

FUNNY BUSINESS



PUNCH  in the Office

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Edited by William Hewison

A PUNCH BOOK

Published in association with

GRAFTON BOOKS

A Division of the Collins Publishing Group

LONDON GLASGOW
TORONTO SYDNEY AUCKLAND

Grafton Books
A Division of the Collins Publishing Group
8 Grafton Street, London W1X 3LA

Published by Grafton Books 1986

Introduction and selection © Punch Publications Limited 1986

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Funny business : Punch in the office.

1. Office practice – Caricatures and
cartoons 2. English wit and humor,
Pictorial

I. Hewison, William II. Punch

741.5'942 NC1479

ISBN 0-246-13060-1

Printed in Great Britain by William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, Glasgow

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Introduction

When did you last see a suicidal company boss standing on a high parapet with his secretary at the window alongside reminding him of a lunch appointment? That sort of situation seems to be the general stock-in-trade of many a cartoonist, but no matter how well we scan those city streets the parapets are patently uncluttered and bossless. What we have here is one of those cartoon clichés, no doubt born during the stock market crash in the twenties, and still providing our cartoonists with seemingly endless variations. Nothing wrong in that if the fresh variation is a good one. But the suicidal boss isn't only on the parapet – he sits at his desk with a revolver against his ear and a plummeting sales graph on the wall behind him – and cartoonists have got a lot of mileage out of that one, too, for sure. However, office life isn't all failing businesses and directors on the brink – there are the secretaries, after all, usually pert and busty and well established on the boss's lap.

Recently there have been rather fewer of these, and fewer bosses chasing their secretaries around the desk,

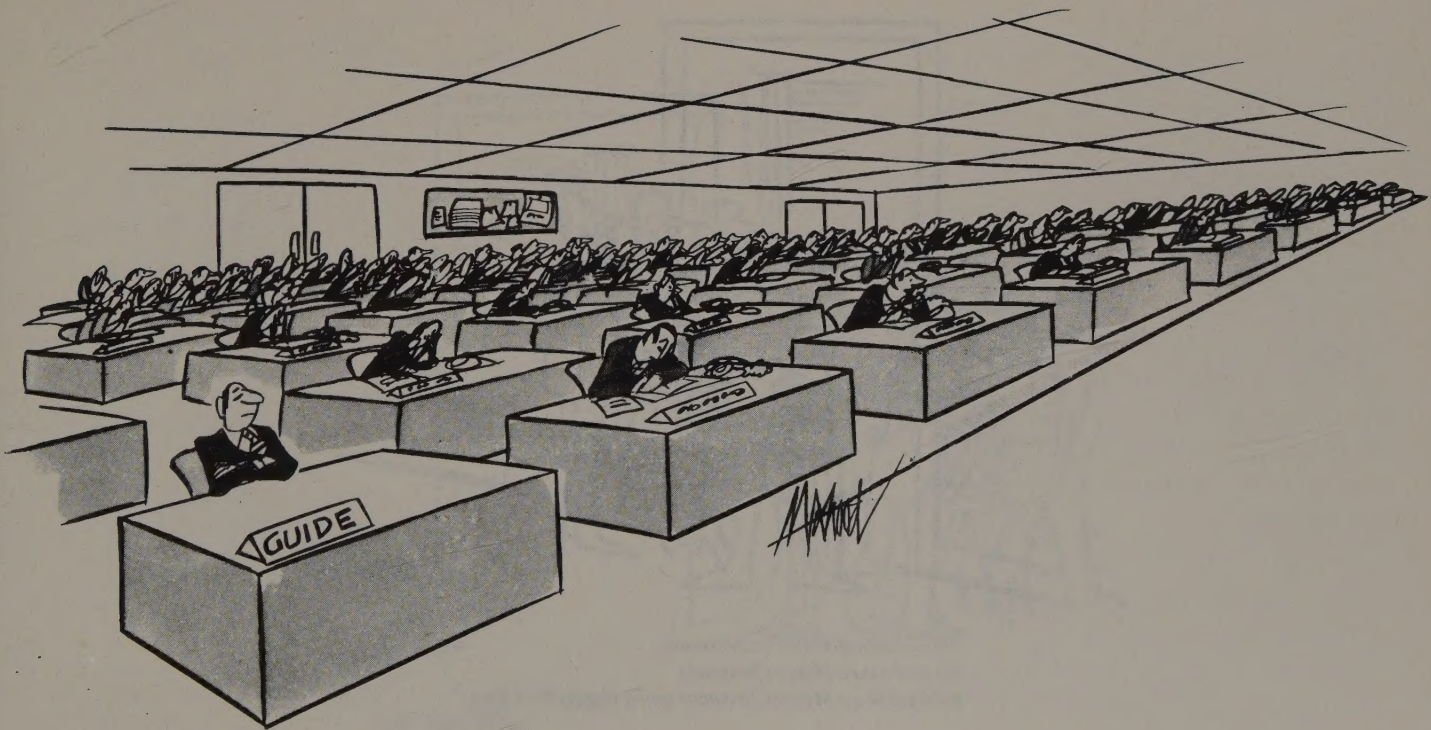
too. (“You men in Duplicating are all the same!”) Instead, possibly due to subliminal persuasion from the Women's Movement, cartoonists are getting the message that sexy secretaries are old hat and in their place we now have jokes about *Guardianesque* wimmin and sexual harassment. Women have even elbowed their way into cartoons as top executives and bosses, though we have yet to see one clutching her skirts ten storeys above the street or holding a revolver against her coiffure as the graph line hits the floor.

