



Cornell University
Johnson Graduate School
of Management

Curtis W. Tarr, Dean
Malott Hall Ithaca NY 14853-4201 (607) 255-6418

July 28, 1989

Dear Paul,

On my last day as dean, I am thinking about those who have helped to make this such a splendid experience for me and a promising one for this fine School. You certainly are one of those people. I owe you my gratitude.

I look forward to my new life, and I have too many things set aside to accomplish too soon. I will be here in my new office on the fifth floor most of the time. Please call me if ever I can help you; my number will be 607-255-1122.

You have my thanks and warm wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. W. Tarr'.

Curtis W. Tarr

CWT:lw

Mr. Paul V. Sheridan '80
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Johnson Graduate School of Management

Curtis W. Tarr
Dean

December 22, 1987

Dear Paul,

Thank you very much for your good letter about business ethics. You can be sure I will be reading all the details in this again with great care as I prepare for the course. You certainly are kind to share it with me.

I am grateful for your continuing loyalty to the School. I hope the new year treats you very well indeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Curtis W. Tarr'.

Curtis W. Tarr

CWT:tal

Mr. Paul V. Sheridan
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December 15, 1987

Curtis W. Tarr, Dean
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SUBJECT: Your input request for the spring semester course on Business Ethics

Dear Curtis:

It has been said that in the "modern" business world the employee with a motivational mix that is 75% political and 25% substance will always outclimb the reverse: the employee who is 25% political and 75% substance. When I first heard that remark I thought it was incredulous. However, many of my experiences have given it more credence.

As you know, I began contributing to the greying of my parents' hair at a very early age via my infatuation with the automobile. From greasy fingerprints to ruined clothes to noisy driveways ... Twenty-five years later my situation has advanced itself and may be characterized by saying, "The only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys." The point being that "Motor City" and its workings represent a long-standing object of my attention both vocationally and, in recent years, professionally. I know something about Detroit ... especially its problems. It is in this context that I am able to offer the enclosed as a response to the subject.

In the mid to late seventies, when the proverbial apple cart was upset in Motor City, there were many superficialities cited as being the cause. The Arab oil embargos and rapid rise in fuel prices did, in fact, devastate Detroit's "rich", fuel inefficient product mix. The incredible public sector incompetence with respect to the administration of regulations that affected vehicle fuel economy, emissions and safety continues to be a focus of attention. The foreign competition, especially from Japan, was also cited as being the reason for woe in Detroit. Many, in this finger-pointing frenzy, even cited the UAW as the prime culprit for Detroit's ongoing economic demise. In fact, these "causes" are convenient scapegoats. They're obvious in nature and easily presented by the media. They represent items that "you can get your arms around" and then feel comfortable in the conviction that you have arrived at satisfactory conclusions. In reality, the impact of these overt events merely serve to verify that the cause is more fundamental.

Mismanagement is not new but it has changed in form, if not concealment. On the other hand, to claim that mismanagement is the fundamental cause of Detroit's commercial demise without providing a practical insight into the source and character of the mismanagement would be only slightly more valuable than erroneously qualifying the aforementioned effects as causes.

Published in the September 1983 edition of the Harvard Business Review, "Moral Mazes: Bureaucracy and Managerial Work" approximates the source and character of the mismanagement that runs all too rampant in Detroit, if not the nation. By using the Protestant Ethic as a historical point of departure, Jackall then provides a very accurate "interpretive sociological analysis of the moral dimensions of managers' work" in the context of the "new" business ethic: the Bureaucratic Ethic.

He poses the central question early:

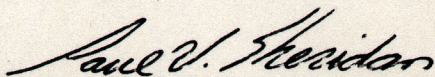
"What if ... men and women in the big corporation no longer see success as necessarily connected to hard work? What becomes of the social morality of the corporation - I mean the everyday rules in use that people play by - when there is thought to be no standard of excellence to explain how and why winners are separated from also-rans, how and why some people succeed and others fail?

Subtitles include, "Who Gets Credit?", "Fealty to the King," "Capriciousness of Success," "Blame Time," "Playing the Game," etc.

The current irony for me is our (Chrysler) investigations into the inner workings of competitive automotive organizations, specifically the Japanese firms. When I read these reports, I come to the perplexing conclusion that the ethical behavior of, say, Honda is more "American" than the American firms! It is as though the Japanese firms have become the "Americans" of the international business world and the Americans have become ... something else.

I commend your efforts to introduce the ethical issues of the professional business world to the future MBA's of JGSM. Although not as glamorous as high-powered finance or computer-aided operations management, and therefore not as immediate in terms of gratification, business ethics represent the axiomatic basis of all other business disciplines. The subtlety here is that the ethical status of a firm (or a nation) is never fully tested during easy times (such as the post WW II era in Detroit). Only when adversity arises can one fully ascertain the character and competence of management ... without a strong ethical foundation there can be neither. There can only be or become what the ancient Hopi called "Koyaanisqatsi" or "crazy life." 'People scurrying to find the rules of the game, when in fact, "there's nothing new under the sun." As Merlin once said, "... it is the doom of men that they should forget."

Sincerely and respectfully,



Paul V. Sheridan

Enclosures