IEEE Standards Interpretations for IEEE Std 1003.2™-1992 IEEE Standard for Information Technology--Portable Operating System Interfaces (POSIX®)--Part 2: Shell and Utilities

Interpretation Request #75
Topic: rm -R **Relevant Clauses:** 4.53

POSIX.2 Subclause 4.53 specifies the semantics of the "rm" utility. My question has to do with the correct behavior of "rm" when it is applied to a directory, the -R flag is used, and standard input is a terminal. If directory Dir is nonempty and has mode dr-xr-xr-x (i.e., is not writeable), and the command rm -R Dir is issued, then Should the system prompt the user to ask whether Dir should be removed? If the answer to (a) is yes, and the user responds affirmatively, should Dir and its contents be removed?

Interpretation Response
Question a) Yes. The standard clearly states the behaviour in item 2b on page 401, and conforming implementations must conform to this.

Question b) If the answer to item 2b is yes, it then proceeds to item 2c. It attempts to remove the directory's contents and then according to item 4 it attempts to remove the directory. The standard clearly states the behaviour for directory removal, and conforming implementations must conform to this.

Rationale for Interpretation
None.