But it would be wrong to run away with the notion that cartoonists only keep to well-honed areas of office life for their material, and though it is true that the majority of these artists have never actually *worked* in an office, their general knowledge gleaned from films and TV and occasional visits to the VAT Inspector, does give many of them an insight into those grey areas of office activity: the nepotism, the back-stabbing, the empire-building, the symbols of position (the size of the desk, whether there is a *proper* carpet), and the minutiae of the daily working

scene. *Punch's* American cartoonists such as Henry Martin and Schwadron have their ears well tuned to these signals and the resulting cartoons have a flavour all of their own. Some of Martin's best work is when he takes a standard situation and bends it only slightly towards the bizarre and the exaggerated – this is “recognition humour” at its best.

So there is a substantial variety of subject matter that can be filed in the drawer labelled OFFICES, and as every cartoonist is an individual with his own particular line of humour, that subject matter will receive his own special treatment. No doubt we'll see a computer on that parapet before long.

William Hewison
• April 1986



GUIDE



[Handwritten signature]



*"We wish you a Merry Christmas.
We wish you a Merry Christmas.
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"*

J. D. PARKER
PRESIDENT



H. Martin



*"There are two things around here that I can do for myself, Medhurst.
I can drink coffee and I can eat my biscuits."*

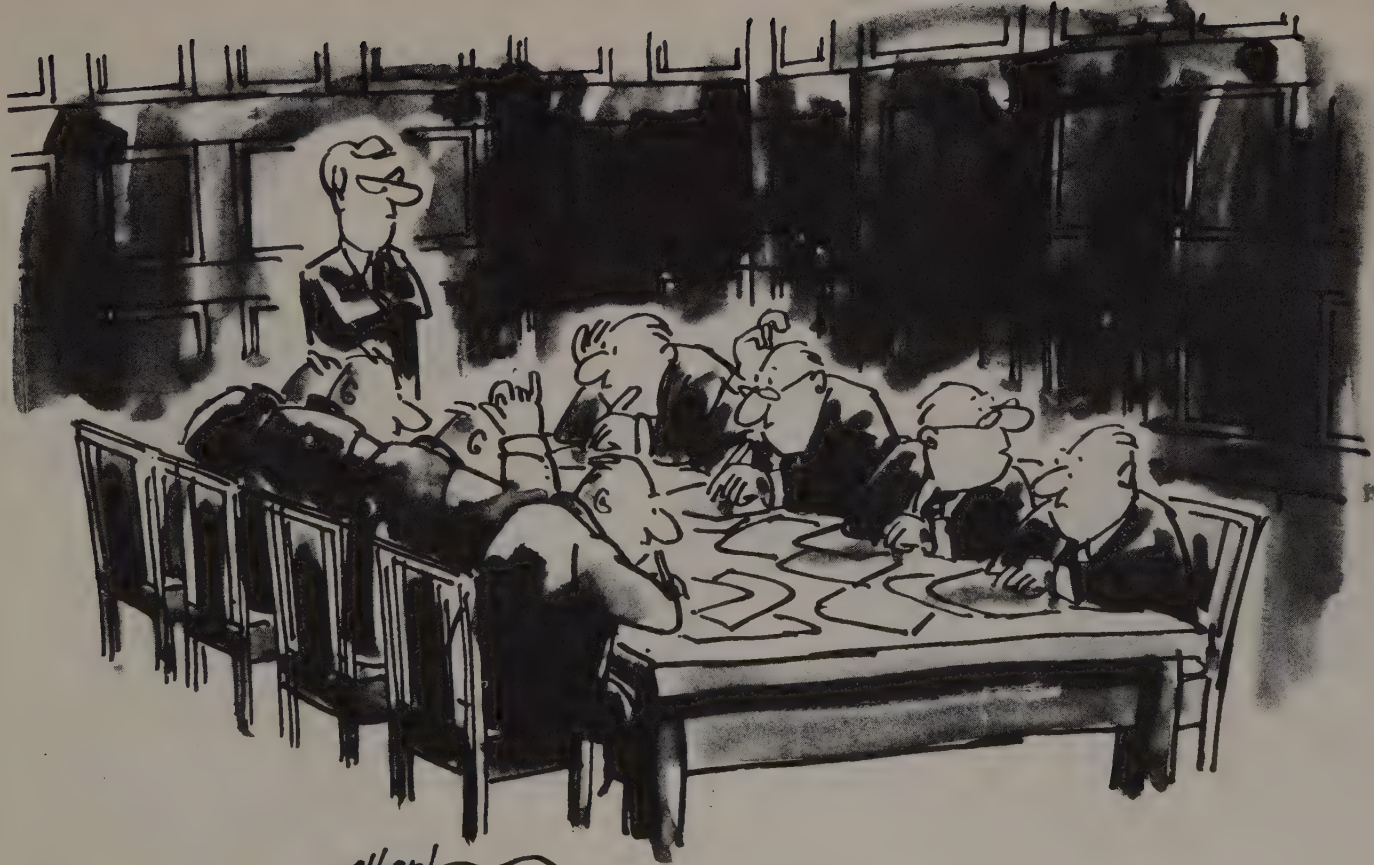
*“... And for a limited period,
this one comes with a free, tiled,
non-executive director.”*



