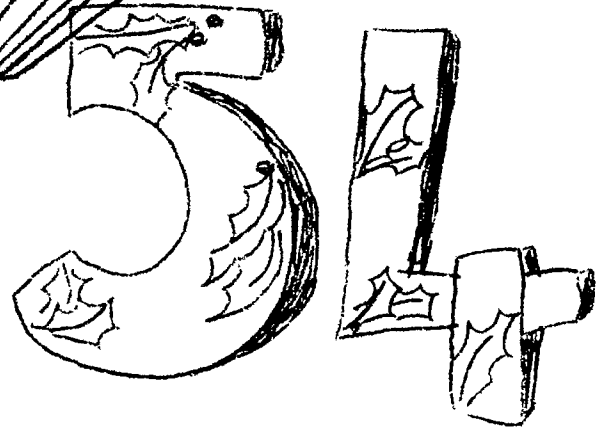


DIB DIB DIB



AMARR
CHRISTMAS

Welcome to the 54th issue of Dib Dib Dib - the Christmas edition packed in before the festive rush, with hopefully another weekend turnaround to see you get to read it whilst eating the old Christmas nosh. What else could one ask for as a present, eh? The cost is a fixed rate of 40p per issue in the UK and 23p + postage overseas. Anyone wishing to send money, send it to Tom Tweedy, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks., HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

EDITORIAL

Deadline after Christmas: Friday the 17th January is really too early after the Christmas rush, the 24th can't be done because I have to produce the Dalmatian Club magazine, Spots of News over that time, ready to get it out for the 1st February, which just leaves Friday 31st January 1986. Sorry if it's an overly long turnaround, but there's nothing else that can be done - I really think the extra time is needed. Mind you, I'll expect everyone to get written orders in with such a long deadline, surely no-one will need to phone their orders in on the Thursday?

Thanks to all those who sent cards or wished us Merry Christmas - as for those who haven't sent cards... WHY haven't you? Mind you, I mustn't grumble I suppose, much as I hate to admit I do have a reasonable bunch of subscribers. You all have your own little foibles which makes my life more interesting; Nick Hoyle sends me his own Christmas card which he made (though this time it was a sort of mobile to hang up); Michele & Kris Morris take time out to send me drawings, one a Christmas one; John Piggott generally signs his cheques to me with "Pay Tom Tweedy the sum of 'so many pounds' AND NOT A PENNY MORE!" (what a Scrooge); Danny & Kath Collman start their letters with "Not a long letter this time" and proceed to write 4 or 5 pages each; George North (a prolific and much-appreciated Dib contributor) and ~~Luke Clutterbuck~~ just write; and Mike Close and Nicholas Clifton pester me and call me names. Of course there's dozens more Dib characters almost too numerous to name, Emblem, Sharp, Deans, Quartermain, Bycroft, Downes, etc who contribute to the zine and make it what it is. I'd like to thank you all, and wish you whole-heartedly a very MERRY CHRISTMAS and a happy 1986!

News of the month must be that Richard Walkerdine is handing over the work of his beloved Zine Poll to the infamous John Piggott. I think this may have cost Richard a lot more than he makes out in MP 113, I am sure he greatly enjoyed the razzamatazz of doing the Poll himself. He must have - he's been doing it for years. The change over is due to a combination of reasons: Some felt Mad Policy had an unfair advantage in the Poll; others felt the voting system/eligibility system needed looking into (none of which bothered Richard much as differing sets of ideas along those lines had been put forward before); also been suggested that MP has no other targets to aim for now it has won the 1985 Poll; but the main reason ~~is~~ Richard now has a lot of other things on his plate with regards the new stats work he rescued from Pete Calcraft. All in all I think Richard has shown a lot of character in handing the Zine Poll over - in his position, I'm not sure I would have done the same.

However, what of the NEW Zine Poll Custodian? Well apart from all the nasty things I'd like to say about him, with words like reprobate, blackguard, villain of the highest water, ex-'hard core' member and someone voted as 'most unlikeliest person to turn one's back on', I must admit he might be the best man for the job. John will be giving the poll back to the Diplomacy hobby, much of which will meet with great approval. Gone will be Soccercross zines and fringe zines of the hobby. If it doesn't run Diplomacy, it won't get a mention. Also to go will be the European zines, no bad things from my point of view as I don't receive any of them anyway. This should give us back a trimmed down and much more respectable Diplomacy Zine Poll with the results being a little more realistic.

Of course there is a danger, a mere possibility, John may now resurrect Ethil the Frog to run the Poll in (look how Walkerdine succumbed), so pressure must be brought to bear to assure us that such will not be the case. The last things the hobby needs is another of the 'Old Guard' crawling out of the woodwork foisting us off with their miserable dusty tomes. Do we really need another zine with the quality of Dolchstoss? I say no! - after all how else am I to get the chance to win the Zine Poll?

News on the Dib front. I'm only really interested in GMing Diplomacy, but I realise people must be interested in other games so, some time in the new year Dib may well take on a subzine to expand in other games. Sub-zine editor will be the ultra-reliable Richard Downes, who's interested in taking on my Sopwith games, and also wishes to run Bourse, Railway Rivals and 'Broadside'; Graham Holmes' sea-faring Sopwith variant. It's early days yet, but Richard seems eager enough to start. I'll have to watch him with this extra bid for hobby domination, he's getting as bad a Walkerdine, Kinzett, or even the Morris/Collman combol

I meant to include Len George's 'Postal Games Poll' last issue but mislaid it - now I've found it I fear I might have left it too late; there's no deadline.

~~~~~

#### JOTTO Turn 1,2,3

Not too many yet. Rosie must have scared most of the competition off. There's some plucky people though I'm pleased to say. Welcome back, and best of luck to:-

|                |               |             |            |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| ROSIE ROBERTS  | : 1ST 120221; | 2ND 214112; | 3RD 221132 |
| ULF JIRETORN   | : 1ST 121033; | 2ND 322201; | 3RD 212221 |
| CATH COLLMAN   | : 1ST 321231; | 2ND 111113; | 3RD 132111 |
| MICHELE MORRIS | : 1ST 322132; | 2ND 122122; | 3RD 112022 |
| BRIAN MOORE    | : 1ST 212002  |             |            |

So, anyone else interested? For anyone who feels up to it, just send in 4 guesses next time to catch up. The gamefee is 75p with 50p going towards a prize. As you can see so far the prize is £2.50. And the rules...

As before I will choose six words from the Chambers dictionary, each word will be six letters long. Each month you send in one word and I then score each letter against each of my six words. For instance, if you submitted DETOUR and the six secret words were: RESORT, BASKET, GENTLE, PRIEST, MORTAR, BOTTLE the scores would be: 4, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3 respectively. Obvious aim is to find all six words.

When you think you know all six words you may take a guess at them (you must guess all six) - but you must get ALL six right! Get one wrong and you're out. Plurals are accepted. Anagrams of the secret words are accepted.

