish. Thank you for your comments and some of the other history you provided to me. May I gather that you would be willing to provide some of that information to other parties that may be unconvinced of Sacks' consistent pattern of unreasonableness? Fred's address is 1427 Clairidge Road, Baltimore, MD 21207. Please send him some stamps or other renumeration to help cover his costs.

Bob Olsen (7/24/86)

Dear Jim-Boob,

Well, if you think Robert Sacks is a problem to you, you ought to try being Woody and having Sacks smack you over the head with a beer can! The pitiful thing is that while there's no malice in the man I believe, he's still a fool. Like you say it would be quite easy and appropriate to just ignore him, except that he does control a certain amount of money.

I saw the results of the AtlantiCon tournament somewhere, and it was quite remarkable to note that there didn't seem to be *any* postal players on it. I guess those all went to MaryCon and avoided Sacks. Hmmm.

I didn't know that the USOS was broke...otherwise we could have sent you some money from the appearance of Masters of Deceit in *The General.* Instead, I just reimbursed Woody for his efforts. Maybe he'd send you some...let's see, as I recall the total came to several thousand dollars...I could be wrong though...

We do need a source of funds aside from the whims of Sacks and suchlike bozos. I don't think the Diptax will ever fly; the very word "tax" must necessarily raise the hackles of those enslaved by the IRS/Gestapo. "The power to tax is the power to destroy" as the old saying goes. On the other hand, the PDO Auction was sort of as one-shot deal; the more often it's tried, the less response it's going to draw, necessarily. It would be nice to have a central agency--say, *Diplomacy World*--that could disburse funds to needy custodians, but *DW* can't manage itself let alone anybody else.

All of which is a fancy way of saying, I can see the problem, but no solutions suggest themselves.

Best wishes, Bob Olsen

Thanks, SLUDGE, for your usual humorous comments. The comment on the diminishing returns from PDO Auctions may even prove to be prophetic. Oh yes, a thousand dollars would be fine...

John Caruso (7/21/86)

Dear Jim,

First, enclosed is a contribution to the USOS. *((I don't mean to be funny, but I couldn't find it))* I know it's not much, *((that's for sure...seriously, though, it wasn't there))* but it's what I can spare at the moment. Don't spend it all in one place.

Secondly - I will contact Woody about the PDO

Auction. If he doesn't intend to do the auction, I will pick up all the donated auction material data on my next trip to Pa. (in Aug.) and type up the auction booklet myself. Given the time required, etc., the funds probably won't be available until 1987. In the meantime, I'll see what I can do by way of requesting donations for you via *KK/W*. If everyone kicked in $1 for hobby services, according to the *BBB* totals, we'd have over $1000 for services. Do you think $1000 would "hold" all the services for a year? *((Ha, when you see my budget next issue, you'll see what a shoestring operation this really is. To give you an idea, I've spent much less than $100 so far this year and, with present donations, the USOS can last to October or November. Thanks for the support though))*

Finally - Robert Sacks. I have read Rob't's latest misinformation about you, Simon, and others. As you know, I've had it done to me, by Rob't. So I know exactly how you feel. However, you are not correct in assuming Rob't wants to feud with you. He doesn't. That's just the way it comes across.

Regardless of whether there is a NYGB or not, the NYGB can, if it so desires, divide any money it has as it sees fit. Neither you nor I can, nor should we, condemn NYGB or Sacks for this. My beef is Sacks/NYGB claims they donate to hobby services. In reality, they only donate to those services that agree with their principles or conditions. NYGB/Sacks used to donate to the services, unconditionally. What went wrong? I don't know. Or maybe I do.

You are particularly incorrect in assuming mostly FTF players money is involved in Sacks cache. PBMers play in his tournaments at AtlantiCon too. Until 1986, PBMers made up about half of those participating. *((You obviously haven't seen the 1986 list of AtlantiCon Dip participants. I could send you a copy if you want, but Bob Olsen's and Fred Davis' comments are pretty accurate, in my opinion. The 1986 money is what we are discussing at the moment and for whatever reason (too close to DipCon, location, Sacks' presence, lack of publicity) this year's AtlantiCon should be viewed as a strictly FTF event.))* But Rob't and the NYGB have refused to be influenced by the reasoned opinions of any PBMers regarding funding of hobby services.