NOEL
FORBES

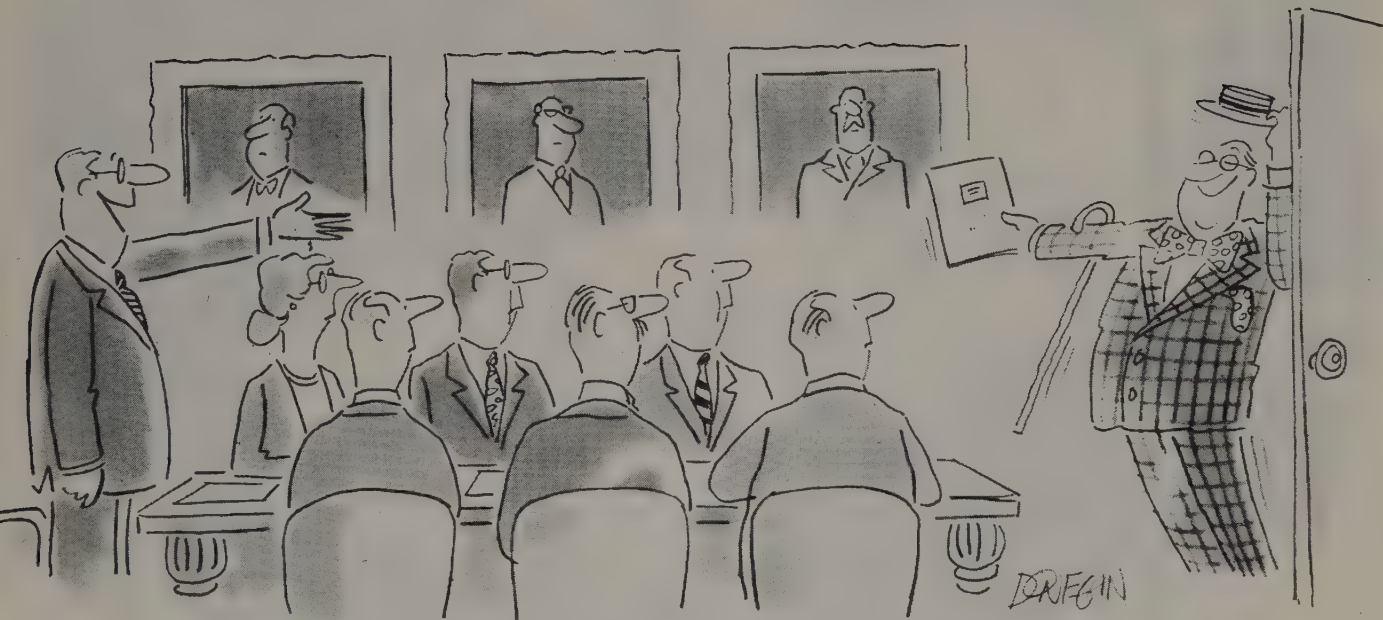


"Tell me, Smithers, if all the world's a stage, how come all the clowns are employed in this office?"



albert

"Thank God his work experience finishes on Friday."