~~~~~

THE IMPENETRABLE MILK CARTON

from Alan Powis

The last few issues of Dib have seen many topics raised and discussed, but I would like to raise what I believe to be an issue of National importance; the Impenetrable Milk Carton. Let me tell you the whole story.

It all started last Tuesday evening. Our stocks of milk were at a low ebb and I was threatened with the catastrophic prospect of having to do without my morning bowl of Cornflakes. I volunteered to go to the local shop which is the only place one can buy milk at 9pm. I found that the only milk they had left was "Long Life" milk which comes in cardboard containers, so I purchased two

cartons. I took them home, put one in the refrigerator and tried to open the other. That is when my problems began.

The instructions were simple, "Lift flap and tear", but having tried this, it is my belief that these cartons should carry a government health warning "Trying to open this carton could seriously damage your health" or something to that effect. I know I am not the strongest man in the world but I did once tear a telephone directory in half (the Rutland edition). One strip of cardboard on a milk carton should have been no problem, or so I thought.

At first I believed my inability to tear the strip was due to my holding it wrongly. Perhaps if I changed my grip and tried tearing from the edge of the carton back towards the middle I may succeed. I changed my grip and tried it, unsuccessfully. For several minutes I wrestled with the carton, using my right hand, changing to my left hand, tearing from the centre, tearing from the edge, all to no avail. I put the carton on the kitchen table and considered the problem while I mopped the sweat from my fevered brow. Would I have to do without my breakfast cereal after all? The prospect of this was disconcerting to say the least. Then, suddenly, the idea came to me. I needed reinforcements. The Scissors.

Now every household has a pair of scissors. Usually they are about twenty years old, never sharpened and have trouble cutting fog. Ours are no exception. I finally found the scissors in the drawer in which they are kept (under the insurance policies but on top of the marriage certificate) and tried them on the carton. At first nothing happened. No matter how hard I tried they just would not cut the card. Then, just as I was about to give up they closed shut. At last! I thought, the damned thing is open! No, wrong again. What had happened was this. The cardboard strip I was trying to cut had bent, the blades of the scissors had closed together without cutting the strip which was now lodged firmly between the blades.

That did it. Now I was angry. I managed to get the scissor blades apart and with one Herculean effort I tore the strip of cardboard off the carton. The result was disastrous. Instead of leaving a spout behind which makes pouring the milk easier, I took most of the side of the carton too, sending at least half the contents of the carton cascading onto the floor. Still, there was enough milk left for our morning tea and my morning Cornflakes.

Which brings me to tonight, Saturday, and Wendy has just informed me she will be making a rice pudding tomorrow. "After all," she said "We may as well use that other carton of milk".

I may just stay in bed all day.

MICROBIT
from James Cowie

Micro was a real-time operator and dedicated multi-user. His broad-band protocol made it easy for him to interface with numerous input/output devices even if it meant time-sharing.

One evening he arrived home just as the sun was crashing, and had parked his Motorola 68000 in the main drive (he had missed the S100 bus that morning), when he noticed an elegant piece of liveware admiring the daisywheels in his garden, he thought to himself, "She looks user-friendly, I'll see if she'd like an update tonight".

Mini was her name, and she was delightfully engineered with eyes like COBOL and a Prime mainframe architecture that set Micro's peripherals networking all over the place. He browsed over her casually, admiring the power of her twin,

32-bit floating point processors, and enquired "How are you, Honeywell?" "Yes I am well," she responded, batting her optical fibres engagingly and smoothing her console over curvilinear functions.

Micro settled for a straight line approximation. "I'm stand-alone tonight," he said, "How about computing a vector to my base address, I'll output a byte to eat and maybe we could offset later on."

Mini ran a priority process for 2.6 milliseconds then transmitted "8K, I've been dumped myself recently, and a new page is just what I need to refresh my disks. I'll park my machine cycle in your background and meet you inside." She walked off, leaving Micro admiring her solenoids and thinking, "Wow, what a global variable, I wonder if she'll like my firmware."

They sat down at the process table to a top of form feed of fiche and chips and a bucket of Baudot. Mini was in conversational mode and expanded on ambiguous arguments while Micro gave occasional acknowledgements although, in reality, he was analysing the shortest and least critical path to her entry point. He finally settled on the old 'would you like to see my benchmark subroutine,' but Mini was one step ahead.

Suddenly she was up and stripping off her parity bits to reveal the full functionality of her operating system software. "Let's get BASIC, you RAM," she said. Micro was loaded by this stage, but his hardware polling module had a processor of its own and was in danger of overflowing his output buffer, a hang-up that Micro had consulted his analyst about. "Core," was all he could say.

Micro soon recovered, however, when she went down on the DEC and opened her device files to reveal her data set ready. He accessed his fully packed root device and was just about to start pushing her CPU stack, when she attempted an escape sequence.

"No, no" she piped. "You're not shielded." "Reset baby," he replied. "I've been debugged."

"But I haven't got my current loop enabled, and I can't support child processors," she protested. "Don't run away," he said, "I'll generate an interrupt."

"No that's too error prone, and I can't abort because of my design philosophy"

Micro was locked in by this stage though, and could not be turned off. But she soon stopped his thrashing by introducing a voltage spike into his mains supply, whereupon he fell over with a head crash and went into sleep state.

"Computers" she thought as she compiled herself, "All they ever think of is hex."

