

On Putting Out Vol. 20, No. 1

Reflections on departing as editor.

BY MARJORIE KELLY

WHEN WE PUT OUT Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Business Ethics* in July 1987, it was in the Pony Express days when production was called “pasteup.” We ran out long galleys of type, aligned them with a T-square and pasted them down. Faxes didn’t exist. The first plain-paper fax machine was introduced by Canon that same year, 1987. The World Wide Web didn’t exist. It wasn’t until 1990 that Tim Berners-Lee made up that name for a program he’d written. The internet, for all practical purposes, didn’t exist. It would be four years before the phrase “America Online” crossed some copywriter’s lips. I had an IBM Selectric on my desk — remember the typewriters with the little ball that bounced around? I sent authors letters through the post office. Imagine that.

A lot has changed since 1987. The Berlin Wall came down. Nelson Mandela got out of prison. And they banned smoking on airplanes. Have you noticed that many planes still have the little ashtrays in the armrests, but they’re bolted shut now? The past is like that: still there, just bolted shut.

When I pry open a corner, I remember how convinced I was in 1987 that a business ethics revolution was just around the corner. Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken had recently been hauled away in handcuffs for insider trading and junk bond fraud. The South African divestment campaign was heating up. Ethics was beginning to be taught in business schools.

Something interesting was stirring, and I wanted to be in the middle of it. We were co-conspirators in those days, out to launch a revolution. Business people called and sent us letters, astonished and grateful this magazine existed. They passed *Business Ethics* from

hand to hand, mentioned it in speeches, saved every issue. One reader sent names of 100 friends he wanted to receive copies.

In 1992 visionary companies like Ben & Jerry’s, Patagonia, and Tom’s of Maine formed Business for Social Responsibility. Today it counts among its members over 200 major corporations, from American Express, BP, and Chevron to UPS, Verizon, and Walt Disney. In 1989, a meeting of the Social Investment Forum in Atlanta that I attended drew 11 people. Today SRI in the Rockies draws 500 social investing professionals, and SRI policies are in place at major pension funds. At the launch of the Ethics Officer Association in 1992, a dozen members were on hand. Today the renamed Ethics and Compliance Officer Association boasts over 1,250 members.

It has mushroomed, this field of ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR). But at the same time, it hasn’t yet gone far enough. A disturbing counter-trend has also been at work, sending ethical corruption to new heights in the Enron-WorldCom-you-name-it’ scandals. The problem is we’ve pasted ethics and CSR onto the side of companies, but haven’t

yet integrated these issues into core strategy, ownership, and governance practices.

That’s the next chapter of the revolution. And I’d like to be in the middle of it. After this issue of *Business Ethics*, you can find me at the Tellus Institute in Boston, where I’m co-founding a new project called Corporation 20/20 (www.Corporation2020.org). My co-founder is Allen White, who was one of two people who created the Global Reporting Initiative, which developed standardized models for corporate social reporting. Using a similar approach — a multi-stakeholder dialogue process stretching over several years — we’re gathering some 100 cutting-edge theorists and practitioners from business, finance, law, government, journalism, and civil society. Together we’re exploring the question: What would corporations look like that were designed to seamlessly integrate both social and financial concerns?

Readers of *Business Ethics* — and subscribers to our email newsletter BizEthics Buzz — will likely be hearing more about it, as I aim to keep writing for *Business Ethics* from time to time.

This past year, working with new owner and publisher Michael Connor, has seen the publication move in exciting new directions, with a new radio program called Good Company on Sirius Satellite Radio, the redesigned, expanded magazine and revamped web site, plus events like the Business Ethics Summit. I look forward to continuing to work with Connor as consulting editor. Yet as

Editor with a capital E, this issue — Vol. 20, No. 1 — will be my last. You can reach me at MKelly@Tellus.org. And hey, I’ve still got my T-square. If anybody needs some pasteup, I’ll still be around. **EE**



Marjorie Kelly

When Business Ethics started in 1987, faxes and the internet didn’t exist. I sent letters through the post office. Imagine that.