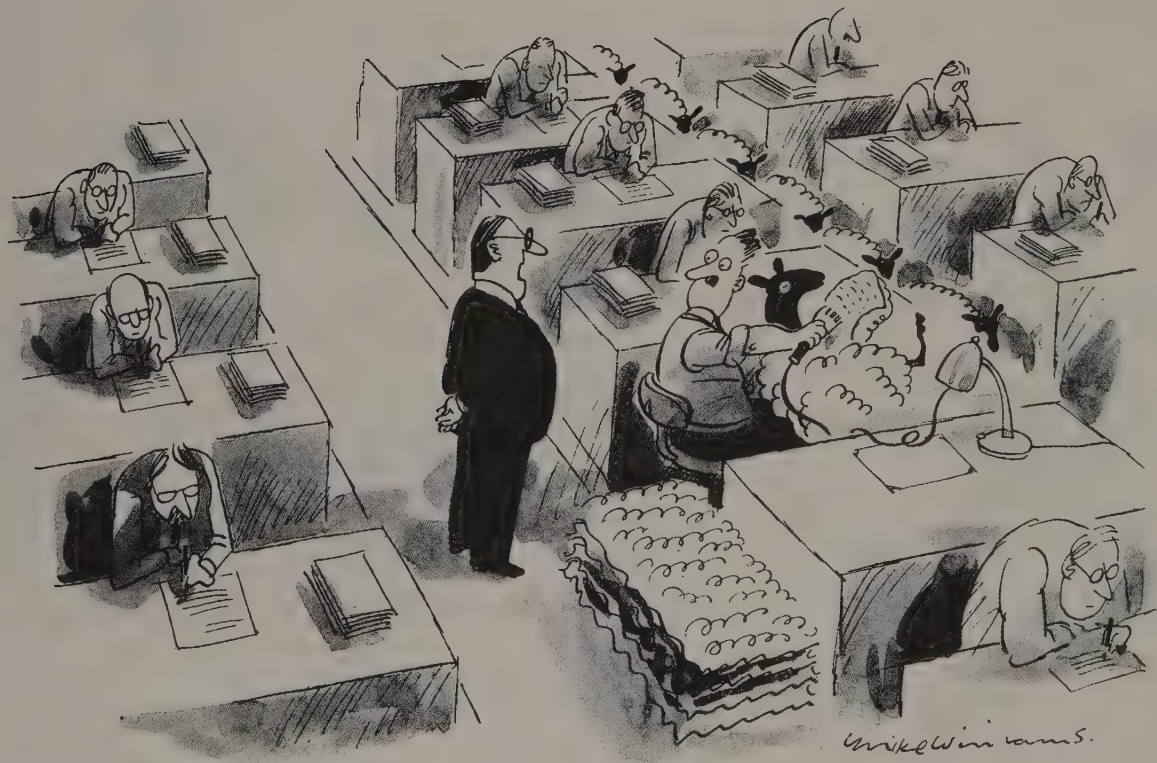


"And now, with a lighthearted look at the year's trading figures..."