That brings me to what to do directly or indirectly about Rob't. As you know, I oppose organized boycotts. Furthermore, I feel he has as much right to be a part of DIPDOM as the next guy, despite the nonsense he writes. I will make one final attempt to persuade Rob't that he's being bullheaded and non-fannish. I don't know how successful I'll be, but considering the fact that he's written some "gems" about me, I doubt I'll get through to him.

In the meantime, I recommend that you draw up a well-worded, reasoned and appropriate *petition* with as many custodians' signatures as you can get, and send a copy of it to Rob't. Let him see that his voice against the custodians is a majority of one.

If people decide to cut trades, writing to him, etc., that is each person's business, and should not be contained in the petition. In the event the petition doesn't work, then, and only then, should the AtlantiCon people be contacted. I've had some contact with them, both in the distant past and recent past. If everyone agrees, I will contact them on behalf of DIPDOM (or you can decide on another mouthpiece and I'll provide any names/addresses or information that might be of help). But be forewarned -- running a dip tournament and accompanying events is no picnic. IT IS A LOT OF WORK! I know first hand. We will need a permanent person, whom is both reliable and honest, who warrants respect and gets the job done to run the diplomacy events year in, year out. And no, I am not available. I will, for the first year only, (if AtlantiCon agrees to the DIPDOM request to replace Rob't) do the preparations. But that's as far as I'll go. There's much more to running the dip events than being a name and getting the money. Keep that in mind when making your ultimate decision. And remember, Rob't has done an adequate job, all these years, year after year. Something to think about.

John

Indeed. My editorial was far from a spur of the moment thing. I noticed that both you and Fred Davis misread some of my editorial while basically agreeing with me. Just how far do you think any of us could get with Robert when he starts with the assumption that he's incorruptable? Last fall, I almost got somewhere by hypothesizing...what if you were to die and someone unscrupulous took over your position...but he attacked me on a tangential issue and, while granting my point, dismissed it since he, of course, was meticulously scrupulous. I haven't the foggiest idea how to write a petition to Robert. You want to see some of the drafts of letters I was working on until I decided the whole thing was a waste of time? Besides being broke, there were two facts that made me bring the whole issue up in the first place. First, DipCon decided not to fund hobby services and second, DIPDOM abandoned AtlantiCon. I decided that I had no right to AtlantiCon money under the circumstances, so why should I continue to deal with Sacks at all? I am finding the debate quite fascinating. Let's hope we can come to some consensus. I presume Simon Billenness has already contacted you about his willingness to run the PDO Auction and that you are working something out. By the way, thanks for your praise for Sacks' efforts on behalf of AtlantiCon. It adds a side to the debate that should not be ignored.

Kathy Byrne (7/19/86)

Dear Jim,

Well, look at this, the Boob finally woke up and smelled the coffee! Sacks is a hard person to ignore -- I warn you! He just won't leave people alone, he continues to badger them. I've been sticking up for every custodian for the past 5 years, while Sacks continues to harass them under the guise of some

fantasy NYGB! Sacks is the NYGB and he just cuts off funding to custodians at will. He's held MNC money since Lee Kendter became MNC. He has now cut off the BNC, as he didn't like a ruling by Bill Quinn. As for known game openings - the only listing funded is his. As for the *Zine Register*, Simon won't sign some covenant, so only Sacks' *ZR* will be funded. To ignore Robert is not to have funding cut off -- he's already cut off the hobby services. (By the way, don't hold your breath waiting for a check as you are on his shit list too.).

I've been trying to ignore Sacks for years. I even have my kids answer the phone and if it's Robert - I'm working late, out to dinner, moved or died, depending on which child you reach! By the way, he still hasn't gotten the hint.

