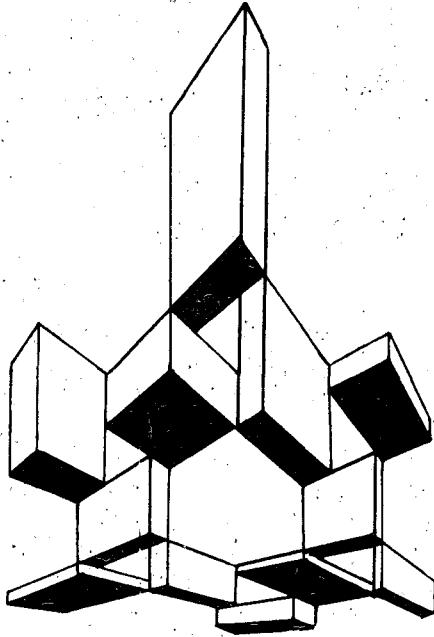


ETHIL THE FROG



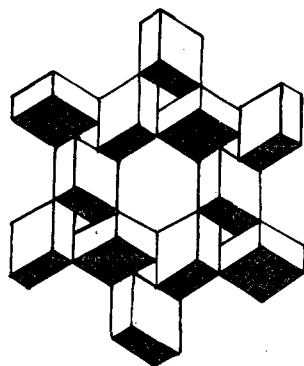
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ISSUE 2: 7 MARCH 1977

Subscribers ! Check your mailing label; the number after your name is that of your last issue on your present subscription. '2' = time to renew !

If there's a mark in this box it's because I put it there. It's my bloody box and I'll do what I like with it.



Personal View

One of the nicest aspects of producing a printed fanzine is the extra scope it gives for playing around with appearance and layout. For instance, I can alter the size of print on the finished product according to the importance of the topic in question. You can be sure that in discussing insignificant areas of the hobby like Mick Bullock, to say nothing of Richard Sharp, I'll be at pains to utilize the most minuscule alphabet I can find.

Naturally I have an excellent reason for making short work of these two tiny tots. You see, when I distributed my first issue there was a general clamour of ecstasy, and pretty soon a raging torrent of folding money was finding its way inexorably to Flat 6, 15 Freeland Road. Even the Post Office was powerless to delay this process, and while the printing workers succeeded in sabotaging Friday's Times (which featured a fulsome article on Ethil by none other than Bernard Levin, who claims no relationship at all to Graeme Levin) they could not stop word getting round that here was the best cold turkey to hit the world since the collected bulletins of Idi Amin ! So what did Sharp and Bullock do? I'll tell you. They denounced the new Ethil as a hoax !

Seethe, seethe... They shall pay...

What criticisms there were about my reappearance centred mainly on my decision to restart my numbering at issue 1, rather than 47 as had been expected. Indeed, I gather Sharp is orchestrating a campaign to refer to issue 1 as '47', this one as '48' and so on, on the somewhat flimsy grounds that by the time I get to the middle twenties and people start talking about 'Ethil 23' they won't know which Ethil 23 they're talking about. Richard is hoping for an early end to his campaign, I can reveal, because of all the things that could happen when I reach issue 23, it's certain that he won't be able to add 46 to 23 and get the same answer twice running.

Mick Bullock simply refused to believe that anyone could wend their slow, weary way up to 46 issues and then contemplate going all the way back up from 1 again. What he doesn't seem to have realized is that mere numbers can mean whatever their user wants them to mean - if I'd wanted to give people the illusion that I'm really old hat, for instance, I could have restarted at issue 234, at which Sharp would doubtless scream 'Make him go back to 1 !'... (Even better, I could have restarted at 234 and then worked backwards !). More realistically, there was a definite case, I thought, for my first issue to be numbered zero, so that issue 1 would announce the start of the first game; and one Dippyazine, Court Circular I think, started at minus 6 for a reason I don't

know. And one SF fanzine published just up the road from me has reached issue 101 after only five mailings... of course its editor expresses his numbers in binary.

Since sending out by initial mailing I've discovered another excellent reason for going back to 1. As noted earlier, I have lately been the recipient of large quantities of cash, and this can only be connected with the fact that I've just started this new fanzine (well, new in all but name) and people want to subscribe in order to get future copies. It seems reasonable to suppose that this happens whenever anyone starts a zine, and I seriously considered calling this issue number 1 again to see whether it'll work twice...

Lastly, to those who claim inability to distinguish old Ethil and new Ethil; well, there are now two versions of number 2, but at the time of writing I can't claim to be having difficulty telling which is which.

I'm producing this issue a lot earlier than I thought I would. Partly this is because I want to ensure that nobody's fooled by that idiot Bullock, partly because producing a fanzine is an addictive drug, a pernicious habit very hard to shake off especially when the first decent TV programme tonight isn't till 9.25, but mostly it's because I've got seven people ready and willing to start a game of Diplomacy and I think it would be poor indeed for their promptness to be rewarded by a long wait.

Reactions to my game fee of £1.50 have been predictable: with few exceptions, the comments contained words like 'exorbitant', 'excessive', 'extortionate' and the like (I've often wondered how much friendlier the English language would seem if we ditched that wretched letter 'x'!). Most commentators offered no reason for these judgements, doubtless because no logical one exists. However, it's interesting to contemplate the peculiar set of values which can prompt someone like Richard Bartle to claim my games are overpriced because a Diplomacy set costs only twice as much in the shops. Amusing to reflect that in Richard's eyes the loving care and attention which I shall lavish on my games is worth less than half the retail price of a few scraps of plastic and cardboard; fortunately, that's his problem, not mine. Bet Paul Humphreys isn't feeling very flattered right now, though...

I expect some readers would say that you can't put a true monetary value on intangibles like loving care and attention, especially when same comes from one of the world's most advanced bionic GM's; let me just say, before I digress any further, that I maintain that in a materialistic society such as ours everything has its market price.

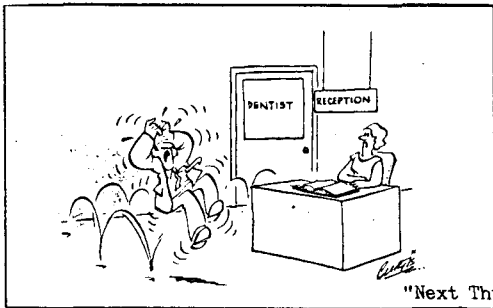
One consequence of my high fees which I didn't foresee (though I ought to have done) was the large proportion of subscribers who said they didn't want to play, but would rather just get Ethil in order to read it. A couple of these people were apologetic about this, but far from being displeased I'm first highly flattered that people should want to take my fanzine just for the pleasure of reading it, and second encouraged that I won't have to start too many games too soon. It looks as if I shall be able to keep lists open for several issues, which will allow latecomers to Ethil the chance to play without having too long a wait, existing players to enter extra games if they wish, and myself to find my right level of workload in terms of adjudications and typing out game reports. In fact, triple excellent!

