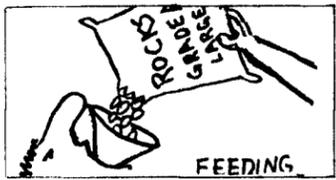


The university as post office—a fable

Any similarity between the university described herein and any actual institution dead or dying is obviously purely a matter of sheer coincidence.

Once upon a time, not so long ago and not so very far away, in a kingdom just over the mountains from the sea, there lived twin brothers who were both virtuous and intelligent. Now these brothers, being of an age as often happens with twins, concluded their time at high school in the same year. As is frequently the case with twins, one was more inclined by natural bent to studious pursuits and he it was who determined to become a political scientist. The other twin, being less studious and more impatient, decided on a career as a postman and a postman, in fact, he did become.

Eventually it happened that the day came when he was to make his first trek in the delivery of the mail. To this end he was fitted by Chief Mailer with two sacks one of which was slung over each shoulder. One bag was filled to brimming with pieces of mail to be delivered and the other was filled with rocks. Upon this the mail twin, being young and therefore brash, dared to speak out thus:

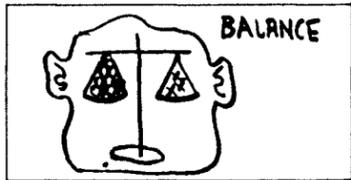


"Why must I carry these rocks around when they have no relevance to that which I am attempting to accomplish?"

"Because," said Chief Mailer, "the rocks balance the load of mail on the other side so that you may attend your appointed rounds as a well-balanced person."

To this the twin gave answer: "Sir, the energy, effort and time consumed in carrying this added burden are wasted in that they contribute nothing toward achieve-

ment of my aims. As well, the rocks do but slow me down by their added weight and thus hinder me in the accomplishment of my vocation. Surely, in such circumstances, to carry these rocks in this bag I must needs also have rocks in my head which would re-



sult again in an unbalanced mail, man. Would it not be more logical to acquire this desired equilibrium through the use of something that would further my ends—perhaps more mail, if even that of a different nature to the first class matter that fills the other bag at present?" (For being intelligent he realized it takes a big mail to keep two bags on the street.)

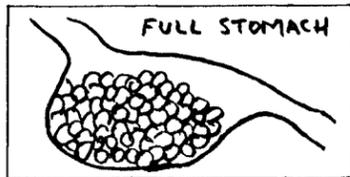
Chief Mailer allowed considerable thought to this novel suggestion before he told the youth, "Yes, it would indeed be more logical and therefore desirable. I will take it up with Higher Authority. But," he added, "do not expect changes overnight because haste is rudeness and we are the civil service."

In due course the word was passed down from Higher Authority to Lower Authority and from Lower Authority to Chief Mailer—"Since the carrying of rocks by persons who have no use for rocks is wasteful of time and energy and additionally is a denial of opportunity to further the work of accomplishment, henceforward it will no longer be necessary for our employees to be members of a rock group. It is preferable that they be mail men."

Now the other twin (male but not mail) enrolled in Great University which was the oldest and northernmost university in the kingdom in which he lived. Enrolment was an experience which left

him starry-eyed in anticipation of the intellectual riches with which he felt sure he was about to be endowed. Before long, however, there came upon him great frustration for it came to pass that it was made known unto him that Great Policy at Great University decreed that he also be endowed with a lab science, like grandmother's annual spring-time application of Sulphur-and-Molasses, was delivered as a matter of course. His name, therefore, was duly inscribed on the roster of Geology students.

It further appeared that this lab science was to take twice as much of his time as any of the helpful courses. Being of a philosophical nature the youth reasoned that if he devoted two classes to that which was without purpose and if this time was denied to that which retained applicability, he was, in effect, being swindled of four courses. Although of passing intelligence the youth was unfamiliar with Great University Ritual and since all this was illogical he assumed that some grievous but easily corrected error had been made. For this reason he presented himself at a certain office in Arts Building. There he was led through a door inscribed with the letters—Great Man—and there he made bold to speak in this fashion: "Sir, why has it become necessary for



me to mess with these crummy rocks which do naught but deter me in my efforts to reach my established goals?"

Now Great Man liked young people, having been told by his mother that he, too, at an early age had also been young. He therefore felt that he had much in common with the young people of today and thus was able to smile indulgently at the young man on his carpet. "Why, young sir," he said, "that I cannot tell you for in

these matters reasons are neither required nor given. It is, you see, a part of Great Policy, and reasons are therefore superfluous."

Having explained the matter so clearly, Great Man leaned back and beamed at this youth with whom he had so much in common; but the youth being young (as many, but not all, youths are) persisted and again addressed himself to Great Man, saying, "But, sir, why should I carry all this useless intellectual weight? Surely these rocks have no pertinence to that which I am trying to accomplish and are in fact impertinent in that they deprive me of greater opportunity of time and effort and learning in the desired direction."

"Ah!" replied Great Man, "that's true; but they render you well balanced in your education so that you may tread the paths of life with acute equilibrium."

The young twin, who thought he knew how his equilibrium could be made even acuter, did speak again unto Great Man in these words: "Surely it is a fact that a better balance of education could be achieved through the substitution for Geology of some subject germane to my ambitions?"

Such is the ignorance of youth. Granted the wisdom of age he would have been aware of Ritual of Great University and would have been aware of the gravity of what he had done, bringing out and dusting off a fact in broad daylight and in Great Man's very office. He was not so inexperienced, however, as to not recognize the troubled look that came into Great Man's eye. Anyone can win an argument by resorting to fact and such unfair tactics do but result in justifiable resentment. The youth therefore hastened to reinforce his position, but as was noted previously, haste is rudeness and the youth thereby committed the great calumny. "According to what we have been taught in Philosophy 240," he said, "to deny myself knowledge that could assist me, while soaking up that which cannot, is just not logical."

Who are more worldly wise than the young twin can vividly imagine the painful scene that followed. A terrible hush fell over the

entire office. In the outer office Great Man's office boy paused in mid-step with one foot hovering an inch and three-quarters above the floor. Pretty secretaries blushed to the roots of their hairpieces and covered their pretty ears. Great Man's face was flushed as he rose from his chair and towered above



the young man on the carpet with whom he had so much in common. Great Man was very good at towering. He had spent much time in practising effective towering and, with the help of a low footstool kept behind his desk for such occasions, could be very impressive in these moments. "Young man," he thundered, "you will watch your language while in this office. We're pretty broadminded around here. We don't mind the odd 'shit' or 'fuck' but to come in here, brazenly march right up to the desk and deliberately, unashamedly, say 'logi . . . log . . .'"

Though Great Man's face purpled with the effort, he could not bring himself to say the awful word. "Well, sir," said the youth, "it seems immoral to me to intentionally throw away a chunk of my life in pursuit of that which is without value. I fear I must withdraw from Great University."

"And good riddance!" yelled Great Man as the twin went through the door. Pretty secretaries kept pretty faces averted as he crossed the outer office and passed into the hall.

Now it came to pass that when next the two twins met, mail twin recounted how Higher Authority had been confronted and with what result. "Now," he told his brother, "I am rid of my useless rocks."

"Me, too," said the other but his brother didn't know what he was talking about. Mail twin said nothing; he knew that no one can understand a university drop-out.

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