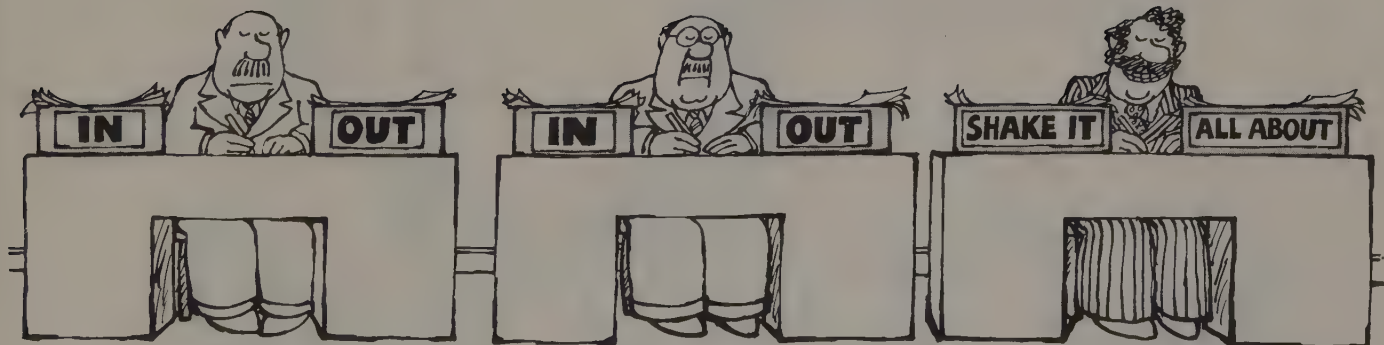
THEATRICAL
AGENTS



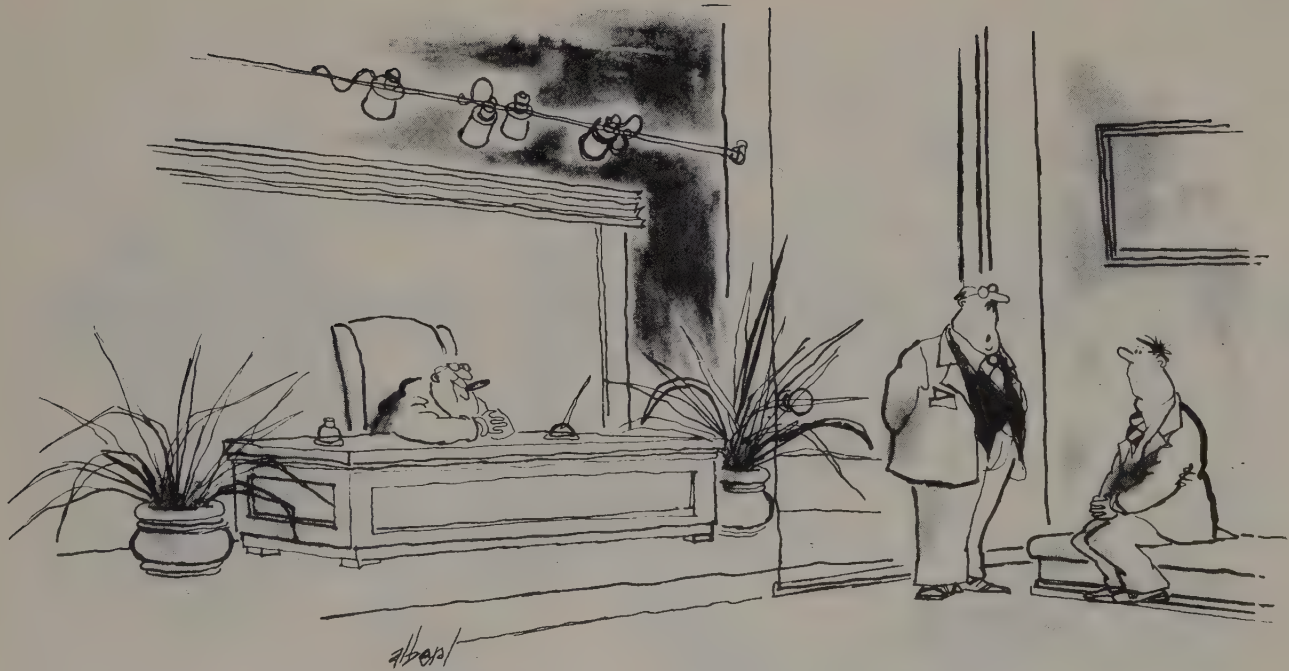
HEATH



"Now see here, Warbourton!"



McLACHLAN



