

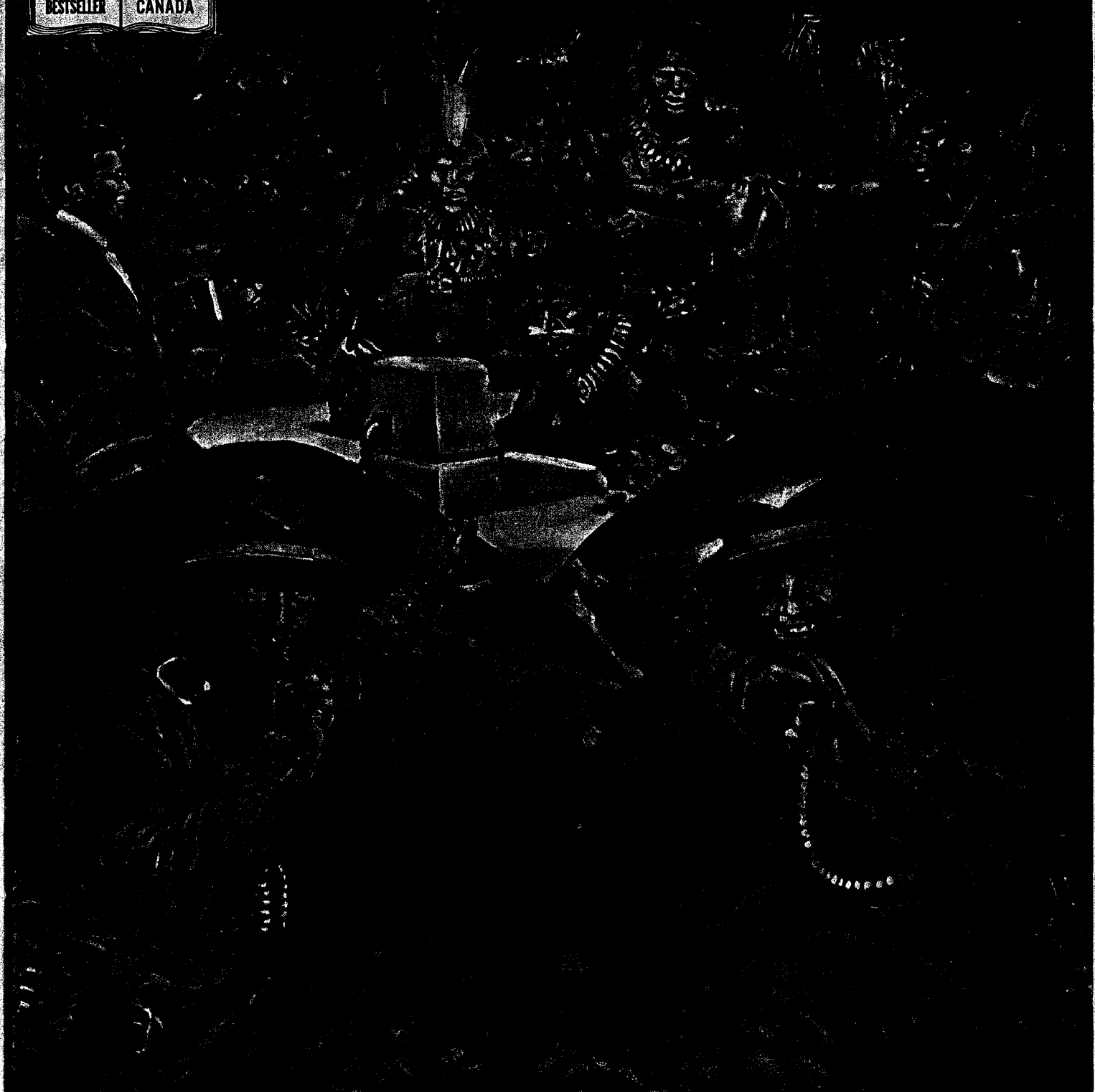
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IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE

BY THOMAS J. PETERS AND
ROBERT H. WATERMAN, JR.



Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr.

(b. March 12, 1943; d. ?)

IN FLANDERS, just a few short months before the Renaissance, a young Spanish duke fell off his horse, because these were the Dark Ages, and he had forgotten his candle.

"Odds Bodkins!" he cried.

"What is it?" asked Herr Bodkins, the toy maker.

"I forgot my candle again. Can I borrow yours?" the duke beseeched him.

Bodkins balked at being beseeched. "No," he exclaimed therefore, and slipped a string through the nose of a toy doll. For, you see, during this time there was no such thing as business analysis, only candles and toys and strings through those toys and darkness everywhere.

What, you may ask, has this to do with the authors in question?

