

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I cannot understand how the giant, Japanese motor-vehicle behemoth, Toyota Motor Corporation, could have got itself in such a mess. From simply having problems with its motor vehicles, Toyota Motor Corporation has placed its goolies in a ringer and Ouch! It must hurt, terribly. Transcending just problems with its motor vehicles, Toyota Motor Corporation has become the ugly face and greedy voice of 'Japan Incorporated'. Today, it, constructively, represents all of the manufacturing entities in The Land of The Rising Sun. The world looks at the world's largest producer of motor vehicles and ponders: 'Is this the true face of Japan's manufacturers? If one cannot trust Toyota Motor Corporation, may one trust any other Japanese manufacturer?' You may or may not realise this, but exports from Japan represent about 16 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product. To continue to state that the company is 'velly solly' (the Japanese have trouble in pronouncing an 'r', you know) for allowing people to get killed in Japanese-manufactured Toyota motor vehicles is hardly sufficient. For Management of this company to state that it is willing to pay many tens of billions of US dollars as compensation to the families of the many known dead people, who trusted Toyota motor cars to be safe, but discovered the horrible truth when driving down US highways, can hardly be sufficient to the mothers, fathers and children who have suffered immeasurable pain due to gross negligence on the part of Management of Toyota Motor Corporation. What would be the correct penalty for this company to pay? I, really, cannot say. Can it be measured in dollars and cents? I doubt it.

It is quite possible that the root cause of the many problems at Toyota Motor Corporation is the Japanese work ethic. Think for a moment, My Dear Grandchild, would a junior Japanese employee on the assembly line have the courage to go up to his manager/supervisor and tell him that the motor car, now being manufactured on the employee's assembly line, could be a killer because of this or that? Not only your nelly! That Japanese employee is working on that assembly line because, among other things, he does not need to think too much. He has been brainwashed and fitted into a special, Japanese-produced, human mould, one that churns out, what can only be described as being human robots. And that is all that senior management of large, Japanese industrial entities wants of its employees. The Japanese industrialist of today believe, very much, in under-delegation of authority so that a person, who is engaged in one particular job, is taught that he/she should not want to encroach on the bailiwick of another person. Such an encroachment would, at the least, be considered rude and, possibly, subject to disciplinary action if sent up the hierarchical ladder for consideration. It is true, of course, that some people have to sweep the street, clean toilets, drive buses, etc, but that does not mean that the men or women, cleaning the streets, washing the toilets, driving the buses, etc, cannot better themselves by dint of hard work and/or self study. But the Japanese work ethic is such that it does not promote, or even consider, for that matter, that such a possibility is possible; and, a man or woman, churned out of a certain acceptable mould, is said to have been printed as a brand for life in accordance with the shape of the mould from which he or she has been cast.

I talked to Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, about this idea and, for a change, he opened up and told me of his

experiences in Japan, some years ago. He said that, when asked to visit Japan, officially, as an official representative of the Government of China, he was invited to meetings with the Governor of Kagoshima , the Governor, being his host for one week. At the first meeting at the offices of the Governor, The Frog was seated at the head of a very large and grand table, around which were the senior officers of the Governor. The Frog asked a question of one officer who suggested that such a question should be answered by another officer. The officer, delegated to answer the question, said that he did not have the immediate answer to the question, but would obtain the answer, which would be forthcoming and would be sent to the hotel in which The Frog was staying. By the conclusion of the 90-minute meeting, The Frog said that none of his questions had been answered to his satisfaction and he was extremely irritated and frustrated by the round-robin attitude of the officers of the Governor. 'The game was that nobody wanted to answer any question, definitively, lest the answer be considered either wrong, partially incorrect, or not in accordance an explicit memorandum that had been circulated by the Governor's Office, prior to my official arrival', The Frog commiserated. 'This is not the way to run a government and it, certainly, is no way to run a company of the size of Toyota Motor Corporation,' The Frog concluded.

I recall that William Shakespeare wrote, in Act 2, Scene 2 of the play, Julius Caesar: 'Cowards die many times before their deaths: The valiant never taste of death but once.' So it should be for all men, Japanese, Chinese, Europeans, Melanesians and all of the other human races that inhabit this world of ours. Sadly, this is not the case. One has to ask: From which mould had President Akio Toyoda been cast? What are the names of the days of the week, again: Moansday; Tearsday; Wailsday; Thumpsday; Frightday; and, Shatterday.

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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