But enough of this gay banter. It's now time for me to start my first game, which will bear the designation 'ETHIL ONE'. (The old Ethil used alphabetic names for games - 'A', 'B' and so on, and while I'd like to confuse everyone except myself by starting from 'A' again, I'm afraid the system suffers from a serious shortcoming which becomes especially bad after 'Z' has been passed. Numerical designations have the advantage that they have no upper limit).

ETHIL ONE (1977-??) - START.

E: Keith Loveys, 25b South Norwood Hill, London S.E.25
G: Stephen Docwra, Chartwell, Butt Lane, Burgh Castle, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk.
R: Simon Dally, 19 Altenburg Gardens, London S.W.11
T: Andy Davidson, 513 Whitton Avenue West, Greenford, Middx. UB6 ODY
A: Richard Sharp, 27 Elm Close, Amersham, Bucks.
I: Allan Owens, Officers' Mess, RAF Bishopscaurt, BFFO 801
F: Steve Plater, 13, Elsinore Road, London S.E.23

Spring 1901 orders must be received by the deadline, which is Friday (9 am) 1 April, 1977.
Telephone deadline Thursday: (01) 273 3232, office only.



WAITING

Players are still welcome here for games of standard Diplomacy; game fee £1.50, payable with application, no deposit. No other games will be organized in Ethil unless specifically notified - but see my announcements below for the first signs of weakening !

"Next Thursday week be all right, sir?"

Before I even started typing issue 1 of Ethil, people told me in conversation that I'd never be firm in my resolve not to run games other than regular Diplomacy; and since then I've had to rethink my attitudes in several areas, this business of non-Dippy games being one of them. Oh, fear not: I'm not about to turn Ethil into another Leviathan, and I've already refused to run a game of En Garde, much though the prospect appeals, on the grounds that it takes up too much space if it's run properly. This is a great pity in a way, of course, as En Garde is by far and away the best of the role-playing games, principally because it has such a high competitive element, and it's also better played by mail than face-to-face. (I'm sure confirmed D&D-haters such as Richard Sharp would enjoy En Garde if they took the plunge). David Gwyn Watts (who else?) said I ought to run Railway Rivals, but I fobbed him off with the excuse that I know too little about the game to be able to judge it. And Paul Simpkins didn't ask whether I might run a Bourse, he just sent in his application on the assumption that I would ! We-e-ell, I'll think about it - but not this issue.

Far more alarming than this sort of reader reaction, though, is the grim truth that (entirely off my own bat, without prompting from anybody else) I am reconsidering my position about variants. What finally brought this to a head was my perusal, last week, of my file of old Ethils. The three Tolkien-based 'Third Age' games therein weren't anything to write home about as far as the play was concerned, but by jiminy the press, especially in the infamous 'H' game, was truly out of this world. In fact, I don't think I'm being too modest when I say that Ethil 'H' may well have been the best press game the world has yet seen, although (like 99% of good press games) it wasn't an invitational game with players deliberately selected for their press-writing ability. I may yet reprint bits of it - after all, if Swanson can reprint appalling DK 72/1 press in his rag (and most of that was originally written by, no surprise, J Piggott), I should be able to get away with reprinting excellent press, n'est-ce pas?

Two things stop me from declaring an instant game opening in a Tolkien variant. First, no such game has ever been successful as a game - the grossly excessive power of Mordor is the usual fault. Second, only one of the three press writers in Ethil 'H' is still with us.

But work carries on. In my desk at the Cabinet Office there now resides an outline map of Middle-Earth, which I occasionally doodle on in an attempt to design the world's first playable Tolkien variant. And I have sent Ethil 1 to John Lettice, and I am attempting to trace Bob Harris and Greg Ward. Should I succeed, who knows what may happen? The Bag End Mob, Maoron, the High Lazoon, both Sarumans (Sarumen?) and Ar Phasixpences (Ar Phashilling?), to say nothing of Frodo and his illicit duplicator... Ethil could yet be swamped ! I hope you all like bad poetry...

Faced with a choice between Abba, or Michael Moorcock and the Deep Fix, confirmed boogie fans would not hesitate to plump for the chart-topping Burlingtons (advt). But people who aren't lovers of boogie, and there are many in this hobby, are disquieted by the amount of coverage certain of today's more depraved zines give to what might be called 'music' by a deaf ear.

I say to them, be calm ! These fads come and go. I remember how, a year or so ago, you couldn't pick up a zine without seeing a boring and inconsequential list of the world's ten most pretentious films; if the protesters keep their cool, I've no doubt the 'music' will eventually disappear in the same way. All right my loves?

Quiz results

There was a small but high-quality response to last issue's quiz; probably extra people would have responded if I had allowed more time. Here, anyway, are the answers:

- 1) The number of ScotDipCons held at 15 Lineside Walk, Rhu, is five. There have been seven ScotDipCons in all; the first two were held in St Andrews under the auspices of the Yare/Morris axis. Now that Wink and Linda have moved down to Somerset it's an open question as to who will host the next one. Malcolm Shaw's answer expressed the need clearly - it read simply, 'Not enough'.
- 2) John Stonehouse is spending his seven years in prison sewing mailbags, a very apt occupation for a former Postmaster-General, and he's being paid £1 a week. Norman Williams suggested that Stonehouse's autobiography (which he's also working on) would be of great use to diplomats everywhere, but I'm not so sure - a random sampling of Diplomacy players shows that many of us can't swim.
- 3) It was Beren, son of Barahir, and Lúthien Tinúviel, daughter of Thingol Greycloak, who together wrested a silmaril from the Iron Crown of Morgoth. Only Andy Davidson got this right; Mike Wassall thought it sounded like RS, or maybe Idi Amin...?
- 4) The game 'Othello' is a rip-off because it's just a ponced-up version of Reversi at five times the price. Norman Williams' version sounds enticing though: 'a variant of Blow Football where the first player to swallow the ball wins'. Eh?
- 5) Screwy Louie's First Finesse was Richard Sharp's ill-fated newsletter for the NGC 'card section' (= poker school). Screwy Louie is a game in the poker family, while a finesse is a card-trick indulged in by players of a certain low game of chance.
- 6) Bilbo's grandparents were Mungo Baggins, Laura Grubb, Gerontius Took and Adamanta Chubb. Again Davidson proves to be the only one who knows his Tolkien!
- 7) The first Ethil player poll was won by (wait for it...) John Piggott. Davidson loses a mark from an otherwise correct answer to this question because he put 'fix' alongside it. This sort of lese-majesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- 8) Here's a Tolkien question that nobody got right! Hobbits and elves always refer to the Sun as 'she' - this is made clear in the song about the Man in the Moon, which was sung at the Prancing Pony. Not central heating, Mike Wassall!
- 9) What is a diptych? Davidson looked the word up in his dictionary and came up with the definition verbatim; curiously, all three other entrants took it to be related to a dipstick! What I was groping for in this question was for someone to say that a 'diptych' was one of Mick Bullock's (fortunately ill-fated) attempts to find an acceptable substitute for the word "zine"; other, equally ludicrous suggestions from the same source included "squib" and "potrzebie"...
- 10) I asked for writers whose work has featured a character called 'Spike' and everyone came up with a very obscure name indeed - someone called 'Richard Sharp'. What a strange name! In fact there are masses of better answers available: C S Lewis, Samuel R Delany, Spike Milligan (remember those autobiographical war memoirs?) and doubtless others. I'm disallowing the creators of 'Peanuts' and 'Tom and Jerry' because they're cartoonists, not writers.
- 11) Contrary to popular belief no less than three Dippyazines have taken flight from within the noble portals of Jesus College, Cambridge. Tales from the Black Forest and Rats live on no evil star are minor; the other certainly is not, as it's none other than Ethil the Frog (old)!
- 12) The callous hag who played poker and enjoyed herself while her husband was a-dying - at least, that's what the propagandists would have us believe - was of course the iniquitous capitalist-roader and running-dog Chiang Ching, 'Madame Mao'.
- 13) Well, really, what an ignorant lot you all are! The Rushock Bog is in the West Farthing, and straddles the Water between Hobbiton and Needlehole. I was surprised to see how many entrants placed an obviously mythical locality in Ireland!
- 14) Mike Wassall thought this a catch question, Malcolm Shaw denied it ('I have my covers washed every three years whether they need it or not') - but actually I felt this one was easy, and only put it in so that Walkerdine could have a bit of egoboo. Sorry about that, Richard! The only Diplomacy variant to have appeared between hard covers is, of course, Multiplicity, which Sharp included in his not-quite-best-selling tome 'The Best Games Brandreth Plays'.
- 15) Another easy one - A(StP)-Syr can first take place in Autumn 1902. Or, as Malcolm Shaw put it, Spring 1900 using the optional TARDIS rule. (Like it).
- 16) Once again a Tolkien question is found to defeat the massed minds of Dippydom - I