Well, children—at least we hope you are children, not Harvard Business School students reading this comic to get through a course—well, children, it has nothing at all to do with them. We were only having a little fun, playing at confusing your impressionable little minds. You see, sometimes it gets boring in the Bestsellers Illustrated offices late at night, which is when we write these things, usually after we've had a few.

"A few what?" we hear you pipe inquisitively. Let's just say it's a medicine that grown-ups must drink. And drink and drink and drink, to help them cope with humiliating livelihoods. To help



them withstand certain indignities that no human being should be forced to put up with. Even if he is an ex-con. He's still a man and he needs his dignity. But never mind. It's the—uh—medicine talking. Let's get back to the biography at hand.

Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., identical twin genius business consultants, were born during the Great War, rising like a couple of phoenixes from the smoke and ash and rubble that was Milano after the German blitz of Italy. Only figuratively, of course. In reality they were born in a hospital in Kew Gardens, New York. And the only rubble at hand was the one on the TV in Mrs. Peters/Waterman, Jr.'s semiprivate room when she watched *The Flintstones*.

The twins were separated at birth, by cracking their shell in half and pouring the albumen back and forth from one half to the other. They did not meet again until Peters's thirty-fifth year and, due to excessive jet travel, Waterman, Jr.'s thirty-seventh, when they independently applied for jobs as models in a hair restorer ad, Waterman, Jr. for the before, Peters for the after. The twins recognized each other by the size of their necks. They soon discovered that separately they had been idiots, but together they were a business genius. So they wrote a book... and the rest is hypocrisy.

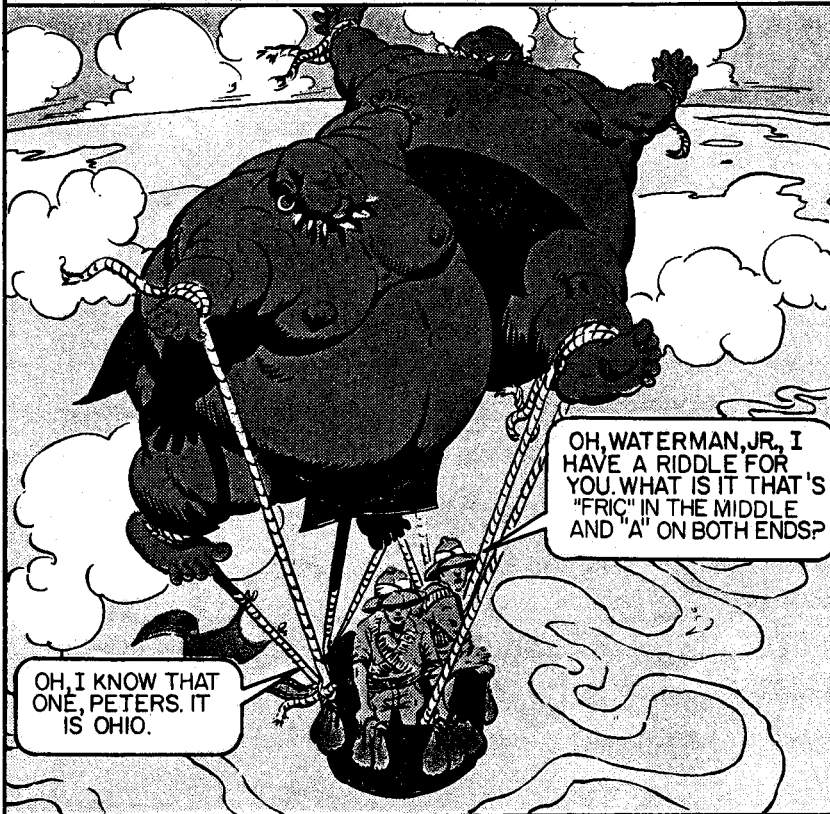
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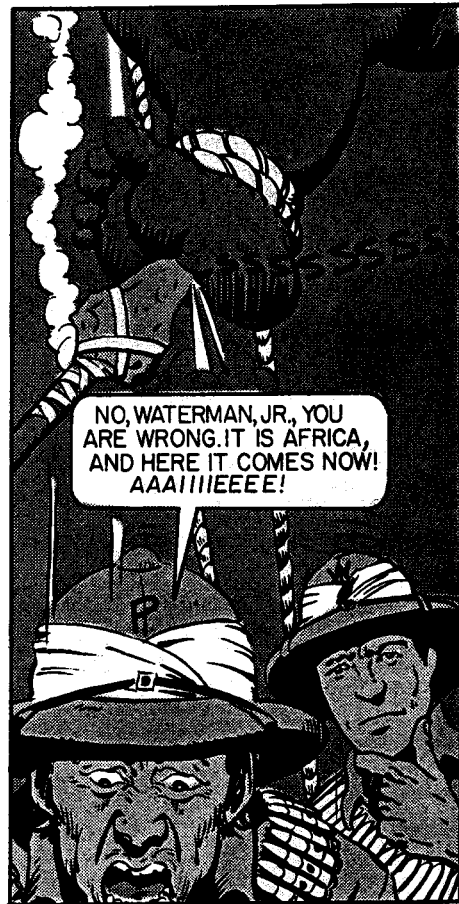
A BELGIAN SURREALIST, RENÉ MAGRITTE, ONCE PAINTED HIS CAR TO COVER SOME RUST HE HAD PAINTED ON IT WHEN HE WAS DRUNK. THEN SAID, "CECI N'EST PAS UN AUTO." ("THIS IS NOT A CAR.") WHAT HE REALLY MEANT WAS THAT AN ORGANIZATION CHART IS NOT A COMPANY. WHAT, THEN, IS A COMPANY? NO ONE KNOWS. THEREFORE WE WENT TO AFRICA....