((I make no excuses for this, I see nothing wrong in linking a micro to a mini, anyway it's all Mr Cowie's fault. All letters of complaint to him. Mind you, here I am worrying about giving insult to my female readers and getting Dib branded as a sexist magazine, when it was two women to replied to Y-front and knicker letters in the letter column! They always say, woman are the worst! Incurable. Er... thanks for the article, James.))

Ha! Just got a little space here for a spacefiller. Did any of you see our hobby superstars on 'Masterteams' on the 10 December? They didn't do too badly really. A slow start to begin, with Birks looking as though he wished he was somewhere else, and John Webley (sub-zine editor in Home) playing a blinder - to tell you the truth he held the team up. The only surprise for my part was thinking Geoff Challenger should've looked like John Webley, and vice versa.

SOPWITH STATS (AUTUMN '85)
from Andy Murby

These stats were copied from the recent 9th edition of The Sopwith States. I won't give the full set of stats, I haven't got the space. If you wish to see the full set of stats just write to Andy Murby, 12 Townsend Lane, Donington-Le-Heath, Coalville, Leics. And will cost you 5p + postage. Other things of interest are the games in progress, and a breakdown of finished games.

ACES HIGH

Richard Morris	121
Brian Moore	119
Tom Tweedy	102
John Bycroft	91
Nicholas Clifton	90
Dave Tant	82
Sandy Peters	62
Ian Tillson	51
Michael Woods	51
Rob Chapman	50
Frank Dunn	49
Matt Quartermain	46
Martyn Ives	45
Stephen Woods	40

Aces High: To become an Ace you have to score a minimum of 40 points. This score must be reached in 5 games or less. Your totals are added, including minuses, to see if 40 or more can be reached.

Ratings List: The scores from all your finished games only are totalled and divided by the number of games finished plus one.

Positional Rating List: When you end a game you are given points depending on how many other players you beat. Generally you receive one point per player beat. However, if a player crashed or died at the same time as you then only half a point is awarded. A sole winner of a game receives a bonus point. Rat is worked out by dividing total Pts x No. of Gms + 1

SOPWITH RATING LIST

Pos.	Name	Rat	Gms	Pts	Best
1.	Richard Morris	21.6	4	108	50
2.	Tom Tweedy	19.16	5	115	55
3.	Malcolm Peltz	17.5	1	35	35
4.	Dave Tant	17.5	6	123	40
5.	Martyn Ives	17	1	34	34
6.	Ian Tillson	16.5	1	33	33
7.	Frank Dunn	16.53	2	49	26
8.	Nicholas Clifton	15	5	90	41
9.	Brian Moore	14.8	6	104	71
10.	Ray Miller	13.5	1	27	27
	Ken O'Brian	13.5	1	27	27
12.	John Bycroft	13	1	26	26
	Brian Douglas	13	1	26	26
	Doug Rowling	13	1	26	26
	Ivo Steyn	13	1	26	26
	Stephen Woods	13	1	26	26
17.	Martin Adlem	12	1	24	24
	Derek Gomer	12	1	24	24
19.	Mark Billenness	11.5	1	23	23
20.	Mike Hanns	11	2	33	18
21.	Steve Norledge	10.3	2	40	26
	Sandy Peters	10.3	5	62	21
23.	Rob Chapman	10	4	50	32
	John Norris	10	1	20	20
25.	Dave King	9.5	1	19	19
26.	Nick Hoyle	9	3	36	14

SOPWITH POSITIONAL RATING LIST

Pos.	Name	Rat	Gms	Pts	Best
1.	Tom Tweedy	3.33	5	20	6
2.	Dave Tant	3.06	6	21.5	6
3.	Frank Dunn	3	2	9	5½
	Len George	3	1	6	6
	Ken O'Brian	3	1	6	6
6.	Richard Morris	2.9	4	14.5	6
7.	Neville Cooper	2.75	1	5.5	5½
	Derek Gomer	2.75	1	5.5	5½
	Malcolm Peltz	2.75	1	5.5	5½
	Doug Rowling	2.75	1	5.5	5½
	Ian Tillson	2.75	1	5.5	5½
	Stephen Woods	2.75	1	5.5	5½
13.	Brian Moore	2.5	6	17.5	6
14.	Mike Vernon	2.33	2	7	4
15.	Sandy Peters	2.25	5	13.5	3½
16.	Mick Antrobus	2.2	10	23	4
17.	Mark Billenness	2	1	4	4
	Rob Chapman	2	4	10	4
	Nicholas Clifton	2	5	12	4½
	Brian Douglas	2	1	4	4
	Richard Downes	2	2	6	5½
	Simon Hatcher	2	1	4	4
	Nick Hoyle	2	3	8	4
	Martyn Ives	2	1	4	4
	Ray Miller	2	1	4	4
	Steve Norledge	2	2	6	5½

The rest of Dib's subscribers: Ian Singer & Andrew Smith 29; Simon Craddock 35; Alan Parr 43; Robert Lozynskyj 45; George North 47; Terry Dibden, Richard Downes, Steve Gregory & Alan Sharples 48; James Cowie & Clive Palmer 61; Konrad Dolata 65; David Crawford 78; Matt Quartermain 90; and Richard Bass 112.

George North 30; James Cowie 31; Iain Singer 35; Simon Craddock 36; John Bycroft 48; Robert Lozynskyj 55; Terry Dibden, Matt Quartermain, Andrew Smith & John Marsden 58; Richard Bass & David Crawford 79; Cathy Cuning 84; Alan Parr, Julien Shepley & Chris Sandow 98.

LETTERS

ROBERT LOZYNSKYJ: "Thanks for the surprise games only issue of Dib 53. I'd like to see a bumper issue to compensate next time!"

((Thank you, Rob, it helps to know I have an understanding audience. Actually this has all the makings of another unintentional bumper issue, without even my answers to the letters the computer says I have twelve pages. I may have to cut some out and hold them over until next issue. Though what will happen if that's a large column as well I dunno.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "In reply to Mike Deans I have no desire to discuss Y-fronts or what's in 'em. As my dear departed mum used to say "once you've seen one...?" Come to think of it I suppose that should be once you've seen them both. After all there are two varieties. Reminds me of a fella I used to know at Uni. He was always asking if I wanted to see his operations scars. I eventually found out (and I'm not telling how!), that he'd been circumcised.