"J.B. has just had this marvellous brainwave – we'll use your idea!"

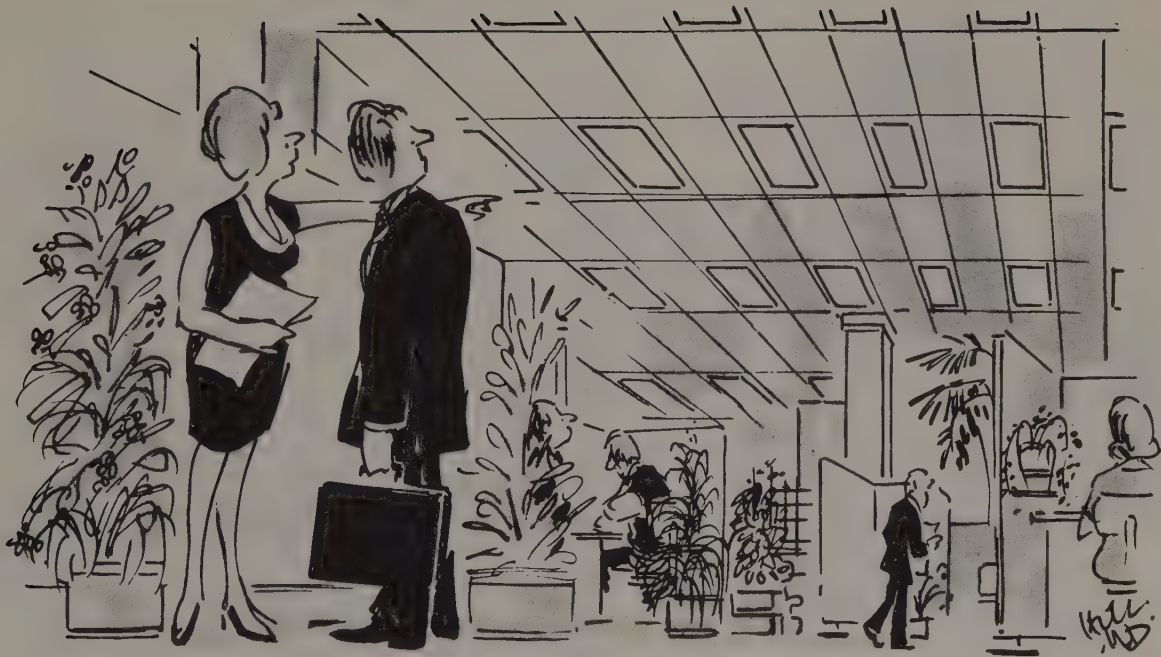
DONEGAN



"Has someone just abused his power?"