ON THE SIXTH DAY OF OUR EXPEDITION WE HEARD TELL OF A HERMETIC MADMAN RUNNING A FORTUNE 500 CORPORATION IN THE JUNGLES OUTSIDE OF BLITTA, IN TOGO. SO OFF WE WENT!



OH, I KNOW THAT ONE, PETERS. IT IS OHIO.

OH, WATERMAN, JR., I HAVE A RIDDLE FOR YOU. WHAT IS IT THAT'S "FRIC" IN THE MIDDLE AND "A" ON BOTH ENDS?



NO, WATERMAN, JR., YOU ARE WRONG. IT IS AFRICA, AND HERE IT COMES NOW! AAAIIIIIEEE!



INKA-DINKA-DOO!
INKA-DINKA-DOO!*

DO YOU HEAR, WATERMAN, JR., THESE NATIVES HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY A GENIUS WITH... A BIAS FOR ACTION!

TAKE US TO YOUR BIASED LEADER!

*BOIL IT DOWN TO SOMETHING I CAN GRASP.



WE WERE LED TO A FACTORY WHERE WE FINALLY MET THE MAD GENIUS WHOSE STRANGE AND UNHOLY BUSINESS STRATEGIES WERE LEGEND FROM ONE END OF AFRICA TO THE BIG TREE ON EDDIE M'GBUMBO'S LAWN, NOT THE ONE OUT BACK, BUT THE ONE BY THE FRONT PORCH.

GENERAL MOTORS!

HELLO, BOYS. WATCH ME WHILE I FILL THE PLANT UP WITH WATER TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY LEAKS. IT WOULD BE CRAZY FOR ME TO SIT AND WAIT FOR THE FACTORY TO BECOME FULL OF WATER OF ITS OWN ACCORD. I'LL JUST DO IT MYSELF.

BUT WHAT OF THE WORKERS, GENERAL? THEY'LL DROWN LIKE RATS!

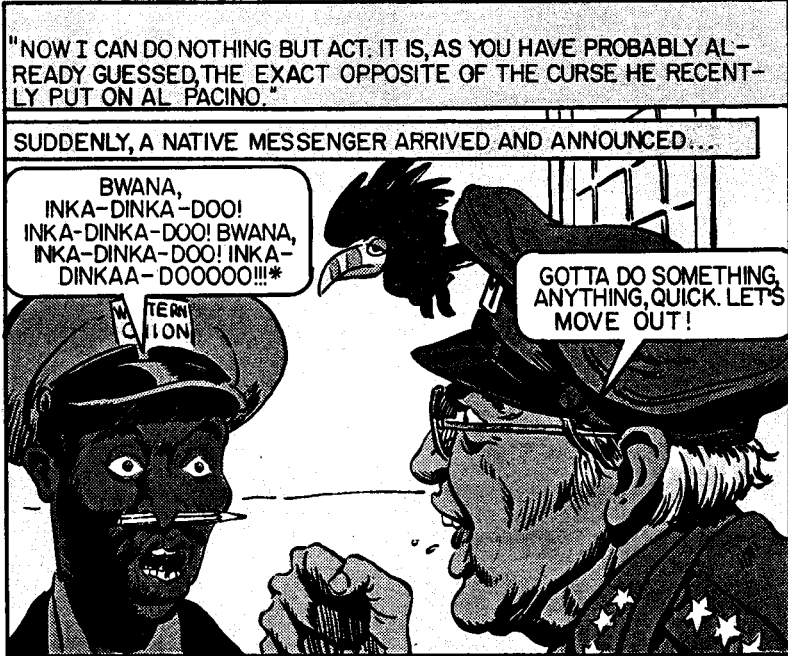
IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE



NO TIME TO GET THEM OUT!
GOT TO ACT NOW! CAN'T WAIT!
CAN'T WAIT....

GOOD LORD, MAN!
HOW COULD YOUR BUSINESS
PHILOSOPHY COME TO OB-
SESS YOU TO SUCH A
STRANGE AND UNHOLY
DEGREE?

