



Bring back the Cricket!

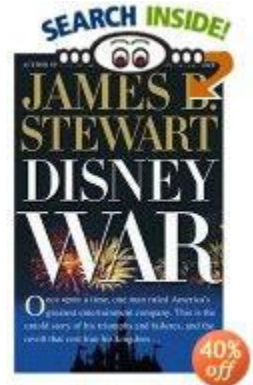
And a conscience for Corporate America.

by Glenn R. Jackson

Once upon a time in America our nation's business leaders were all about creation and innovation, and not just glitz and marketing. Once upon a time in America our nation's business leaders would shine the light of a community-centered conscience through their business affairs, and carry around them an enthusiasm for this nation's citizens. Once upon a time in America Walt Disney was such a leader, and in America the Cricket reigned and not the Locusts.

In 1937 Walt Disney started the Walt Disney Studio working on the animation for Pinocchio, Carlo Collodi's classic. As they worked faithfully through the storyline one clear problem began to shine, Pinocchio was not a good or likable character. Being true to the story, the puppet who would be a boy had no conscience and knew nothing of right from wrong. Walt Disney's decision was to resurrect the minor grasshopper character from Collodi's story, make that character a guide, conscience and teacher for Pinocchio, and in the process create two likable characters and one new star for the Disney studios. *

The new star was Jiminy Cricket, a conscience for Pinocchio and the sage alter ego for Walt Disney. Jiminy Cricket had been drawn in many ways in caricature of Ed Disney, Walt Disney's uncle whom he called "Uncle Elf."* The Cricket became one of the central characters for Disney, appearing in cartoon features and weekly on the Wonderful World of Disney. And just to prove his identity with Disney and the American public, the most memorable Disney song "When you wish upon a star", as sung by Jiminy Cricket in Pinocchio, became the Disney theme.



The Cricket reigned at Disney Studios, clearly not as the franchise Mickey Mouse, but surely as the voice and character of ethical and right behavior. The Cricket was a visible sign of the corporate conscience of Disney Studios. During Disney's days Jiminy Cricket was our omnipresent guide to the dreams and creations of Disney Studios. Today the Cricket is an afterthought, the Locusts have arrived.

Michael Eisner is the epitome of the modern American corporate CEO, substituting formula for creativity and slick marketing for innovative products. Using the momentum of his benefactor's genius Eisner can expect to be borne along to personal wealth long before anyone notices that there is nothing new at Disney that corporate money doesn't buy. The locusts are in the storehouse and the seed corn is being devoured. Where once

the genius of Walt Disney looked to the future and how to shape it for the better, Eisner and his ilk look to the past and plot to exploit it.

When you enter Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom you are entering on Main Street USA. This was a place of fun, of hope, and of magic for Walt Disney. Main Street USA was a place of fond memory and Disney wanted to pass that fondness on to the future generations of Americans. But when the Locusts replace the Cricket Main Street becomes a carnival midway, a glitzy place where every angle is figured and taking your money is what the game is all about.

That the Walt Disney Company is rotten around the Eisner core has been clear for years, the happy message is that the Disney Board and shareholders are finally seeing this truth. Eisner has strayed far from the Disney traditions, identifying and siding with forces that devalue society and our cultural standards. Who would have imagined that in 1997 The Walt Disney Company would have been at the center of a boycott by the Southern Baptist for promoting moral decay and indecency! Eisner's "business" decisions are destroying the Disney trademark.

Once upon a time in America corporations identified with the nation, supported the American culture, and built their business in partnership with the American people. Those were the days when the Cricket reigned at Disney and a corporate conscience was the rule and not the exception. Today the Locusts rule and Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, and more are the result. The American people and their nation are nothing more than consumers and consumables for this generation of corporate Locusts. "The last great hope of mankind," as Abraham Lincoln called America, may yet "perish from this earth" unless we see a return of corporate conscience.

Bring back the Cricket at Disney, bring back a conscience to corporate America, and send Eisner and the Locusts packing.

*** "Disney's World" by Leonard Mosley**