can see I should have entered this quiz myself, as I would have won the prize easily on the strength of my Tolkien answers alone ! What does grow upon the highland of Dorthonion is pine trees, that's what - you'll find the reference in one of the songs Treebeard sang to Merry and Pippin.

- 17) You need a set of dominoes to play Leyden. Davidson got this right, but obviously only after much frantic searching through back issues of G&F. Mike Wassall said you need 'the tool of your choice' - fair enough, I suppose...
- 18) Davidson now reveals himself as a regular Analog reader; only takers of Condé's Nasty Medicine would be able to answer this question correctly. The significance of 'Tak Hallus' as a pseudonym is that it is Arabic for 'pen-name'.
- 19) Who ransacked Smolensk last Sunday afternoon? 'I had thought that was a well-kept secret', opined Mike; while Malcolm wasn't sure which Smolensk I was talking about. Norman got it right - in his own words, 'that bloody silly G&F ad ... young Jeff Booth'. Obviously it must be Clive's kid brother. No wonder he keeps quiet about him
- 20) And last, we come to the chap whose accent is laughed at by the entire hobby. Of course, it's that malignant albino dwarf Pete Birks, editor of Bertram Spike's Circus or (as we know it in the trade) Smallest Hits. Exit stage left, pursued by cries of 'You wanker, Piggott - I'm at least 3' 6 1/2"! ...

And now we come to the distribution of the spoils. Much as it pains me to say it, the winning entry came from Andy Davidson (who else ?), who, with a monstrous score of 13 1/2 points out of 20, walks away with the prize of five free Ethils. Aaagh... Next time I run a quiz, perhaps I'll sell the answers before the deadline at 25p a shot.

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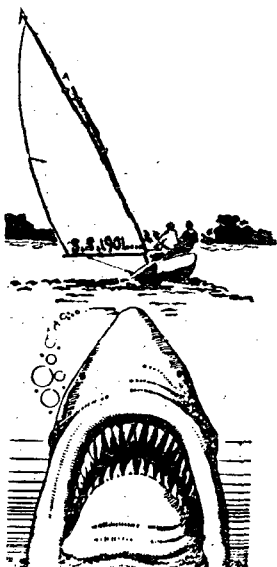
Review column

One of the smaller virtues of producing a regular zine, rather than a very infrequent one like The Norms or (even worse) Science Fiction Five-Yearly, is the way even the most insignificant asides by one's correspondents can spark off the most incredible rush of creativity. Sometimes only a short reply is needed, of course; when I received Simon Dally's note that 'it is a refreshing change to see an author accuse his publisher of being too optimistic about his book... I think it is actually unique!' - it isn't, in fact; there have been a depressing number of examples, mostly justified, in British SF fandom - I sat for some time at work trying to think up a humorous reply that would take up more than one line. What should turn up but a note from Steve Plater (Plater of the FO): 'Will you be running a "Desperately Squalid" page in Ethil, consisting entirely of attacks on Willis & Co?'

Which brings me, naturally, to the number one idiot debacle of today's Diplomacy hobby: the absolute and total failure of Leviathan as a viable fanzine.

It pains me a great deal to have to say things like this, especially as on the face of it Leviathan has so much going for it: a production team full of enthusiasm, litho printing that works out both cheap and handsome, and (most vital of all) a long subscription list. But the fact is that these advantages have been squandered. To put it bluntly, Leviathan is a mess.

It's easy to nitpick at individual faults. There's the naive that impels Eric Willis to complain about the lack of feedback from the readers when at the same time he gives them nothing to comment on. There's the pernicious habit, so common among minor zines, of spacefilling with personal messages (does anyone except me, Ron and Clive care that the latter two gentlemen will each receive £1 worth of Ethil?). There's the sloppy thinking that deludes their (anonymous) reviewer into mistaking an unfavourable comment about Albatross for a personal attack on Paul Humphreys.



There's the repetitiveness that makes them mention at least five times that Birks bit someone's finger during a game of Squasp, imbuing an originally funny news item with all the calculated subtlety of a wet fart. There's the inevitable page 3 nekkid woman, so badly reproduced they probably cut it out of the Sun or a similar comic. And, of course, there's the bad GM'ing (of which more anon).

All these faults, each one minor in itself but adding up to considerable irritation when taken in sum, fade into nothing, however, when compared with the root cause of Leviathan's malaise. The problem, you see, is that Leviathan is run by a Committee, that many-legged beast with no brain, and although Eric Willis may bleat as much as he likes about how successful the operation is being, the blunt fact is that committee zines don't work... can't work.

Look at it this way: the whole of humanity can be divided into two: strong personalities or weak personalities. You don't get many of the weak sort in the zine editing business; although many GM's do display weak characteristics, that's usually because they exercise restraint at the typewriter.

So let's consider our hypothetical Committee zine. With an editorial body consisting of the strong type alone, you get fights. While strictly not a zine of the committee type, Albatross is a good example; at the moment, editor Humphreys and subzine man Nash are engaged in a public dispute over who's going to front the zine... if you like, that's hobby politics taken to its most incestuous extreme.

Suppose our committee zine has a mixed group of people in charge? That's easy to work out: the strong ones become more prominent in the zine's public part, and eventually take over completely; the weak ones quit in disgust at being ignored.

It's when you get a group of uniformly weak characters on the committee that a product like Leviathan results. I know that several of the Leviathan mob can be assertive when they want to be, so it's obviously by conscious choice that they restrain themselves in print. And that's the problem: Leviathan has about as much personality as a packet of Chef square-shaped soup.