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY? PHA! IT'S A VOODOO
CURSE. EDDIE M'GBUMBO'S CRAZY FATHER,
STOSH, PUT THE HOODOO ON ME LAST FALL,
JUST BECAUSE I BUILT MY NEW BARBECUE
PIT THREE INCHES OVER ON HIS SIDE....



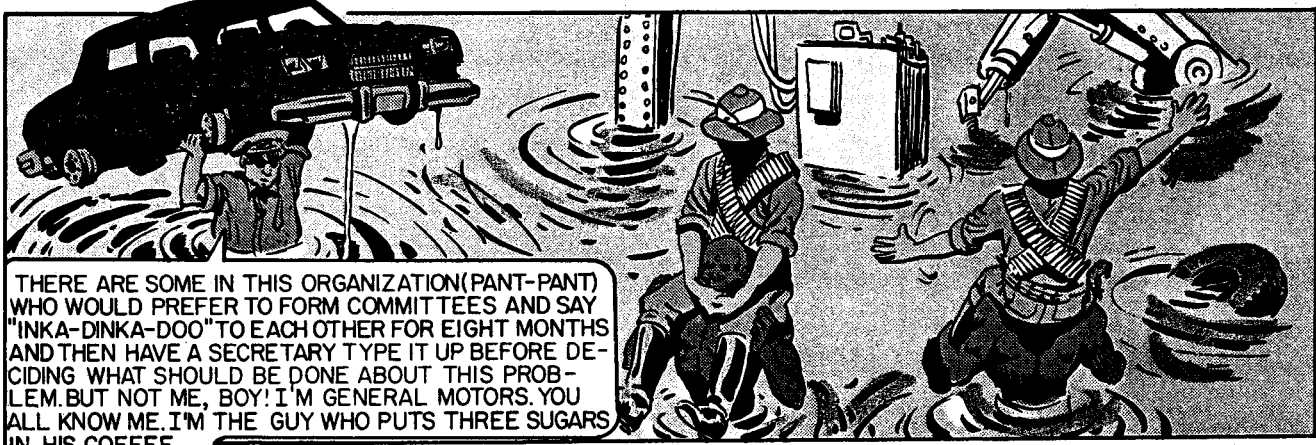
"NOW I CAN DO NOTHING BUT ACT. IT IS, AS YOU HAVE PROBABLY AL-
READY GUESSED, THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THE CURSE HE RECENT-
LY PUT ON AL FACINO."

SUDDENLY, A NATIVE MESSENGER ARRIVED AND ANNOUNCED...

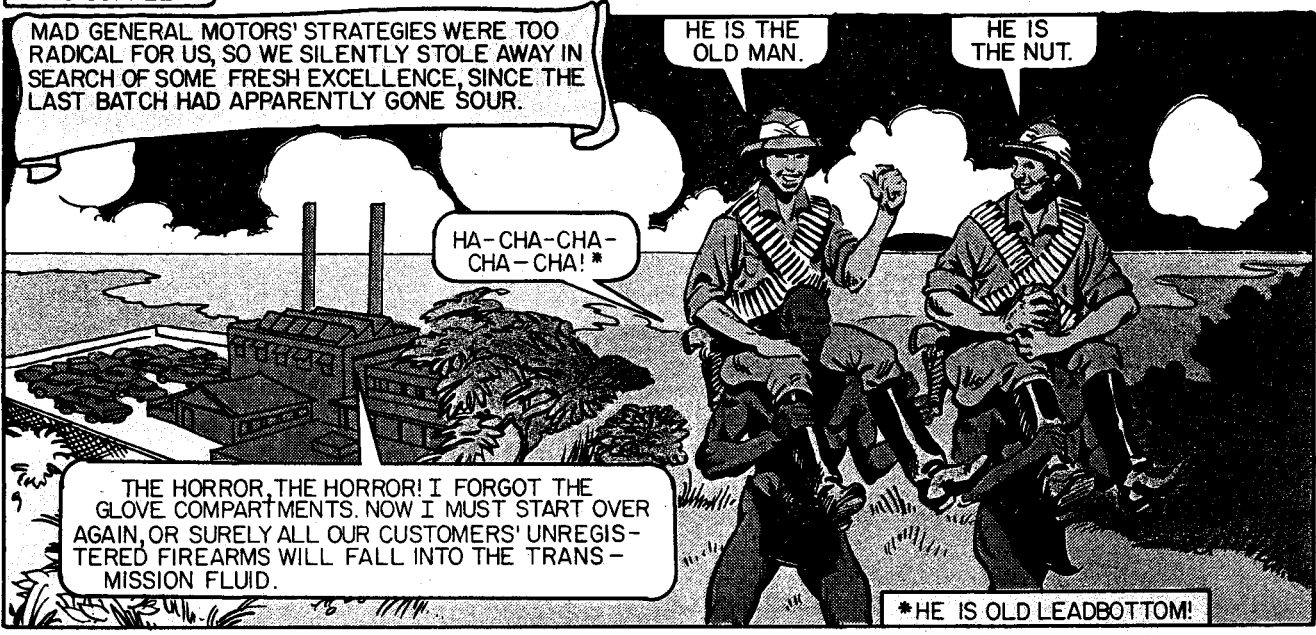
BWANA,
INKA-DINKA-DOO!
INKA-DINKA-DOO! BWANA,
INKA-DINKA-DOO! INKA-
DINKAA-DOOOO!!!*