((It's always the best stories that get left out.))

CATHY OZOG: "The letter column is getting rather large isn't it? I thought life stopped after 50, but you ((the zine!)) seem to get better and better. Or is it Jan that is really running the show?

As for 'knickers' we Americans don't use such words. Why it's underwear or nothing at all. And there are some who wear nothing at all. But I'm a married woman now, I can't talk about such things anymore - such is life."

((I should think so too - but is this discussion really necessary, when I have to take into consideration my ~~ether female~~ male readers? I should say not! Stop trying to lower the tone of this excellent zine, Mrs Ozog, have you no shame? I think I'll change the subject before the rest of the pimpled youth succumb (so far, thankfully, only Deans and Close have been attracted by this, but what else is one to expect from degenerates such as these?).

As for the letter column... yes, it is getting large, even after weeding out most of the undesirable elements. None of this however has anything to do with Jan (apart from her sometimes driving me to the typewriter with threats) it's all my own work I'm afraid. I don't need subzine editors like Webley or Bain to boost this zine to the top of the Zine Poll! Ignore Richard Downes, he is merely an extension of me. Now, who have we next... oh no, is HE back from the prison colony already?))

NICHOLAS CLIFTON: "I must chastise you on your letter column - it is far too sensible. What ever happened to those endearing Chameleons, those enchanting Angel Dolls, the enticing delights of prehensile rubber ducks? Where has the flair, the charm and the lack of taste gone? I say to you that you must start a guest column by George North, print full page articles on knicker elastic and blow-up men (for your female readers). Come Tom, it is time to lower the tone of Dib once again!

Love and kisses..."

((Yeuk! Go away, Clifton, I thought I'd given the Authorities enough evidence to keep you over in Ausy for the rest of my natural. Don't say you came back to bugger up my letter column once again? Of course Dib's letter column isn't vulgar any more, I'm going 'up-market' now, I have more control over the contents... apart from the Collman's, Morris', Close, Sharp, Piggott, Emblem, North, etc... but their days are numbered believe me!))

RICHARD MORRIS: "It's a small world. My parents came from the Plymouth area (though I don't think we are related to Kris) so I've always considered myself to be a bit of a local. Though despite the 'Welsh' surname you will find me claiming to be a Scot, since I was born and raised in Fife,

for reasons which will be apparant to anyone from Plymouth."

((Know what you mean, squire, know what you mean - mind you, surely claiming to be a Scot is worse? Heh heh, that'll start off Deans and the others....))

And you can't have a lettercolumn without some mention of George and his mishaps...

GEORGE NORTH: "Thank you for another zine with the giant letter column. I haven't ploughed through it all yet but a couple of items sort of stopped me dead in my tracks. Dave Fish for a start off. He is quite right about heavier objects being used on free range eggs, or any other kind of egg, for that matter.

Do you know, Tom, it is possible to throw an egg over the roof of your house and then run round to the lawn at the back, and find the egg lying there unbroken. That is because eggs thrown high into the air will always land point downwards and are as tough as old boots on the pointed bit. ((Well I go to the foot of our stairs...))

You can also tell if an egg is hardboiled by spinning it like a top on its point. if it spins then you know it is hard boiled, and if it doesn't spin then it is still soft.

I know lots of interesting things about food since I do most of the cooking in our house. Peg used to cook at one time before she realised that this cooking was a disaster area in her case. I remember the first time Peg tried to toss a pancake.

Admitted the pans were a bit cheap because we bought a set of four for five bob from Woolworths and Peg was using the largest of the four. The small one was stolen by a chemist at the Brewery who wanted to test some solution or other, and the middle sized two I left accidentally, on the bus on the way to work.

So Peg did one side of the pancake and then tossed the pancake high into the air so that it came down near the wall. Undeterred, Peg jabbed at it with the frying pan, and the pan hit the wall and sort of buckled up, leaving the pancake to drape itself around the handle, split slowly into two, and hide itself behind the gas oven. So Peg went off cooking and left me and the rest of the family to always cook our own.

The only other discovery that might be of interest to somebody out there is when I dripped bisto into a saucepan of boiling water, the bit that splashed up was brown in colour. So I can only assume the Bisto doesn't actually sink when dropped, but bounces back up again. Isn't that curious?

And finally I have to admit that Peg and I have just returned from a marvellous week at an Adult College where we learned about life after retirement. First our Brewery pension, then the Government Pension, then how to invest and how not to have to pay much tax. All boring stuff.

However, what came out of the discussion was hard facts that after retirement the expectancy of life for men was 22 years, and for women it was 27 years.

"Why," asked our teacher, "did we think woman lived longer than men?" I suggested they did less work and nearly started world war three, but perhaps somebody out there might know the reason?

Won't bore you with the rest of the week except to say we modelled clay, made confectionary, learned a splattering of Italian and played croquet on the lawn. All symbolic, I suppose. we also had a day of gymnastics and a grand party to finish up with. Roll on retirement after that lot."

((You don't make retirement sound very palatable George - it sounds more like they sent you back to school. Makes me wonder how people managed retirement 50 years ago - perhaps they all flunked, what with them not going to Adult College an' all that. Doesn't it get you angry people treating you that way?))

MIKE DEANS: "I've been meaning to tell you about a good game that we've been playing a lot up here. It's called 'The Max', and as you might guess it's a WWI flying game. However, as you might not guess it is excellent! At only £11.95 ((ONLY!)) it is extremely good value for your money, although being an American game it only starts in 1917 when the Americans entered the war. However, one of my mates has worked out manoeuvre sheets for most aircraft going back to the beginning of the war, and I'm sure he would make these available to anyone who wanted them, and would pay the costs of photocopying etc. The game is similar to Sopwith, but instead of all planes being the same there are manoeuvre sheets for each type of plane. Each player selects a manoeuvre, writes it down, and when all players are ready they all move, then firing is calculated. All very simple. We've played with ten players once, but you've really got to use a timer (30 secs is about right) with more than about. A great 'con' game because it is easy to pick up, and no two games are ever the same so it doesn't become 'stale'."