Now, in this hobby where production of a fanzine is the biggest possible ego-trip, it does seem odd to say the least when some editors are willing to forego

the pleasure of having their names noised abroad - for this, in effect, is what the crew of Leviathan are advocating. They even featured some crap about 'Views expressed herein are the collective views of Leviathan' in an early issue - I wonder if they considered that nobody would be interested in what Leviathan had to say, while if Eric Willis or some other named person wanted to say things their by-lined comments would be received with attention. Did they even stop to think why the most important part of a statement in print is the name of the person expressing it? To be fair, a few issues showed signs of hope in this respect, as Ron Canham was named as 'editor, with aid from the rest' in the colophon; but in the latest issue, number 7, Canham has been put firmly in his place, presumably as a result of decisions made by a top-level meeting of the Leviathan planning team. Serve him right for joining a committee in the first place.

In other areas there is now cause for hope. In the latest issue it's easier than before to tell who's writing what, and there are signs that the unwieldy committee is breaking up, for Gary Porter and Ron Canham are planning to produce a new zine called Phantasmagoria, on the subject of role-playing games, which will leave them less time to spend on Leviathan.

Unfortunately, this zine won't fulfill the hopes some of us had when it started until certain basic attitudes change in Leviathan's leading lights. This bunch are confirmed games-players, the sort of people who will spend 12 hours at a con hunched over a D&D campaign rather than visiting the pub with their friends, and they're enthusiastic and ambitious. The result has been much what you might expect; Leviathan well deserves its name on grounds of size, for it's absolutely huge, with 40 litho pages, 20 duplicated ones and god knows how many other optional supplements besides in the latest issue; and there are lists open and games running in just about every kind of postal activity imaginable. (In a previous issue they claimed to have 481 places available for potential players, as if that was something to boast about). So a lot of the extensive space is devoted to game reports of no interest (well, okay, limited interest then) to the spectator, leaving comparatively little over for items of more general interest.

Large size coupled with a wide range of games in progress means two things, which even when you've got a huge committee to help out follow as surely as night

follows day. These are GM errors and delay.

I'm not too bothered about the errors in adjudications, as I myself don't find them irksome (although many players do, of course). But it's perfectly obvious that a zine whose main *raison d'être* is the running of postal games simply must come out on time - and Leviathan doesn't! Issue 7 turned up only two weeks and four days after the previous deadline, which is good by their recent standard though lousy when compared with the performance of other games-slanted zines.

I've got a little anecdote I'd like to recount at this point, because it rather shows up the attitudes of this crowd towards their players, and, boy, is it an unhealthy one. I'm only playing in their Bourse, and naturally when the very thin Leviathan 6 turned up around the end of January I turned immediately to where I expected the Bourse results to be. They weren't there; the obvious place (the page after Belial game, which the Bourse is connected with) was occupied by the Social League Table for the En Garde game!

What had happened? Feverishly I searched the pages of the main zine, then the supplement. (Note the bad organization - I oughtn't to have had to search for information). Eventually I found news; there had been difficulties, and the Bourse adjudication would be sent out separately in a week's time.

A fortnight later, and I was just lethargically drawing the cover for Ethil 1 when my doorbell rang. Excellent, I thought; here's good old Richard Sharp, come to give me a lift to Games Day. But no: 'twas the postie, bearing in his hot, sweaty paw an envelope containing the adjudication for Belial Bourse - at last! Pausing only to verify whether the 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ p stamp had been franked, I tore open this missive to discover what excuse they were going to offer for the inordinate delay.

'Sorry it's late,' ran the note, 'and in xerox form. We sort of mislaid the stencil.' Well! When I was labouring over the old Ethil I often used to wish a few of the stencils would get mislaid - I never quite managed it, though. Anyway, muttering curses beneath my breath I unearthed the copy of Leviathan from the pile (it had been buried quite deep by this time) to find out when the deadline was. Diplomacy - 18 February. All the rest - 11 February.

The date was, of course, 12 February; the adjudication for the previous move had been posted on the deadline for the next.



'Oh, yes, I've found an excellent method of keeping Birks in order - every time he NMR's in my zine, I go round to Kent and kick him...'

I seethed with rage, but managed to control myself long enough to work some orders out just in time before Sharpy arrived.

On arrival at Chelsea Town Hall, I was awakened from my wrathful reverie by a call from Pete Swanson: 'Shucks, Piggott, Eric Willis is just behind you.'

'Ah, Willis, you rotter, you twister, you blackguard, you...' I began, turning; Eric Willis (for it was he) turned out to have a figure not unlike that of Duncan Morris, and I finished lamely, 'sir.' (In the latest Leviathan this self-same Willis muses at one point as to why so many games players are small. I suppose most things look small from a height of 6' 4"). Briefly I explained my predicament; I had missed the deadline, yet through no fault of my own. The miserable Willis squirmed in agonies of indecision; finally his brain went click, whirr, and he came out with this gem: 'Oh, but when we say "Diplomacy" we mean "Bourse"!'

So there you have it. Eric Willis considers five days is sufficient time for players in a postal Diplomacy game to consult each other and get their orders to the GM. Do other respected GM's share this view? Taylor, Bullock, Sharp, Birks, Walkerdine - your views please!

No, but seriously I think that the ability to admit you're in the wrong when you demonstrably are in the wrong is a good attribute for any gamesmaster.

It was in this same conversation with Eric Willis that I discovered perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Leviathan, and the reason why quite frankly I don't see it lasting long in its present form. I'm

(Continued on page 16)

LETTERS

PAUL SIMPKINS Ethil was good; there is no doubt that it is born of years of experience and it also bears the stamp of a man of more mature years, ie, over 22/23. I wonder which type of subscriber you'll attract. They say one needs a reading age of 11 to understand 'Nationwide', although that's open to argument (some say 8). Be that as it may, can a similar statement be made for Ethil? I consider myself fairly articulate and I have even been called 'literate' by Richard Sharp, but I do think that your rather teutonic prose will deter many a younger member of the hobby. Maybe this is one of your aims - possibly even a subconscious wish to attract only the 'brains' of the hobby - but by crikey it certainly takes some effort to comprehend some of your more obscure references... a pullulation of subzines... my arse!

This leads me to another point. The anonymous columnists which appear in every aspiring zine all spout a similar prose to yours, heavily punctuated with references to the pursuits of gentlemen and those in Debrett's. The authors of such dross even make the effort of dressing up small and often insignificant points in the most flowery language possible. Young Swanson (agh, there I go doing it too!) increases his columnists regularly, and fills the rest of his otherwise excellent zine with historical 'press' which has a similar aura. Let's hope that this fad, this Freudian longing to be one of the landed gentry will soon pass, and then we'll be able to get back to using normal ~~talky~~ language again.

((Literacy is of course to be admired, but I doubt that Mr Sharp is qualified to pass judgement - he, after all, is the man who talks about 'baited breath' twice in four lines (Dolchstoss 13), whilst his tautological memoir 'The Best Book Titles People Choose' abounds with such gems as '7.00 am one Sunday morning' !

