

Mr. Schmidt Runs Short of Workers

Mister Schmidt's manufacturing business was going very well. He had just received a large order for parts from the John Deere Tractor Company and he needed to hire some more workers to complete the work. One day at lunch at the town cafe, he discussed his need for workers with the Mayor and two members of the City Council; Persnickity Procedureperson and E. Pluribus Unum. Since they were all politicians, they pretended to be very interested, but their main goal was to look helpful to the people who lived in the town who might vote for them in the next election.

None of the three politicians was very good at work and each of the three was peculiar in one way or another.

The Mayor was very concerned about his appearance. He had a wig, so people would not know he was bald. He had false teeth so people would not know his teeth were all gone, and he had inflatable shoulder pads so he would look younger, bigger, and healthier than he really was. The Mayor also had sinus trouble and was prone to sneezing.

Persnickity Procedureperson never cared about things getting done but he was very concerned that everything was done according to the proper procedures. In particular, Persnickity Procedureperson liked meetings. He liked committees and subcommittees and sub-subcommittees. He would much rather meet than work. In this regard, he was similar to some professors who don't write books or teach many classes.

E. Pluribus Unum was the town treasurer, but he had a problem. He was dyslectic meaning that he read the numbers backward, from right to left, rather than from left to right as is done in most, but not all countries. So, he kept getting the numbers mixed up. As an example, when someone said, "123," he would write it down as "321" which was a very bad trait for a treasurer who was supposed to be keeping track of money.

When the Mayor, Persnickity Procedureperson, and E. Pluribus Unum volunteered to help Mr. Schmidt, his first question was, "What about your regular jobs? Don't you have work to do there?"

The three politicians replied that they would make up their work by taking work home and working extra hours on the weekend. In reality, though, they didn't have very much to do and the town might be better off if they didn't do any of it since none of them were very good at their jobs.

So, even though Mr. Schmidt was wondering if any of them knew enough to help him out, he finally agreed to give them a chance because he had to complete the work for John Deere. So, E. Pluribus Unum agreed to help out in the production control office where they order all of the parts needed to complete the manufacturing work. Persnickity Procedureperson went to work on the shop floor helping to assemble the products for shipment. And, the Mayor went to work in the paint shop where the tractor parts were painted just before they were shipped to the customer who, in this case, was John Deere.

The first problem developed in Production Control where E. Pluribus Unum was ordering the parts. Mr. Schmidt had agreed to build 248 wagons for John Deere. Each wagon had one big box, two axels, and four wheels. The box was the part of the wagon that held what was to be hauled, like hay or feed for the farm animals. The axels held the wheels of the wagon, one axel in front, one in back. So, what needed to be ordered was 248 big boxes, 496 axels (two times 248), and 992 wheels (four times 248). However, E. Pluribus Unum got all of these numbers mixed up. Instead of ordering 248 big boxes, he ordered 842 big boxes. Instead of ordering 496 axels, he ordered 694 axels. Instead of ordering 992 wheel, E. Pluribus Unum ordered 299 wheels. So, Mr. Schmidt had way too many big boxes, too many axels, and not nearly enough wheels. There was only about one wheel for every wagon but there were nearly four big boxes. The entire situation was a mess.

But the mess in Production Control was no more of a problem than what happened on the production floor. Persnickity Procedureperson had begun to organize the workers into committees. There was one committee for who should do what work. It was called the Work Assignment Committee. But then, people wondered what was the real meaning of the word, "work." So, he formed Work Definition Subcommittee of the Work Assignment Committee. Persnickity Procedureperson also organized a Political Action Committee, so the workers could support the politicians in office for doing a good job (Ha, Ha, Ha). Pretty soon, nothing was being produced at all. Everyone was in meetings -- very similar to most units of government and many companies headquartered in New York or Boston.

But, some of the biggest problems developed in the Paint Shop where the Mayor was working. Since the wagons were going to John Deere, nearly all of each wagon was green, but the wheels were yellow. At first, the Mayor was painting the big box part of each wagon green. However, he sneezed at the wrong time, and his wig fell into the green paint. One of the other workers told the Mayor to quickly dump his wig in the paint thinner so it would clean the

paint off the wig. That worked pretty well, but the wig still looked quite green. It wasn't the bright green color of a John Deere tractor but it was more the color of lawn grass in July, a bit lighter shade of green but not much difference.

Next, the Mayor was standing up next to the drill press and one of the drills poked a hole in his right inflatable shoulder pad. The left shoulder pad remained inflated but, since the right one was completely collapsed, he looked a little lopsided. He had one big shoulder and one little shoulder.

Then, the Mayor started painting the yellow wheels. It turned out that he sneezed again and his teeth flew out and into the can of yellow paint. Again, one of the workers suggested that he dump the teeth in the paint thinner right away. That helped some, but his teeth were still very yellow -- about the color of dandelions.

One of the workers suggested that with green hair and yellow teeth, the Mayor could make commercials for John Deere, but the Mayor did not like the suggestion.

It wasn't very long before Mr. Schmidt figured out that these three politicians were of no help to him in building wagons for John Deere -- or anything else. He fired them all and then hired Olaf Erickson, Amazing Alice, and Innovative Ingrid to replace them. Then things went much better.

Unfortunately for the Mayor, Persnickity Procedureperson and E. Pluribus Unum, the three politicians had a big town meeting that evening. The Mayor, in particular was afraid to appear before the people of the town because of his green hair, his yellow teeth, and his deflated right shoulder pad. They did not know what to do.

Finally, Persnickity Procedureperson said that he had an idea. "We will shut off the furnace in the Town Hall and claim that there is a furnace failure. Then, since it is winter, we can all dress up in heavy coats with large mittens and scarfs over our faces and head. With all of that covering, no one will notice that the Mayor has green hair and yellow teeth."

So, that is what they decided to do. They shut off the furnace just as the town's citizens began to enter the Town Hall. Persnickity Procedureperson made an announcement that there would be no heat because of a furnace failure and that he apologized for the inconvenience. Then the meeting began.

However, part way through the meeting, the Mayor began to get very chilly and he began to shiver. He got colder and he shivered more. Then he shivered

again. Pretty soon , he needed to sneeze. He was able to hold the sneeze back for a while but, after a few minutes, he could not hold the sneeze back any longer. He sneezed a very loud and forceful sneeze. He sneezed so hard that his wig flew off the top of his head and his teeth flew out of his mouth onto the big table where they were sitting.

Olaf Erickson looked at the wig and the teeth and said; “Yiminy crickets, Mr. Mayor. You have the worst cold I have ever seen. Not only did you sneeze off your hair and your teeth, the cold made them change color. You must have some kind of an infection.”

With that, the Town Meeting was adjourned.

And that is the end of the story.