((Sounds like a good game, Mike, though a trifle expensive. What about a review of it? If anyone has got the game, and is interested in the manoeuvre sheets, they can contact Mike at 160 Crown Street, Aberdeen, Scotland, AB1 2HX))

NICK HOYLE: "I keep meaning to put pen to paper in response to some of the views expounded in your worthy lettercol, but sloth is so inhibiting.

I think there is a built-in paradox in the position of heroes in society. As you concluded, the sheer existence of heroes (however you define them) in a society is a sign of social poverty: individual's longing for the unattainable is satisfied by proxy. For instance, one could define the current popular status of our monarchy as a channelling of other's desire for the unattainable into a group of individuals in the public eye, at a time of social disharmony.

The other side of the paradox is that a society without heroes - without the deficiencies that focus attention on glamour our success amidst the dullness of everyday life - is not per se any better to live in. An ultra - democratic wealthy state such as West Germany has few heroes since individuals are much more likely to be content with their lot. It is easy to build up a stronghold of material security, if that's what you want. But a social order that does not need heroes is not exactly stimulating. Ironically, when German first world war propaganda made out that Germany was a nation of heroes whereas Britain was one of shopkeepers was, in a sense, a statement of the poverty of German society at the time.

The state of the English language; the Hobby's secret talking-point. My views on this matter are held with considerable conviction since my very profession involves linguistic creativity and precision. Surely the point about starting sentences with conjunctions or any unusual stylistic expression that could be considered 'incorrect' is that they are avowedly subjective, often calling upon the less rigidly-structured spoken language. Where a subjective style is inappropriate, as in a technical text or factual document, these stylistic features represent an undesirable intrusion of the author's personality. Advertising, literary or even journalistic texts do not require such objectivity. Far from it; they rely on the authorial voice behind the text, and his voice is a vital element of a text's effect."

((Now why didn't I think of that? So there is only a time and place for the use of starting a sentence with a conjunction. Now that we've figured that out I've forgotten the argument. No, don't remind me.

As for no heroes in Germany, we've come across this subject before with Konrad Dolata. I would have thought Germany was full of heroes because of their folklore, Siegfried, Parcifal etc. I know a lot of the warmongering stuff has been knocked out of the German way of life, but surely some of their old fairy tale culture still lives on?))

MICHELE MORRIS: "On to school uniform. They are not the answer as they don't allow all children to dress alike regardless of income. Casting my mind back to my school days (and that's quite a long cast) I seem to remember that you could still tell the difference, even though our school uniform was regulated from head to toe. (Yes even our shoes were nominated by the school). Girls from the richer families had their uniform altered to fit. Subtle changes but obvious ones in our 1930's style uniform. Kids from poorer backgrounds wore second hand gear, noticeable for the shiny seats on the skirts and darns in the pullovers.

That brings to mind another point. Aren't kids perverse? We had 2 hats to wear, a summer straw cloche, and for winter a felt cloche. The former, being starched rigid, made a great football. The latter was a shapeless scrap of bilious green felt. To improve its appearance a bit we used to fold the brim up. An act punishable by a detention if caught by a prefect. When the uniform was updated in the early 70's out went both hats and in came a stylish hat with up turned up brim. Yes, you've guessed it. Within days of its introduction we were all gaily turning the brim down!

So we're too subtle for you, are we Tom? It is borne of female optimism. Can we help it if we keep overestimating male intelligence? I must say the idea of addressing you all as 'butch' is quite appealing, but Master is definitely out. You men get quite enough ideas without us calling you Master as well. Personally I hate being called Madam. I tend to get a fit of the giggles when so addressed as it brings to mind a 20 stone female gorgon, in a fur coat and veiled hat, dragging a pale pink poodle through Harrods. I'm not in the least bit like that (I hope!).

By the way my birthday is January 30th, all contributions gratefully received. As my contribution to your Xmas happiness I'll shut up now and just wish you Joy for the Future."

((Touting for presents already eh, Morris, well I try and remember but my memory tends to fail me quite a lot nowadays. You could put this down to me becoming senile, but you must also take into account I may have to break into Dib's coffers to pay for a card. Now... what was it I had to remember...))

PER VON GAVEL: "Now to the uniform syndrome, I quite agree that the school uniform enables people to see each other as equals. But unfortunately it doesn't work that way, you still have people coming in with £50 notes hanging out of their pockets, showing off their newest personal stereo and proving how much money they have to spend on cigarettes!

Infant ((?)) counting up people in my year I would say that only about 10-15 out of 60 don't smoke!!! If you ask them why they smoke they look at you blow the smoke in your face and say "because it's square not to." Can anyone explain this logic to me. I find this particularly worrying in a school such as Westminster you've got to think that about 60 - 70% of these people will be lawyers, MPs, medics, or owners of factories and companies. It is indeed a bleak future to think they will lead our nation in around the year 2000 + !!!"

((There is no logic to smoking. Although I don't smoke now, apart from the odd King Edward at Christmas, I started when I was 11 years old because I thought it was the grown up thing to do. My friends egged me on, my girlfriend was there, she smoked, and I didn't want to look silly or appear different. Not wanting to appear 'square' is part of the same syndrome. I realise it's silly now, but try telling the kids that. (Thankfully Stuart realises it's silly; he HATES me smoking, and was part of the reason I gave it up.))

CHRIS SANDOW: "It's no good - my pen finger is developing an irresistible itch and I've finally been forced to put pen to paper and add my own half-penny's worth to the current debates.....

First, I loved the letter from Bernard Emblem. A wonderful parody. He's managed to perfectly capture that air of strident self righteousness that seems to be the hallmark of so many left wingers. I'll bet he's glad

that he isn't REALLY like that.....!

But seriously, his comments about your good self are almost beyond belief. He's obviously has as stereotyped a view of you as he believes you have of everybody else. "Comic-book ideas of right and wrong" indeed! I can't say that I agree with all your views, but at least you obviously seem to THINK about them. (There if that's not worth a free issue, I don't know what is!)