As for funding, I say that we need to resurrect the PDO Auction. It's fun and boy did it generate income. I say, get someone reliable to get it going, someone with time (i.e. Melinda). Seriously, the auction is the way to go. Then services will have plenty of money, and everyone can ignore Sacks; as the only reason any of us put up with him is because of donations to services that we were doing at the time. I realize now, that was a big mistake. Our pacifying him to get financial help, led him to believe that he and the NYGB were "the power".

I think that no amount of money is worth the aggravation that Sacks put custodians thru! Let's have an Auction and Boycott Sacks!

Love and Kisses, Kathy

Thanks for your comments. I got the impression from Sacks that he was going to fund the BNC, regardless of his disagreements with Bill Quinn, because the BNC is a necessity. To finish this issue off...and I'm very pleased with the scope of the responses...we have letters from two people who are meeting the problem head on, but in opposite directions. I'll let them both stand without comment and I hope to have a good crop of letters next time. The only way to run a letter column szine is to come out quickly and frequently while an issue is hot, so we'll be on two or three week turnaround until things wind down. Thanks to all the letter writers.

Scott Hanson (7/22/86)

Dear James,

I guess this letter is a bit overdue. First off, we ain't broke yet. Last month (via slow boat) I got a check from Keith Sherwood for the funds he had left over plus a not so small donation. *((Indeed. By my count, he only owed us about $50. Many thanks, Keith.))* The total was $100. At the moment it arrived our checking account was barely afloat, and in fact it still is. But I can spare $30 right now, which is enclosed.

As for Sacks. In my former stint I had absolutely no problems with him, he was very helpful and his money was most appreciated. In fact it was I who added the OGP to our name to acknowledge his support. He never tried to tell us what to do, or make us sign any covenant, or impose himself in any way. He even noted in *KGO* that the opinions there were his alone and not those of any hobby service. Sure, he's a little weird, but who isn't in this hobby? In short, he and Rod Walker were the two biggest helps to the orphan service that I had in the whole hobby.

I still see nothing wrong with the name "US/OGP Orphan Service". It humours Sacks and no one else really cares about the name. I guess that was the strategy of Dick and I, to humour the man. It's not really worth the bother to deal with him in any other way. Publically cutting ourselves off from him would be messy, and would accomplish nothing. If he were trying to assert authority, that is interfering with the transfer of a game or the naming of a new custodian, that would be different. But right now I don't see him causing any harm besides supporting a good portion of the paper industry.

How's this for a solution: I'll volunteer to be the liaison between the NYGB and USOS. Sacks will love it, it's another title for him to play with. I guess that would in effect make me director or whatever of OGP, which is better than Sacks giving the title to someone else or himself. And you won't have to deal with him anymore. He'll be back on the shelf and he'll keep sending us money.

I was told when I first took the job that Sacks came with it, kind of like a ball and chain. If you let him know what's going on, write to him once in a while, let him think he's important, then he's OK. And when you're done, you can pass him on to the next custodian.

Meanwhile, I'll write him a letter offering to mediate between the two of you. You may decide it's time to kill the dragon, but I say let him smoke.

Best, Scott

Simon Billenness (7/23/86)

Dear Jim,

I agree with you that Robert Sacks is an extremely troublesome individual who should be kept away from hobby services. He's the Lyndon La Rouche of postal Diplomacy. I've decided to cut all contacts with him unless he cleans up his act.

I would be very interested in reviving the PDO Auction to raise money for hobby services. However, I reckon I should obtain the permission of Tom Swider, the previous PDO honcho. Of course, if I succeeded in raising some money, there is the problem of how to share it out. If I am partially responsible for distribution, I really don't think I could allocate any to the *ZR*. One problem with Robert Sacks is that he risks putting his fingers in the till by giving himself money for his various projects.

I've asked John Caruso for Tom Swider's phone # so that I can sort things out directly. Let's get the ball rolling!

Yours, Simon