GOTTA DO SOMETHING,
ANYTHING, QUICK. LET'S
MOVE OUT!

*GENERAL MOTORS, COME QUICKLY. THE WATER HAS SHORTED OUT
THE ASSEMBLY-LINE CONVEYOR BELT. GENERAL MOTORS, PRODUC-
TION HAS ABRUPTLY CEASED. THE NATIVES WHO HAVEN'T DROWNED
ARE RESTLESS. AIIIIIE EEE! GENERAL MOTORS!



THERE ARE SOME IN THIS ORGANIZATION (PANT-PANT)
WHO WOULD PREFER TO FORM COMMITTEES AND SAY
"INKA-DINKA-DOO" TO EACH OTHER FOR EIGHT MONTHS
AND THEN HAVE A SECRETARY TYPE IT UP BEFORE DE-
CIDING WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT THIS PROB-
LEM. BUT NOT ME, BOY! I'M GENERAL MOTORS. YOU
ALL KNOW ME. I'M THE GUY WHO PUTS THREE SUGARS
IN HIS COFFEE.



MAD GENERAL MOTORS' STRATEGIES WERE TOO
RADICAL FOR US, SO WE SILENTLY STOLE AWAY IN
SEARCH OF SOME FRESH EXCELLENCE, SINCE THE
LAST BATCH HAD APPARENTLY GONE SOUR.

HE IS THE
OLD MAN.

HE IS
THE NUT.

HA-CHA-CHA-
CHA-CHA! *

THE HORROR, THE HORROR! I FORGOT THE
GLOVE COMPARTMENTS. NOW I MUST START OVER
AGAIN, OR SURELY ALL OUR CUSTOMERS' UNREGIS-
TERED FIREARMS WILL FALL INTO THE TRANS-
MISSION FLUID.

*HE IS OLD LEADBOTTOM!

EXHAUSTED AFTER DAYS OF SEARCHING FOR AN EXCELLENT CORPORATION IN THE SAVAGE, UNTAMED JUNGLE WILDERNESS, WE STOPPED AT THE LOCAL BEEFSTEAK CHARLIE'S FOR A COUPLE OF BEERS.

TWO HEINEKENS, PLEASE.

GOOD NIGHT, MRS. CALLABASH, WHEREVER YOU ARE.*



*TWO HEINEKENS COMING RIGHT UP.

GOOD NIGHT, MRS. CALLABASH, WHEREVER YOU ARE.*
HELLO, FREDDIE? CHET HERE, DOWN AT THE BEEFSTEAK CHARLIE'S, NEAR THE GRAZING HERD OF WILDEBEESTS, ACROSS FROM RADIO SHACK. GOT TWO LIVE ONES. RIGHT. I'LL TRY TO STALL THEM UNTIL YOU GET HERE. BYE.



HI, I'M FREDDIE HEINEKEN. HOW ARE THE BEERS?

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?



LET ME EXPLAIN! I BELIEVE THERE IS ONLY ONE ESSENTIAL KEY TO EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS, AND THAT IS... STAYING CLOSE TO THE CUSTOMER!

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, BOYS? IS THERE TOO MUCH OF A HEAD? IS THERE NOT ENOUGH BODY?



TOO MUCH BARLEY, OR NOT ENOUGH? IS GREEN A GOOD COLOR FOR A BOTTLE? HOW 'BOUT THOSE HOPS? IS THE LABEL STRAIGHT? LET ME SEE IT. YES, IT'S FINE! UH-OH, THERE'S MY BEEPER! WHERE'S THE PHONE, CHET?

WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY? SOMEONE'S BUYING A CASE OF HEINEKENS AT THE 7-ELEVEN, NEAR THE ELEPHANT GRAVEYARD?



COME ON, BOYS! I'LL GIVE YOU A FIRSTHAND DEMONSTRATION OF HOW I OPERATE IN THE FIELD.

IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE



HI, I'M FREDDIE HEINEKEN. MIND IF I TAG ALONG?

JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE.

WHAT, AGAIN? WE TOLD YOU—WE LOVE YOUR GODDAMN BEER.