Discipline in schools. Yes. Well, my own memories of school are beginning to fade somewhat (at last! I was afraid the scars would last for life) but I do distinctly remember that you could divide teachers in to two types: those who frequently dealt out piles of punishment, and those who never seemed to punish pupils. The catch is that those who dealt out punishment were the young and trendy ones, who were reduced to (totally ineffectually) handing out punishments left, right and centre in a desperate attempt to keep control. And (there - I can start a sentence with 'and'!) the others? They never needed to hand out punishment, they had an air of authority that somehow had the roughest pupil in school not daring to even 'talk back' to them. Curiously (and, I suspect, not entirely coincidentally) these also seemed to be the ones who really knew their subjects and could successfully communicate that understanding. I don't suppose that gets us any nearer to any kind of solution (I don't believe there is any single, simple solution to the problem) but perhaps it's something to think about.

To change the subject completely, can I ask what Pete Sullivan intends to do about Cathy Ozog (and indeed any others of that same sex who intends to enter) in 'En Garde'? The game is, after all, almost totally male-orientated. Will they have to adopt a male character (the mind boggles!)? Or will they play the mistresses, perhaps (the mind boggles even more!)? I only asked....!"

((Actually I hadn't thought of that - mistresses taking masters in 'En Garde'... Cathy? On the other hand, I seem to remember Cathy being in an 'En Garde' game in another magazine. There didn't seem to be any problems in that game. I think this is merely your sexist attitude rearing its ugly head again, Sandow. Shame on you.))

KRIS MORRIS: "Ah Ha, so the truth is out is it? you've had to admit that you are a Plymouthian also, even if you can't spell it, and what may I ask is up with Cornwall. Come on out with it Tweedy, what's wrong with 'Gods wonderful county'? O.K. some of the inhabitants of this fare land are a bit strange, apart from me of course, but what's that got to do with it?

Like you, I don't beleive that Bernard Emblem can really mean what he said, so I'll completely disregard it. In fact I have my doubts that he really does exist, you're just having us on aren't you and writing it yourself to further the "Bid for the Dib letter column to take over the world and win the 'zine poll" campaign.

I apologise for not sending you a card on your birthday, but you've only yourself to blame, if you don't tell anyone when it is, how do you expect us to know. It shows a worrying tendency in you, Tom, what with making a cock up in Vortigern, spelling Plymouthian wrong and now thinking that we're phsyic, are you sure you're not Cornish? Just as a matter of interest, and I'm sure all your subscribers will be interested to know, my birthday is coming up soon, January 10th to be precise, so any cards, presents, money (especially money) would be welcome.

I know that you want to get on with compiling (that's a good word ain't it) the zine, so I'll bugger off now, and leaves you to get on with the 'good work' Happy Christmas to you, Jan and the family, and best wishes for the New Year."

((Many thanks Chris - even though you DO keep reminding me of my typing errors. Bernard does exist, how could I ever invent a character like his? What's even more strange is the fact he was serious about what he wrote last issue. I think so anyway, judge for yourself over the page....))

BERNARD EMBLEM: "Reviewing Dib in a recent Marvin's Bit, I described your zine as friendly. But that was before Dib 53, and the hysterical outbursts from some of your readers! ((Dib IS friendly, though it's true some of my subscribers might seem not to be all the time, but believe me they are just having playful digs at your expense. If you want proof of this see Clive Booth's letter latter on about Danny. Yet Clive is one of the friendliest blokes around - he's a little caustic in print sometimes is all. Please, don't take it to heart - give as good as you get.))

Some Dib correspondents seem to me to be overly impressed with the background and experience of an individual proposing an argument, rather than with his presentation of his case, and the evidence he produces to support it. I regard this as a rather strange line of reasoning, but I might as well respond.

So, please allow me first to comment on Danny Collman's 'respectful suggestions', not to add force to my arguments, but to demonstrate how Danny has jumped to conclusions, without any attempt to verify them.

For example, Danny 'suggests' I'm a secondary or older juniors teacher (and you accuse me of being a headmaster, Tom). In fact I'm deputy head of a special school, with my own class, and have worked with children aged 3-19, though mainly under 11's, in a variety of primary and special schools, for the past 14 years. Danny also suggests I'm childless. I have 3 children, aged 7, 10 and 14.

What credence do readers suggest we give a correspondent whose arguments are based on such inaccuracies?

However, I have been studying Danny's letter carefully, and feel I am able to draw more accurate conclusions from his letter than he could from mine. I suggest Danny is:

- a. A primary teacher.
- b. 38 years old.
- c. Playing Diplomacy in Bruce.

((Oh dear, much as I hate to break letters up, this one will be difficult to answer if I leave it all to last. I'll have to answer this letter as I go along. I think, Bernard you have missed the point, many readers would surely be more interested in the opinion of a pro-hanging advocate, for example, if he were a judge, or had committed murder, or was in some position to experience at first hand our normal deterrent, or to implement the law. Likewise an anti-hanging advocate, would surely be more interesting, if, for example he had had a relative killed or was a prosecutor or advocated euthanasia. Opinions matter, but the opinions of those who have the greatest influence or power, for example the opinion of teachers as to what they think education is intended to be, carry more weight. As a dissatisfied parent my opinions count on the amount of, or lack of, schooling my son gets. It all counts.))

BERNARD (CONT): "And, next Dave Tant, who accuse me of 'shallowness of thought', going to great lengths to convince me that doctors work hard. Sure, most of them do, but their hard work brings them a good salary, a high standing in society, and is rewarding in itself. OK, Dave, it's tough if your patient dies, but what could be more rewarding than knowing you've saved a life? The fact that Dave could empty bins himself serves to support my case, not his - it lowers the prestige of a job if anyone could do it. Therefore the job is not only poorly paid, unhygienic, and physically tiring, it is also boring, and transfers low prestige to the worker.

And so to Ulf Jireton, who claims that 'there has to be something extra to get people to study', and 'responsibility must be paid for', clearly overstates the financial argument.

Most of the people I knew as students in higher education weren't there in the hope of great financial rewards to come - most of them were planning to become teachers! We were having a great time playing at being students, and putting off having to work for a living for as long as possible.