((Seriously, I am conscious that I use far too many long words - I think it all started when I joined the Cabinet Office two years ago, and vowed there and then that I would never produce the sort of archetypal Civil Service letter that says absolutely nothing and takes two pages to say it. I'm sure everyone can think up

examples, though to be fair I must admit that I've only ever seen two or three genuine ones. Anyway, I avoided that trap only to fall slap into another - if it's any comfort, my boss caught the bug years ago, and thinks it quite all right to use such expressions as 'transdepartmental initiatives on intergenerational deprivation' (I swear I'm not making this up!).

((As for that wonderful word 'pullulation', I used it for the same reason that you used 'teutonic' - because, of all the words or phrases available to me, it was the one whose sound indicated my entire feelings about the subject in question. I mean, even if you don't know what 'pullulation' actually means, doesn't it strike you as being something vaguely slimy and unpleasant?

((You, even so sensible a chap as you, Paul, insist on carrying on this insane fight against anonymous columnists; what's more, you seem to be making inferences about their identity - inferences, I may say, which are totally unsubstantiated. You'll have noted that Ethil does not feature an anonymous column; however, the writers of such are free to send me letters if they wish, as is clearly shown by this next item ...))



'LUCIFER' Reaction to EtF 1 has been swift and uncompromising. Some comments by certain leading hobby figures:

'EtF... the only publication whose reappearance would seriously worry me.' Richard Sharp.

'The reappearance of EtF would naturally be a matter of the utmost concern to any gentleman of taste and discretion.' Anon, Greenford.

'As elegant as Concorde and slightly less expensive.' RJW.

'Happen tha niver do owt for nowt on Ilkla Moor bar t'at, sithee.' Mick Bullock.

'Hullo again, sailor!' Will Haven.
'What a —ing load of old cobblers!' P Birks.

'Oh, rats...' P Swanson.
'Edith the which?' (squeak, squeak)

R Taylor.

'Now what about those orphans?' Your

Conscience.

'... an abrasive wit, a coruscating eloquence, an elegance of expression to which Cantabrigensis alone (alas!) dares aspire.' Lucifer.

'Yet another blow struck against the workers in the resurrection of the burjoyce scandal-sheet Ethel the Fronde by the elitist Establishment stooge Piggott he should stick to racing me and the lads of the Ely WRP branch dropped a packet on him last week at Sandown it is obvious that control of the mediums by these Fascist puppets continues to prevent a meaningful ongoing dialogue being conducted in a relevant (cont.p.94)' Tim Spanton.

(But I enclose my subscription! I fear I'm engaged in too many games at present to star in another, even assuming you get as many as seven subscribers!)

((Thank you for conducting this straw poll, my Lord - I shall ignore that last remark! Though what Mick Bullock thinks he knows about Ilkla' Moor bar t'at I can't imagine - he wasn't even there when I sang it!))



ANDY DAVIDSON Ethil the Frog I was quite good, though it resembled the soulless Victor Ludorum more than the old Ethil. Somehow I find litho zines more cold and distant than those done on a duplicator. Doesn't your printer have any green paper?

Your house rules seem very reasonable and I welcome your conversion regarding standbys. I've just one question, though. On what basis will you make unordered removals? I trust that you will use the rulebook system - furthest from home, fleets before armies. Oh, and another point - what about joint orders, heh, heh, heh...

Who are the characters on your cover supposed to be? They look to me like Wink Thompson and Graham Buckell. And did you see the Muppet Show yesterday? As well as the item which included nine frogs (not to mention Kermit) the guest human looked very like Pete Swanson.

((You mean Paul Williams, that short fat blonde-haired Yank with the pebble glasses? Yes, I thought he looked like Swanson too.

((The 'impersonal' nature of printed zines is something I've remarked on myself in the past, notably when Dolchstoss suddenly went litho. I think the main trouble is that mimeo'd stuff always has

an aura of shoddiness about it, which sets the reader up to expect something amateur and friendly - decently printed magazines, on the other hand, exude professionalism from every pore. I suppose we can even test this theory - the one issue of Gumballs that was printed looked really terrible, because the typewriter Ronlad used wasn't suitable, and the resulting mess could be bettered in appearance by any issue of 1901..., for example. Which of them has the most 'soul', Andy?

((I don't think coloured paper will make a lot of difference, though I'll see what can be done in this respect just to distinguish Ethil from Dolchstoss. The main reason many editors choose tinted paper is that flaws in the duplicating - small ink spots and so on - always show up more on white paper than on coloured. Nor, incidentally, should green paper be equated with frogs; only 11½ out of 46 issues of the old Ethil were on green, and one of those was a mistake.

((Trust you to come up with queries about my house rules, ratbag! Yes, okay, I'll stick to the rulebook in making unordered removals (in the old Ethil I used a different system, and I assume that's why Andy is asking). As for joint orders, I intend to make no rulings whatsoever - frankly I think anyone who submits joint orders is asking for trouble, most obviously because either signatory is free to make a unilateral change after the joint set has been posted, and I don't think any situation I could possibly plan ahead for will ever arise! Nonetheless, I'd appreciate any comments, pro or con.

((Andy isn't the only person to have rules queries; here goes with a word or two from...))



ROGER COLLINS No reference in your first issue to the Karma League controversy. I know roughly where you stand from your letters in 1901..., but how will you handle the situation as a GM? Personally, I find the only objection I have to playing in 1901... is the relatively high chance of finding oneself in a game with the Karma League people, which, combined with the ubiquitous presence of one Richard Nash, severely reduces the attraction of 1901... games.

The attempt to predict the unexpected stab is one of the main pleasures of playing Diplomacy, and I feel that the kill-joy effects of the KL philosophy were not sufficiently emphasized in the recent

correspondence in 1901... and elsewhere. A statement from you on the KL would be of interest.

((Prearranged alliances - in fact, any cross-game agreements or enmities - are contrary to the true spirit of Diplomacy and, in the final analysis, self-defeating. Two players who are known always to act as allies will find themselves attacked from the outset and eliminated in game after game until they get the message, whilst anyone content not to stab his neighbours may well avoid being stabbed himself, but he'll also avoid winning....