HI! I'M FREDDIE HEINEKEN. HOW ARE THE BEERS?

HI! I'M OSCAR MAYER. HOW ARE THE DOGS?

LOOK! THERE ARE THOSE TWO FAGS WHO WANT TO STAY CLOSE TO US! WE'VE WARNED YOU NANCIES EVERY WEEKEND TO KEEP YOUR DISTANCE NOW YOU'RE GONNA PAY!



YEAH! LET'S GET 'EM!

SO WE WENDED OUR WAY BY STATION WAGON FROM CAMER- OON TO THE COAST, AND THEN BY FERRY TO THE ISLAND OF FERNANDO POO.

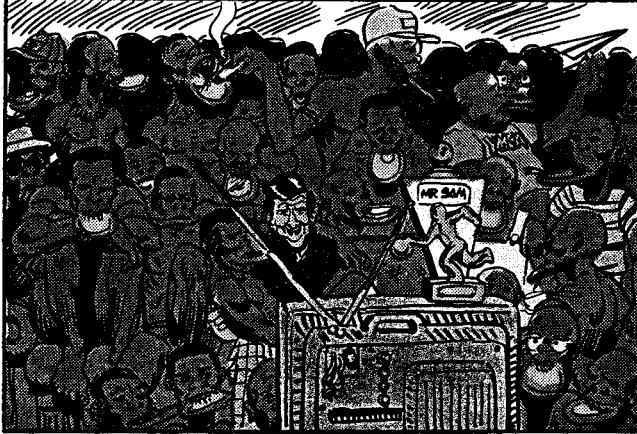
THE THEORY WAS SOUND, BUT THE PRACTICE WAS DANGER- OUS, SO WE BEAT A HASTY RETREAT AND SWAM AWAY FROM FERNANDO POO, NEVER TO RETURN.

WE SPENT THE NEXT EIGHTEEN MONTHS MAKING OUR WAY FROM ONE SIDE OF AFRICA TO ANOTHER, WITH A SHORT STOPOVER IN LARCH- MONT TO PICK UP SOME CLEAN UNDERWEAR. NOT ONLY DID WE NOT FIND EXCELLENCE, BUT THEY PUT STARCH IN OUR UNDERWEAR.



FIRST WE HAPPENED UPON MISTERS OGILVY AND MATHERS, WHO WANTED NOTHING MORE THAN TO BREAK THEIR CORPORATION INTO SMALL COMPANIES AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO THINK INDEPENDENTLY AND COMPETITIVELY.

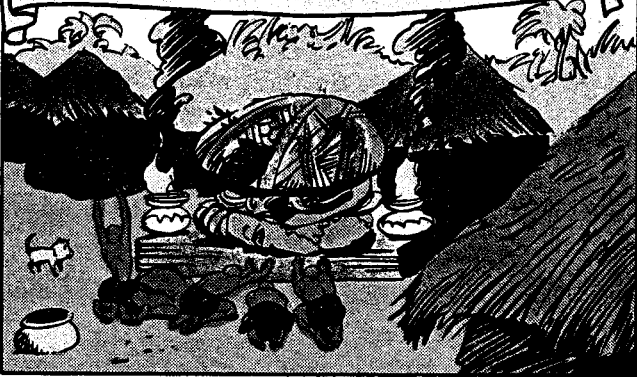
WHAT A FIASCO! THEN CAME SAM WALTON OF THE WAL-MART CHAIN IN EAST NAIROBI, WHOSE EMPLOYEES CALLED HIM MR. SAM OR GOT FIRED. HE BELIEVED IN *PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH PEOPLE*. HE STARTED BY CARING ABOUT HIS WORKERS, REFERRING TO THEM AS ASSOCIATES, NOT EMPLOYEES; LISTENING TO WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY; ULTIMATELY THINKING OF THEM AS AN EXTENDED FAMILY...