And what's all this about being paid for responsibility?

Responsibility is a reward, not a burden - it's a strong motivating factor for most people. What do people say when they're looking for promotion? They usually say they're looking for two things: more money and a more challenging position. If everyone in our school was paid the same, I know I'd rather do my job than be the secretary, the cook, or, indeed, the head. No wonder they call me smug."

((Which proves our point, my wife would like to be an opera singer, but God forbid that she should even be given a part in the queue outside the box office. EVERYONE might prefer your job, but only a few CAN go for the plum jobs, can't they?))

"OK, so my initial assertion, that I saw no reason why binmen should be paid less than doctors (Dib 51), is clearly unacceptable to some readers, though nothing they have said has convinced me I was wrong - no-one has even produced evidence to make me reconsider my position. But let's get back to the real world. I'm not looking to the government to decree tomorrow that all wages should henceforth be the same, but I would like to suggest a more realistic and practical idea for your readers consideration - that a minimum wage should be imposed for all full time workers, and that this should be well above the poverty line. I don't care much about how or why some people earn very high salaries - I'm sure some is luck, some talent, some hard work, and most a combination of all three. What does concern me is that there are honest, hardworking people who put in as many hours and as much effort as me, for example, but who don't get a living wage. Examples? My brother, Nick, for one. A well qualified experienced, and enthusiastic nurse, Nick gave up trying to support a family of five on a nurses wage several years ago, and was forced to move to Saudi. Is this right? Shouldn't a days work in the sort of difficult environment Dave Tant thinks justifies a doctor's high wages lead to a reasonable day's pay?

And to take an extreme example, let's think about the future for the children I teach, and for other children with problems. I can't accept that these people, now as children, or later as adults, have done anything to deserve less, or are inately of less value, than the gifted children in the grammar school down the road. To be even more specific, I know children who through injury or illness, find themselves at special schools. Is it right that they should be condemned to a life of poverty when ther's plenty to go round?"

((Might I respectfully point out to you, Bernard, that no-one has the right to demand a job pays enough to cover the cost of a family of five, it might just pay comfortably for a family of three.))

"Right, let's continue by picking up another current Dib theme, and weave in a bit about heroes. My greatest hero is, naturally enough, woven into, and a strong influence upon, the views I've been expressing in Dib recently.

Albert Camus ((Who?)) was probably the biggest single heroic influence on my life. It was Camus who helped me first realise the absurdity of life, the universe and everything, and then discover how it was possible to come to terms with this absurdity.

The most relevant quote I can find is from Camus 'L'Homme Revolte', in which he wrote that life "is only worth living if one pursues a policy of revolt against the unnecessary man-made absurdities in our society - particularly injustice and tyranny", and that "the best way to revolt is to establish their opposites - mercy and justice." My hero.

And I'd like to close with a couple of quotes from one of the most damning studies of the effects of inequality I've ever come across, the National Children's Bureau study 'Born to Fail?', which was based on evidence from the National Child Development Study, which is monitoring the progress, from birth to maturity, of every child born in England,

Scotland and Wales during one week in March 1958. So this is evidence not hearsay.

The study showed how those children who would later be described as disadvantaged in terms of family composition, income and housing, were, at time of birth, already facing 'substantially diminished prospects of normal development.' Without a particularly favourable environment throughout infancy - which is just what they didn't have - what hope do such children have?

"Do we mind," the report concludes, "if children grow up in bad housing when we could do something about it? Do we mind the stress caused by low incomes when we could afford to change it? Do we care that so many children are born to fail?"

'Course not - it's a great life being a binny."

((What about the children who have been unfairly condemned to poor examination results, because those entrusted to give them a decent education have seen fit to use them as political pawns in a dispute which, once over, will have nevertheless ruined the futures of the students, not their luckier elders who received full-time education?)

Look, I know your beliefs are honorable, but don't you think you might be straying a little from the facts. Work wasn't just INVENTED to right all wrongs and as a social leveller. It was a necessary fact of life which started off as bartering. No-one laid down rules to make it 'fair' for anyone; if you had something to sell or trade you did so, it was as simple as that. Why is someone 'ENTITLED' to a job? Why MUST he have a 'fair' wage, who says so? When I used to try out for jobs, I first found out what I had to do, if I liked the work I'd find out how much the pay was, if the pay wasn't enough I wouldn't take the job. What gives someone the God-given right to take a job (knowing the pay prospects) and DEMAND an employer pay them more? I say this attitude is definitely unfair and is wrong.))

ALAN FROST: "Dib is starting to look like the Times Educational Supplement and I'm not sure that it's the right place to have such matters. Therefore, this isn't particularly fit for publication although you're welcome to do so if you want.

It seems that you've had a bad experience with education, presumably because your son is involved in starting exam courses. Of course, there's incompetence and downright laziness in all trades and professions and teaching is no exception, so you may have struck unlucky. However as Shirley Williams once said, "the trouble with education is that everyone's had one" i.e. everyone thinks that what they had was right. When teachers don't work the way they remember their own teachers working, parents assume that things are going wrong.

When you send a member of your family to hospital, you expect the doctors to get them better but you don't tell them what drugs and operations to use. You leave it to the professionals. They will use techniques which they wouldn't have used twenty years ago.

When you send kids to school it's the same. Teachers have equipment and techniques available today which they hadn't in our day. They may even be more effective. Surely the people to decide are the professionals. If they make a mistake, yes, it can ruin a kid's life. Same thing with doctors, but does that shake your confidence?

It's certainly true that more kids take and pass exams than happened in the past. It's also true that kids who used to get written off at 14 in the past and not entered for GCE now get a chance to do a course which allows a final decision to be made in the 5th year in case they show hidden promise. From what you say, it sounds as if this might be happening to Stuart, although I can't be sure at this distance. Maybe you should stop worrying.

As to your comments about ruining a generation of kids, well, I think that's being overdramatic, but what do you expect? Teachers have consistently been moderate in their pay demands. We've consistently accepted pay deals below the average of settlements. Consequently our pay

has declined relative to that of other workers. This year is typical. We're offered 6.9% and the average rate is 10%, I heard in last week's news. (We've had to fight for 6.9% It was 4% originally)

When I started teaching, it was relatively well paid. Not as well paid as other professions, but not bad allowing for supposedly good conditions (holidays etc). When my wife married me, she could expect a reasonable level of support 'in the circumstances to which she was accustomed'.