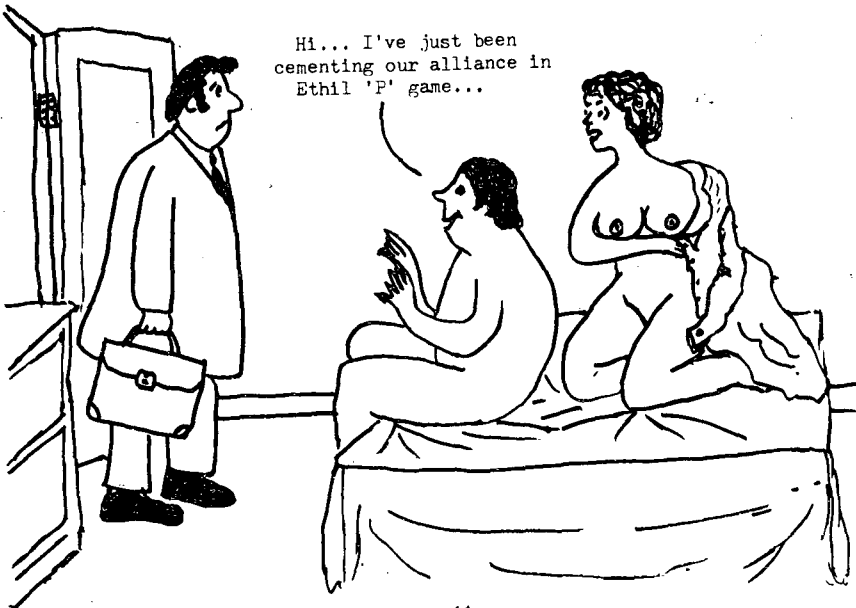
((When I consider the related, equally iniquitous practise of trading favours or grudges between games, I'm always reminded of the time, three or four years ago, when Andy Davidson and myself were in fifty games each, about twenty of them in common. Obviously, in some games we were allies and in some we were not; occasionally we would exchange letters during university vacations (of course, during term-time we were both at Jesus College, Cambridge, the world's premier Diplomatic centre). Typically, Andy's letters would start with a list of games and 'Nyaah, nyaah, nyaah' written by each one, after which he'd get on with some proper diplomacy in those few games where we still had something to talk about; my replies would include a different list of games and my own nyaah's. The

fact is that not only did we not see why stabs in some games should disqualify us from being allies in others, but if we'd tried to transfer agreements from one game to another we would have got inextricably bogged down in the complexity of running a twenty-game alliance !

((But I digress. The Karma League, immortalized in 1901... as the chronic rhinitis of the great pharynx of Diplomacy by a correspondent whose name temporarily escapes me, is a difficult problem for the GM. Once a game has started he's powerless to interfere, of course, but it would be possible to fiddle game-starts so that members of known inter-game alliances do not play in the same game - which I shall try to do. Ample precedent for this sort of thing exists; it is, for instance, commonplace for GM's to rig the country draw by means of Who's Where so as to give players countries they aren't playing already.))



DAVE TANT Congratulations on the best 'first edition' I've yet seen. (Come to think of it, the only other first edition I've seen was Albatross !). Still, I'm sure you'll accept my compliments in the same spirit in which I extend them. Not only is Ethil neat and



literate, but interesting, thus breaking entirely new ground for a determinedly Dippy-oriented zine. Where you lead, perhaps others will follow.

I also liked the little cartoons, although I must admit I first thought the one on page 7 was an illustration for a new sado-masochistic perversion. Has Mrs S really got a figure like that? No wonder he never brings her anywhere.

((Hmm. Well, I never claimed I could draw as well as write, did I? For the record, no, Jill Sharp doesn't look anything like that picture; it took me four attempts to get an expression of surprise on her face that didn't make her look too ugly, and once I finally achieved it I let the rest go hang. Only after the zine had been printed did I notice that I had inadvertently (and quite unjustifiably) given her the famous large Sharp chin, which in Richard's case is only a fraction smaller than Conrad von Metzke's shoe size. The reason Jill doesn't turn up at cons, of course, is that she's busy at home teaching her daughter Pippa to become a Satanist.))

Much as I'd like to play in Ethil, I am determinedly disciplining myself to get down to half-a-dozen games before I start any more; I find my time badly over-committed these days, mainly due to 'The Pits of Cil'. Also, I find I can't get on with two-season Dippy. I think I've forgotten a build or retreat (sometimes both!) in just about every game so far.

Still, I'm quite sure you'll be overwhelmed in the rush, and won't mind the odd bloke like myself, who just wants to sub for the pleasure of reading it.

((Keep writing things like that, Dave, and you'll be welcome here any time !

((Interesting point, that, about two-season vs three-season Dippy. I myself find that taking Winter builds separately slows the game down a bit too much for my taste, but to what extent depends on the frequency of the zine; in 1901... for instance, a three-season game year takes only nine weeks, whilst in the less frequent Ethil the two-season year will take eight weeks. In The Norns game-time might move at the same pace as real time, one year per year, if Dave Allen used a three-season year !

((The most important point about the two-season year, however, is that its pedigree is immaculate - for, as a few old-timers among us will remember, it is a British invention.))

CLIVE BOOTH I still don't think standardization of Diplomacy house rules is such a bad idea, and I don't see why you're against it. Okay, so some GM's might like variety, by ruling in different ways in some cases, but if we had an exhaustive set of house rules at least they'd be able to say 'Games played in this zine will not follow rule 21 of the standard house rules'. Then all players would know where they stand; as it is, people don't know what the ruling will be until it is actually made, and then the arguments start.

((I suspect that if a set of standard rules did exist, GM's, far from giving a list of deviations from the norm, would be under considerable pressure to conform. After all, nobody is forced to go along with the Diplomacy rulebook, as published by Philmar or Avalon-Hill; nevertheless, everyone does.

((Dave Fisher commented that absolute rulings in these matters would cut down on the literary content of Dippyzines, as editors would have less opportunity for libelling each other ! Here's some more of Dave's letter:))



DAVE FISHER Your fascinating 'Review Column', and specifically the Laws of Fanzines... taking the Laws of Robotics as a basis, I think that three laws of fanzines could be comprehensively described as:

- 1) Good fanzines are those which communicate constructively.
- 2) Such communication must stimulate, not alienate, the producer.
- 3) Such communication must stimulate, not alienate, the subscriber.

I think the second and third of these, defining as they do the meaning of the first, cover the three 'factors impinging' on your first law (every fanzine is produced solely for the benefit of its editor).

Your second law would appear to be irrelevant, or at least imprecise, in that although it is true that the best fanzines contain material which cannot be obtained elsewhere, a good fanzine warrants distinction by effectively featuring material even if it can be found elsewhere. By 'effectively' I mean that it complies with my version of the second and third laws; that is, material which appears mundane elsewhere could be featured in a manner which gives it new life and

extracts fresh meaning, the criterion being original presentation rather than just startling content.

((Right - although you've really only got one law there, not three; after all, constructive communication always stimulates both partners. I think you're being a bit narrow, though, in your choice of the word 'communication' - perhaps 'entertainment' might be a better one. (This is hair-splitting, of course, as we are basically in agreement).))

((My statement of the Second Law was imprecise rather than irrelevant - perhaps I'll reword it to read 'A good fanzine does not feature material which can be obtained elsewhere in the same form', which is more exact, but also more verbose and unwieldy, something I'd hoped to be able to circumvent.))



PAUL HUMPHREYS In reply to your review, I'll start by saying that for a Club (or institution) to be attacked, there has to be a reason. No doubt you see that the NGC is often criticized - when do you see complaints about the IDA/UK?

The attacks on Richard Sharp and Pete Birks only resulted from their initial libellous remarks on myself and Albatross. Please, get your facts right if you're going to print them. Speaking of which:

- 1) Take my age. I'm not 14, but 16³/₄ years. So?
- 2) I was not taking mock 'O's, but retaking 'O' levels which I had failed in the summer, due to lack of effort.
- 3) Christ, I do know the rules about Spa-NAF; my letter only suggested a rule which could be used in a variant to give added realism. But then, if Will Haven had printed the rest of my letter you would have seen that.
- 4) When I went to RAF (OASC) Biggin Hill, I spent three days on a course - including something like seven exams and an hour-long interview. On the last day, the Review Officer assessed my results and made the statement referring to my powers of reasoning and logic. Again, get your facts right.

