



# Kiss-ass careers for the uninspired

## *Aspiring corporate gimps join the boot-lick line up*

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

Careers come in all shapes and sizes, but Monday's university-sponsored career fair at the World Trade and Convention Centre in downtown Halifax came in the solitary shape of a corporate love-in.

Arriving at the convention centre with a closed mind, I was happy to discover my scepticism could not be shaken — representatives from major corporations filled most of the 95 booths.

I'm no rabid idealist, unwilling to work for large corporations (although I would like a career with meaning), but I'm also not naive enough to think that any corporation would hire me, except as a retail gimp — and I've been there.

Corporations are glad to have access to university commerce graduates, but they're even more thrilled that schools continue graduating Arts students, like me, who keep the demand for menial jobs high and, in turn, the cost of filling menial positions low. I don't think, however, they were expecting many of us at the fair.

Milling among the career-seekers, with resumes, firm handshakes and solid eye-contact flying in all directions, I was impressed with the myriad boot-licking opportunities available.

The day's first revelation was that most of the students there, in spite of their job-envy and power-suits, were not much different than me; they were just lining up to become higher-paid gimps.

For those interested in middle-management positions — paper-pushing nowhere, as far as I'm concerned — there was opportunity at every turn. If you possessed the right set of intangible commerce skills to excel or "to win in business" (as many of the brochures put it) there were all sorts of jobs just a screening process or two away.

The day's second revelation was that while the companies came from different parts of the private and public sectors (finance, industry, information technology, government), and each operated in different ways, the jobs they were advertising sounded mostly the same. Managing money, managing people, managing computers,



"So, how about those damned monks?"

managing piles of paper, managing to stay sane as the years slide by and four white walls, fluorescent lighting and a faux-wood desk begin to define your existence — they're all one and the same.

It didn't matter who anyone gave their resume to as long as the company name carried a cachet of corporate respectability, ensuring suitable salaries and benefits.

It seemed the questions "who to work for?" and "what to do?" were irrelevant. And, as a result, the questions "how much?" and "can I wear a suit, carry a briefcase and use a cell phone?" were the only determining factors.

As a child I had a similar notion of work.

I dreamt I'd wear grey flannel, carry a briefcase and work in an indistinct office tower. At my desk each day I'd unload a wad of files from my briefcase and begin work.

The work itself was

immaterial. What I actually did and who I worked for was as trivial as the paper-thin day jobs of comic book heroes. As I saw it, work wasn't something you actually did, it was just some sort of place, or state of existence in which people floated from nine to five. And from the campy confines of kindergarten that seemed exciting enough.

But I'm no longer five, and I'm no longer happy with that notion of a generic business career. I know with unwavering certainty that, whatever career I choose, it will mean more to me than a paycheque.

As I said at the start, careers come in all shapes and sizes. Sadly, the career fair — which was more like a commerce fair — provided a narrow view.

Near the end of the event, a representative from a major financial institution explained that after collecting over 500 resumes

through the career fair and several campus visits, his institution would begin a hiring process lasting several months, and might (he emphasized "might") hire one student.

It sounded more like corporate cherry-picking than a career fair.



"Have you ever read *Death of a Salesman*?"

### Gazette Career Fair

#### Benefits include:

- joy not sucked out of life
- brain not sucked out of head
- soul not corrupted, usually
- no pay
- sometimes pizza & beer
- good times had by all, usually
- friendly, corporate family
- think up ads at 3am

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