This is no longer the case. I'm senior enough for it to be impossible to change careers without a salary drop because I'd have to start at the bottom, but I certainly wouldn't have become a teacher, however dedicated I was had I known.

My wife and family have a right to expect a good standard of living in recompense for a husband and father who comes home shattered most days and in a foul mood to boot. They don't get it.

I for one am sick of putting society before my family's needs. I'd done it for years and it hasn't done me or mine any good, while others with similar backgrounds, dedication, ability and so forth have gained.

As a matter of fact, I, personally, have not been on strike at all, largely because I don't think it's doing much good, but, frankly, I'd disrupt exams. Now that would affect the kids.

If you don't like it (and I don't either) I suggest that you, as a member of society, do something about society's unwillingness to pay me what I expected (and society led me to expect) when I started to work for you. I'm sorry it's your kids that suffer, but I can't get at you, personally, or your representatives. If you care about your kids, you know that it's worth paying for their education. It obviously does matter to you. Have you written to your M.P.?"

((I think Alan that this strike will mean a more divided society, those of us who can, will simply pull our children out of the public educational system and pay for decent solid teaching (excluding Peace Studies, Social Biology, Musical Movement and "Third Formers against the Bomb and Supporting our Current Teacher's left Wing Political views" studies, and other irrelevant curriculae). Those left in the ordinary schools will be so affected by the strikes etc., they'll only be able to fill the unskilled vacancies in society.))

ALAN (CONT): You'll gather that I feel pretty strongly about this. To show you how strongly, let me say that my politics could be described as fascist if I didn't think that Hitler was a pinko, but I'm going to vote for the appalling Kinnock at the next election since I, personally, have been better off under Labour. Sod the country. What's it done for me while I've made sacrifices for it?

By the way, I agree with the government that it's spending too much on education. We can't afford it. What we have to do is have less but concentrate it where it's needed i.e. at the most able end and in useful subjects (although these are open to debate). It'll mean teacher redundancies and a lot of kids on the scrap-heap at an earlier age, but schools are damnably expensive methods of child-minding and reducing employment.

To compensate for the danger of losing potential talent, there will have to be more opportunities for Adult Education.

All this will produce a great deal more value for money. At present, a significant percentage of kids emerge from 12 years (12 years!) of education with the barest levels of literacy and numeracy and a few disconnected facts in useless subjects. What a waste of national resources and children's time! No wonder teachers are dissatisfied when they have to waste their own time.

Now that's Fascism in action!"

((Sensibly argued - no beatings of breast or insane mutterings here. I think Alan, you've argued your case very well. Don't get me wrong though I'd like to say from the start, I do think teachers and nurses should get a substantial

pay rise. I just wish there was a more selective way of going about it. Some 'teachers' are wrong in the profession, and are needed desperately to be weeded out. Any chance? Can parents, and children, be protected from being foisted off with the incompetent teacher? I hardly think so, the teacher's union wouldn't allow a dismissal unless you were a headmaster getting chucked out for alleged racism, would it? To give you an instance of 'leaving my child's education to the professionals'. Stuart's in his 3rd year secondary school doing English: he's doing DRAMA in his English lessons, while another class of third years are working on word processors! What the HELL is his teacher thinking off? What should be good for one class of 3rd year students should be good for another. Drama... PAH!))

LUKE CLUTTERBUCK: "Dear, oh dear - a definite shift to the right in the old letter column mate. We'll have to do something about this! Your concept of 'civilised' is a bit too narrow for my liking. Law and order is, particularly where punishment is concerned, little more than the institutionalization of the very barbarity that it is intended to control. What about art and science and political awareness and so on? Surely these are elements of a higher civilisation. If so then from time to time certain higher drives are going to override less civilised conventions such as Law and Order. Witness the French Revolution. The law was broken and the old Order was smashed to make way for the new. The justification for this action was that 'Liberty, Fraternity & Equality' were more important. Don't you think they were right? Or would you rather toil under a repressive aristocracy? You're going to hate this but it seems to me that this is the crux of the argument that rioting is not a crime in the same sense that simple theft is a crime. The justification for Law & Order is like a contract: Obey Society's Laws and you can share it's wealth. If you are not in on the sharing then society, in effect, has broken the contract. Ergo the chronically unemployed and those constantly on the 'outside' do not have any moral obligation to abide by the mores of Law and Order and anyone who punishes them is a tyrant."

((What a load of old cobblers Luke, I mean, to deem rioting as no crime. Of course if you were to riot in an enclosed space in a property belonging to yourself, then no one outside the riot suffers harm to his property or self, then and only then can you say it is not a crime. A crime is surely an act which brings harm to another Human Being, and by that mark you should judge an action. Do you think all those rioters destroy their own homes, beat up their own relatives, destroy their own livelihoods? Like hell they do...))

LUKE (CONT): "Now none of that would happen if we all were to accept the concept that 'society' is as real and as active and as vibrant as any 'individual'. We have responsibilities towards society and it has responsibility towards us. There is no place any more for a meritocracy. Like the aristocracy before it, its course has run. We have developed to the level where we need a higher civilisation. The basic trouble at the moment is that we are living through the change. Some of the aspects of the future have been accepted but some are lagging behind. Danny Collman's letter is not a bad example. First of all (page 18, DDD 53) he extolls the virtues of the lone individual who struggles up to reach the dizzy heights of medicine. Then a mere dozen lines later he's completely contradicting himself by claiming that people's basic attitudes and abilities are set before even they reach kindergarden - before that is, they are able to influence their own development. Here is the future and the past in one letter. If indeed society is the prevailing influence on the youngster who becomes the adult then there is no reason why the individual should derive more wealth than another less talented than himself. It is society, of which we are all by definition equal members that deserves to derive the benefit. As far as the individual is concerned, it is his or her moral obligation to do his or her best for the society that largely created him or her. Doctors may have to spend 6 years training and just because one person spends 6 years in the same