

"Fight, Honor And Obey"

By Jeffrey Blum

As the American economy developed, there appeared corporations so large that the boards of directors would meet only occasionally to discuss finances, and would leave execution of routine business in the hands of seemingly autonomous managers. Some of these giant corporations were called multiversities because of their high and expanding production of multiverses or publications. Despite the

managers' preoccupation with multiverses, it was generally agreed that the multiversity's most important product was its own workers who were trained and socialized to become managers of either multiversities or other corporations.

This system worked well until one day a cowboy seized power and started a war. Even though the war grew large, it seemed puny, and no one wanted to fight. To get workers to staff the war, the cowboy had to tap the dreaded draught. In the multiversities managers were displeased and workers outraged. After passing petitions and yelling, "Hell no, we won't go," workers and a few managers with proletarian consciousness discovered that the war hadn't sprung full-blown from the mind of a cowboy, but started out long before as nation-building. In the words of Hubert Bumkin,

"We went in there with the intention of building a nation. But then our men were ruthlessly attacked and we had to defend them. As the enemy increased its force, we had to increase ours, and now our investment (sic!) is too great to let the Communists run willy-nilly all over the globe."

"H'mm," thought the workers, "if nation-building (sometimes abbreviated COIN) precedes American involvement in wars, then perhaps we ought to stop nation-building instead of worrying about which cowboy becomes President." Then the workers discovered a plethora of nation-building, right in the multiversity's wholly owned subsidiary, the Subtrafuge Research Institute. An ambitious group of workers approached the managers to complain about the nation-building and the board of directors who was allowing it to happen. The managers responded,

Highest Good

"Don't worry about the directors. They don't control the multiversity, but we do, the very same managers who give you your daily work detail. As for stopping nation-building research, that would infringe upon managerial freedom which is the highest good of civilization."

Then there was a work stoppage in a laboratory, and production of electronic zappers was slowed drastically. Fearing other work stoppages, the managers became very accommodating.

"We agree whole heartedly that nation-building is bad and ought to be stopped, but it's just a

question of the best way to do it. We must also consider getting money to finance good research (mine) as well as getting rid of bad research."

Naive

The naive workers thought this was fine and waited for the managerial senate to assert itself to the directors. Meanwhile, a committee had said that if the managers agreed to sell SRI instead of stopping its nation-building, they would get thirty-five million dollars, enough for five new cars and twenty color televisions each. Surprisingly and predictably, the managerial senate did next to nothing.

"We don't have authority on this issue. The decision must be left up to the directors who probably will decide against you." The workers reasoned, "If everyone agrees with us about stopping nation-building, and the directors are going to decide against us, then we have to place strong pressure on the directors." So they occupied a solar plexus.

This time managers and bureaucrats agreed that what they (along with the directors) had really wanted to do all along was to smash the workers' movement and restore order. Paging through the corporate manual, they discovered that the most successful method of dealing with work stoppages in the past had been a combination of injunctions, police and termination of employment.

Absurd

Some protested the repressions, saying it was absurd to suspend seventy of the brightest workers. Managers and bureaucrats responded,

"We're not going to permanently suspend all seventy, only the hard core who can't be rehabilitated. And even if we were to suspend a hundred, that would still be less than 1% of the total enrollment. Compared to a national unemployment rate of 4%, such an action would be trivial (and would certainly please the directors.)"

"But does it make sense to throw out intelligent workers basically because they oppose the same war and nation-building that you oppose?" The managers and bureaucrats shook their heads. "These workers haven't just opposed war and nation-building. They have been deliberately disobedient on several occasions, and they seem to have no respect for either the institution or managerial freedom. And it doesn't matter whether they are

intelligent or not. In America it's not a man's birthright or his natural gifts that count, it's what he does as a man."

"And what are they supposed to do?" came the question. "Fight, honor and obey," came the reply.

(Jeffrey Blum is a member of the SDS and A3M-Ed.)