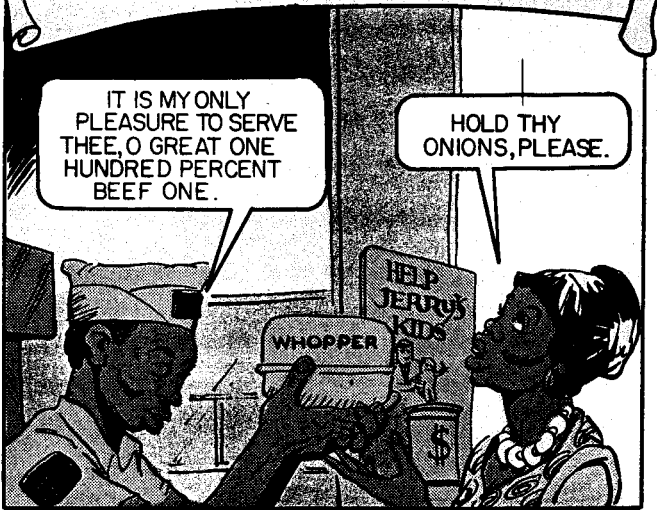
... AND INVITING ALL 4,000 OF THEM TO MOVE INTO HIS GUEST ROOM, THEN FEEDING AND CLOTHING THEM, AND PAYING FOR COSTLY VISITS TO THE ORTHODONTIST. BUT THIS SCHEME WENT OUT OF CONTROL. THE TIME IT TOOK TO RAISE 4,000 UBANGIS, PLAYING CATCH WITH THEM, TAKING THEM TO THE ZOO, LENDING THEM THE CAR ON SATURDAY NIGHTS WHEN THEY HAD A HOT DATE WITH THE GIRL UBANGI NEXT DOOR — ALL THIS LEFT NO TIME FOR WAL-MART. THE STORES WENT STAFFLESS, THE OFFICES WENT EXECUTIVELESS, AND MR. SAM WENT BANKRUPT AND WAS LEFT WITH 4,000 PLATE-LIPPED MOUTHS TO FEED."



BUT WE NEVER WERE ABLE TO LEARN, SO WE WENT ON WITH OUR CRACKPOT EXPEDITION. BY DUMB LUCK WE STUMBLED UPON THE TOP-SECRET BURGER KING TRAINING CENTER. HERE THE POTENTIAL BURGER SUBJECTS WERE INSTILLED BY THE BURGER MEISTER WITH ENTHUSIASM AND FANATICISM. WE SOON LEARNED THAT "HAVE IT YOUR WAY" WAS A THING OF THE PAST. NOW IT WAS "HAVE IT THE BURGER'S WAY OR BE SACRIFICED TO IT!"



WHAT COULD THE NATIVES DO? THEY HAD BECOME *VALUES-DRIVEN*. THEY WERE TAUGHT THAT THEIR ONE PURPOSE ON EARTH WAS TO SERVE THE BURGER.

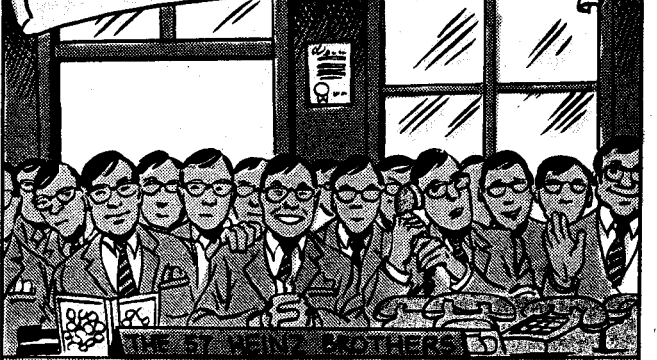


ED EXXON, A FANATIC OF THE FIRST ORDER, BELIEVED THAT TO STICK TO THE KNITTING WAS TO STICK TO THE BUMPER OF SUCCESS, AND THAT MEANT PUMPING GAS INTO CARS, REMOVING THE PUMP FROM THE CAR, COLLECTING THE MONEY, AND NOTHING ELSE. CHECKING THE OIL WAS OUT, ALSO WIPING WINDSHIELDS AND GIVING DIRECTIONS TO MOTORISTS WHO COULDN'T FIND THE HIGHWAY. PUMP GAS, JUST PUMP GAS, THAT'S ALL. HE WAS FURIOUS WHEN HE HEARD THAT EUROPEANS EXPECTED SOMETHING ELSE.




I WAS SET TO OPEN UP 5,000 EXXON GAS STATIONS IN EUROPE, BUT NOW I HEAR THAT GOOD OLD AMERICAN GASOLINE ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU LIMEYS AND WHAT HAVE YOU. THEY WANT ME TO PUMP SOMETHING CALLED "PETROL." I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL IT IS, BUT I'M AN AMERICAN AND I WON'T PUMP IT. ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY DON'T WANT TO GIVE ME MONEY FOR IT, BUT SOMETHING CALLED "POUNDS."
VIVA AMERICA!

THE 57 HEINZ BROTHERS WANTED TO RUN THEIR COMPANY USING THE PRINCIPLE OF *SIMPLE FORM, LEAN STAFF*, WITH FEW PEOPLE AT THE UPPER LEVELS.



ENOUGH SAID.

IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE



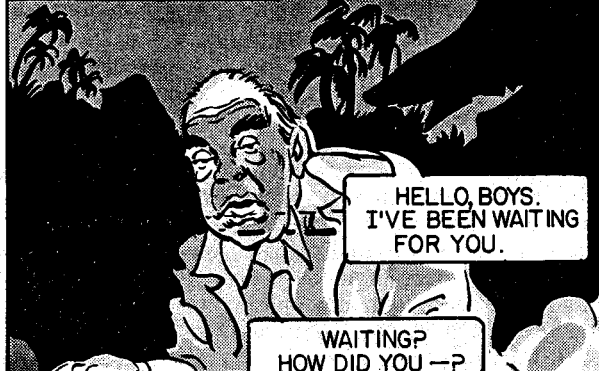
F INALLY, IN THE DARKEST PART OF THE BELGIAN CONGO, WE DISCOVERED WALT DISNEY RUNNING HIS EMPIRE BOTH LOOSE AND TIGHT SIMULTANEOUSLY—A REMARKABLE FEAT FOR A DEAD MAN, AND A FROZEN ONE AT THAT. ON THE ONE HAND HE WAS INFORMAL, AND ON THE OTHER HAND HE WAS RIGID, AND ON YET ANOTHER HAND HE WAS ONLY SLIGHTLY FORMAL BUT STILL FRIENDLY, AND ON THE FOURTH HAND HE WAS A NAZI. OF COURSE HE WENT HOPELESSLY INSANE.



HAVE A DRINK. RELAX. DON'T WORRY ABOUT BEING LATE FOR WORK THIS MORNING.

NO DRINKING ON THE JOB! BECOME TENSE! IF YOU'RE LATE ONE MORE TIME YOU'RE FIRED!

DISILLUSIONED AND DEFEATED, WE WANDERED IN A COUPLE OF DAZE'S UNTIL WE CAME TO MPWAPWA TANGANYIKA. HERE WE STUMBLED UPON A SECRET VOODOO SEMINAR CONDUCTED BY THE GHOST OF NIELS BOHR FOR A PRIMITIVE TRIBE OF YOUNG NATIVE BUSINESS SCHOOL STUDENTS. WE WATCHED THE PROCEEDINGS FROM BEHIND THE BUSHY HEAD OF A PUSHY BUSHMAN.



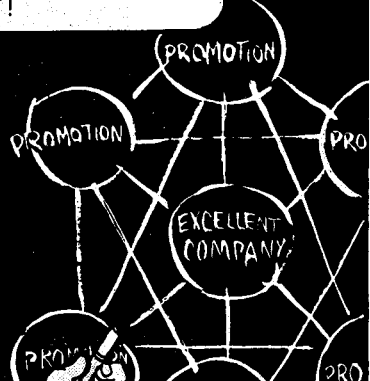
HELLO, BOYS. I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

WAITING? HOW DID YOU —?

USE YOUR NOODLE, PETERS. GHOSTS CAN KNOW ANYTHING THEY WANT TO KNOW AND, UNLIKE US, THEY CAN WALK THROUGH WALLS.



IN 1909, A STUDENT CAME TO ME AND HANDED ME AN ATOM AND SAID, "THIS IS WHAT A SUCCESSFUL COMPANY SHOULD BE LIKE!" THAT BOY WOULD ONE DAY BECOME ALBERT EINSTEIN. AND HE WAS RIGHT!




NOTICE THAT THE ONLY ESSENTIAL COMPONENT IS PROMOTION. YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE TO BE EXCELLENT. FOR INSTANCE, I IMAGINE SOME OF YOUR FORTUNE 500'S WOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO SELL OUT BIG BUCKEROOS TO A COUPLE OF ENTERPRISING YOUNG FELLOWS IF THEY WERE TO, OH, SAY, WRITE A BOOK PURPORTING TO BE A FACTUAL ANALYSIS OF SAID COMPANIES. BUT WHICH IS IN REALITY NOTHING MORE THAN A THINLY DISGUISED 360-PAGE COMMERCIAL....

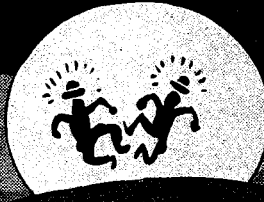
"YES. VERY BIG BUCKS INDEED."

UH — WE GOTTA GO NOW, GHOST OF MR. BOHR. THANKS FOR THE MILLION-DOLLAR IDEA — ER — WE MEAN LESSON.

YEAH WE GOT BUSINESSES TO TAKE OF. BIG BUSINESS-ES. HEH — HEH. GOODBYE, MR. GHOST.



GONE. THEY WERE GONE. WITH VISIONS OF SUGAR DADDIES DANCING IN THEIR HEADS. THEY WERE ON THE ROAD TO THE RICH-HOUSE.



AND I WOULD NEVER SEE A PENNY OF ALL THE MILLIONS THEY WOULD MAKE. AND I GAVE THEM THE IDEA! AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE, THEY LEFT ME STUCK HERE TO FINISH THEIR STINKY LITTLE COMIC BOOK. AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE, I'M DEAD. AH, ME. AH, LIFE. AH, AFRICA. AH, EXCELLENCE.

— THE END.