I do not want to pick a fight with you as there's no reason. Why can't Richard Sharp reply?

You also seem to forget that Diplomacy is a hobby, and that people play by post for light relief. Why does everyone seem to forget this?

((Well, at the outset let me point out that several readers have castigated me for devoting so much space last issue to the wanton destruction of Mr Humphreys and his organ. Of course it's quite true that Paul and other zine editors are doing the hobby at large a service by running games, and that it must be demoralizing for someone to be at the receiving end of a hatchet-job review; and a couple of people expressed disquiet that I might have goaded Paul to reply, giving me a chance to repeat the process (apropos of which, Nicky Palmer paid tribute to my well-known sense of fair play in a recent letter to me, so I really ought to resist the temptation to kick a man when he's down. No, I didn't know I had a sense of fair play either - but who am I to contradict Nicky?)).

((That said, one must remember that if Paul Humphreys can't take criticism he has no business doling it out, and also that sensitive people shouldn't be in the zine business in the first place - if the heat's too much, get out of the kitchen, as the English proverb remarks. And, to be perfectly frank, I'm completely at a loss to know how to deal with the foregoing tissue of irrelevancies and non-sequiturs, except to answer the points one by one at tedious and exhaustive length.

((One. IDA/UK has often been attacked in the past - see, for instance, acres of letters in several issues of old Ethil, in which people bawled me out for trying to set IDA/UK up. Of course, some would say that if you've got criticisms to make about an organization you shouldn't extend your quarrel to making personal attacks on the people running it, however misguided they may seem.

((Two. It's a mistake to accuse your enemies of libelling you unless you're absolutely sure they did. All Sharp and Birks need do now is accuse you of libelling them, and so ad infinitum.

((Three. I didn't mention your age as I didn't know it - I said that when I took mock 'O' levels I was 14. Age isn't relevant when it comes to revising for exams, but since we're on the subject I'll just say that when I was taking Tripos papers at Cambridge - a damned sight more important than poxy school exams, and a lot more difficult, to the extent that (for the first time in my life) there was a distinct possibility I might fail - I kept Ethil's games running by producing a game-reports-only 'economy issue' on schedule, then a bumper issue after I'd sat my last paper. Nobody had cause to complain, and

I'm sure many players appreciated having their games continue without disruption. My revision, such as it was, didn't suffer because the small-size issue took only about four or five hours to produce, and after I'd done it I was spared the heart-ache of receiving letters from worried players who thought their Ethils had been lost in the post. This is a much better solution during times of personal crisis than merely delaying things, wouldn't you agree? (It is, incidentally, still my policy in the unlikely event that I have to take any more exams. I thought I'd given the summer ritual up for good when I joined the Civil Service, but I find that under certain conditions passing a few more exams could win me extra money, so the possibility remains, dammit).

((Four. I thought you were taking mocks, Paul, but cheerfully admit my error. 'O' level resits it is. I'll just repeat my earlier intimation that exams get more difficult and more important as you grow older; so when you take 'A' levels (just 16 months to go, right?) the situation as regards Albatross delays will be worse unless you try a different solution to the problem.

((Five. On the vital subject of Spa-NAF, the words printed in Bellicus were indeed 'an end to the Spa-NAF controversy' (my underlining). I maintain that if you were just talking about possible variants you wouldn't have used those words. You accuse Will of having caused distortion, but I really can't see how that could have happened simply by his having omitted the rest of your letter. That word controversy says it all, I reckon. There remains the possibility, of course, that Will rewrote your letter to give a distorted meaning, but if that were the case I'd be bitterly disappointed; Will is usually much more subtle than that. Fact is, Paul, that if anything so twitlike as 'an end to the Spa-NAF controversy' had appeared in connection with my name I'd have rushed into print with a denial simply to protect my reputation !

((Six. My note about you, logic and the RAF was a fair precis of what you put at the bottom of Albatross ?'s front page. Your letter expands both versions and contradicts neither. Either I did 'get my facts right' or else you've now been telling lies - twice. I prefer the former.

((Seven. If you didn't want to pick a fight with me, you shouldn't have allowed yourself to be bamboozled into selecting as subzine editor someone who goes around

spouting provocative crap like 'I love insulting John Piggott' (Albatross ? again - Thorby's subzine this time). In this context I'm pleased to see that you're showing signs of asserting your editorial prerogative in the latest issue, number 8; the fight between you and Nash over who writes most of Albatross will hopefully be decided soon in your favour... But who's picking a fight? If everyone took adverse reviews of their zines to be personal affronts we'd have had several murders in this hobby by now.

((Eight. I've never forgotten that Diplomacy is a hobby. I maintain, though, that if you go to a hell of a lot of trouble (as all zine publishers do) it's worth taking time to ensure that the finished product is as good as possible. If I produce something which I know falls short of the standards I'm capable of, I'm not satisfied, and I can be sure that no-one else will be either, right? And as I'm not being paid for producing this thing my only reward is egoboo, be it from other people telling me what a great guy I am, or just me fantasizing in bed, thinking, 'You've done a good job of this issue, Piggott !' The second factor in all this is, of course, that fanzine editors are always identified in the public mind with their creations. It is even rumoured among the cognoscenti that Ethil has a prominent Adam's apple...

((In all this, I feel a strange sense of déjà vu. Way back in 1973 a chap called Mike Sherrad, long since departed from our numbers, published a particularly awful zine called Our Enry. Naturally I drew attention to its shortcomings, and my remarks drew general agreement from wide sections of the hobby. The main dissenting voice came from (of all people) Pete Birks, who, in a letter which must rate as one of the classics of postal Diplomacy, accused me first of attempting to rip apart the fabric of the hobby as we knew it, second of intensifying Sherrad's stammer (which was in truth a slight enough thing), and third of driving him to suicide...! 'For God's sake, show a bit of humanity !' he finished.

((Listen, Pete, when you send me your letter this time, just don't plaster 'Do Not Quote' all over it....

((Finally, connoisseurs of letter columns will have realized that this one is a classic. Every letters section ought to feature at least one missive where the editorial reply is five times as long as the letter - true !)

GRAHAM BUCKELL You might be interested in some more facts about the CUSFS attempt to subvert the by-election. Although not a member (never got round to joining) I contributed to the deposit as did a fair number of other non-CUSFS members (someone said that the Catz Master, Prof Swinnerton-Dyer, contributed a fiver !). Shortly before the deadline they were still £20-30 short, but CSU stepped in with the rest provided they could use part of the campaign budget allowed to campaign against the National Front. As it wasn't planned to spend several hundred pounds on a campaign anyway this idea was accepted. I don't know much about Philip Sargent's campaign, but I believe it involved travelling around on a tricycle dressed in a scuba suit following the NF people.

((How sad that the purity of the SF Looney ethic had to be sullied with base politicking ! Still, thanks for the info, Graham; I rather thought Philip Sargent had been cavorting around in a ridiculous costume. Really, he should have donned a 1950s suit, white shirt, narrow tie and so on - he would have received many fewer votes then ! As it was, the fancy dress he affected would have made people notice him - not what you want to happen when you're trying to lose an election ...))



CHARLES VASEY Thank you for the copy of Ethil the Frog, and may I say how much I enjoyed it. One wonders why you wish to defile the excellent content with a load of cruddy Dippy games, especially considering the standard of most Dippy press - oh, for some more work like 'The Teeth of the Evidence'. The Hobby Corner was quite excellent and must be the only example of skatology which appears to lean more on erudition than vulgarity. I should remark in passing (p 14) that anaemic crap is an excretion most devoutly to be wished.

((Thanks, mate - wish everyone showed your impeccable taste. The point at issue engendered a good deal of interest, the most common response being the return of the free bit of bog-paper I provided, together with a note going like this: 'The catalogue value of this is 25p, so can I swap it for a copy of Ethil?' In no case did this ploy succeed; I already possess an excellent specimen of the tissue in

question and don't need to acquire a second one.

((The Hobby Corner piece originally appeared in the January, 1970 issue of Peter Roberts' fanzine Egg. Shortly after the issue had appeared, Peter found to his amusement that there actually is a legitimate hobby devoted to collecting toilet paper; it goes under the dreadful name of 'Cloacapyrology', and seven years ago it had an efficient national organization which published a regular fanzine from an address in Welwyn Garden City !))

Your bold revelations about Davidson stagger me. How did you find out these details? Is Davidson the man whom the Porn Squad complained was draining off all the bribes? The mind boggles ! I shall of course have him expelled from any games I am GMing; one expects this sort of thing in the Services, but not in Middlesex. I was deeply worried when reading the SF section to discover I understood most of it - you must consider whether you are not being a little too journalistic to count as a fanzine. Third Law - fanzines serve cliques (if you'll pardon the expression).

I was amazed to see you did not know what simony was. Clearly you never suffered from the dread history lesson of Luther's period in which Simony, Pluralism and Nepotism became a long single word to describe the situation of the Catholic Church (as was), finally culminating in Luther nailing the 95 turds to the door of Wittenburg Cathedral and being sent down by Charles V (played, one imagines, by Orson Welles). All of which brings me to the quiz. (9) a holy book, specifically the Lists of Saints, especially in the Orthodox Church. Notable for some saints being dropped (not unlike the Fitba' League). All the other Q's - pass. However, if you're so smart how about telling me in which leading case did the Lords of Appeal decline to discuss whether, when planning to enter a room to engage in copulatory activity with a young lady, it was better to retain one's socks as an aid to speed to avoid the attentions of her mother. Come on then !

((Aaagh !! Must have been R and others vs Haven, in which their Lordships were very reluctant to say anything lest their interest in Mr Haven be misconstrued. Seven pages of letters ! Curse - I doubt there'll be room for an SF section this issue now !))

REVIEW COLUMN (from page 8)

reluctant to name a date for Leviathan's demise, say Christmas 1977, for the simple reason that I don't want to give them the opportunity of publishing through till Boxing Day, saying 'Nyaah, Piggott, shows how much you know' - and then folding at once. I'd much prefer them to go on until they decide their own disappearing date. Anyway, as I said earlier the Leviathan mob have no shortage of enthusiasm; the trouble is, though, that there's such a thing as far too much enthusiasm, and Eric Willis in particular has caught rather an acute dose of it. Eric told me that he spends three weekends out of five working on Leviathan, and quite frankly that's far too many, especially when you consider that he's active in face-to-face gaming as well. What's going to happen when his zest for publishing a zine starts to disappear? And disappear it will, you may be sure, all the sooner because of his present gross overcommitment. I've no way of knowing how much time the other members of the committee are investing at the moment, though Ron Canham in particular seems to have been pretty active in the production. What is certain is that typing 60 pages plus every six weeks in one's spare time is no mean task even when there are several of you doing it.

The one possible advantage of a Committee structure over the more normal one-man-show, of course, is that if one partner loses interest the others can carry on regardless. My experience of committees tells me, however, that this doesn't work in many cases.

Whether it will for Leviathan is something we'll have to wait to find out. For all its many shortcomings, I wish it well in the battles that lie ahead - all it really needs is a strong hand at the controls and a reduction in size and it could become pretty good. Address is: Eric Willis, 30 Blagdon Rd, Lewisham, SE13. They don't seem to give a price (aargh!) but I expect a couple of stamps will get you a sample issue.

Christalmighty, lawksluffers, don't I ramble? I can see what Pete Birks means when he talks about me packing the zine with my endless prattle. Blame it on the lack of decent TV programmes - I'm typing this on Tuesday at 10.20 pm and I haven't turned the thing on yet tonight. Before I close the review column this issue, though, I must just give a mention to Richard Hucknall's new zine Fall of Eagles, which should not be abbreviated to FoE, happy though the acronym is, 'cos it stands for

'Friends of the Earth'. Richard is an old (in both senses) member of the hobby, and a member of the Jigsaw/1901... school, believing that the main purpose of a zine should be running Diplomacy games well, with quick turnaround and reliability. This point of view is valid, I suppose, although I don't share it; certainly such zines are valuable to those who take their games seriously, and to novices who find long intervals in their first games irksome. Issue 2, which I have, is eight pages long and contains Richard's statement of policy, two pages (bleah...) of house rules and a few reviews. His ruling on NMR's contains a curious flaw, heh heh, but I expect he will fall back into line rapidly when I point it out (as I will do) in a letter; apart from that fault everything seems eminently sensible and augurs well for the future; Richard strikes one as the sort of chap who won't over-extend himself until he's sure he can keep the pace going for some time. I recommend this zine to Diplomacy players. Address; 124 Southcliffe Road, Carlton, Nottingham, NG4 1ES; and price, 12p/issue. Game fee 50p + £1 dep.

SWEEPINGS

Graeme Levin notes that I misinformed readers about G&P's rates of pay in my first issue. (My information was cribbed from the Writers' & Artists' Year Book, an impeccable enough source). Payments actually vary between £5 and over £10 depending on circumstances; £7.50/1000 wds would be a fair average.

Sad news for Latin chess freaks: Norman Williams' zine Caissa is suspended at the moment, as Norman's duplicator has gone completely kaput (it fell down some stairs) and he can't afford a new one. No word on the fate of the games - presumably they are continuing by carbon copy.

Have you voted in the MP Zine Poll yet? All Ethil's readers are eligible; you just list all the zines and subzines you receive and give each one a mark from 1 (yeech) to 10 (perfection). I won't give the usual hint that the correct mark for Ethil is 10, as I'm sure I don't need to; to be quite serious (and that makes a change for this zine!) I don't think Ethil will place very high this time as it hasn't been going long enough to impinge on the public conscience as much as it might. Send votes to Old Man Walkerdine at 43 Chapel Grove, Adlestone, Weybridge, KT15 1UG, to arrive by April 2; if you don't normally get Mad Policy include a 6½p stamp to receive a copy of the results, if you want. G'bye....