"Typing and shorthand will come in useful but more important, have you green fingers?"



*"Mr Charlton? Turn right at the Philodendron, first left after the
Tetrastigma Voinieriaman and you'll find his work station between the
Cohunned and the Sparmannia Africana."*

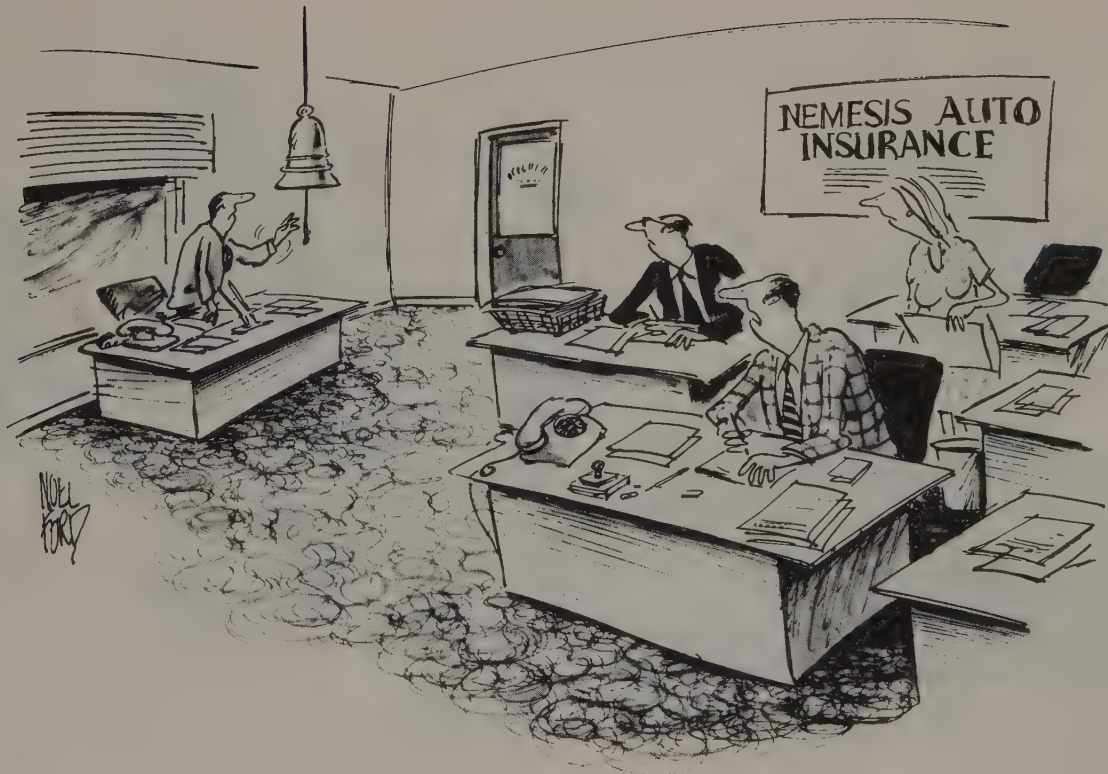


BAC
MISSILE
DEPT.

Mike Williams.



"Then, you see, with these young fellows pushing from below, I daren't drop behind!"



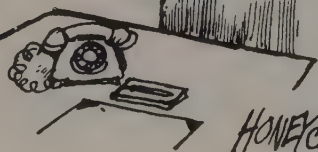
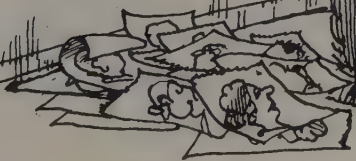
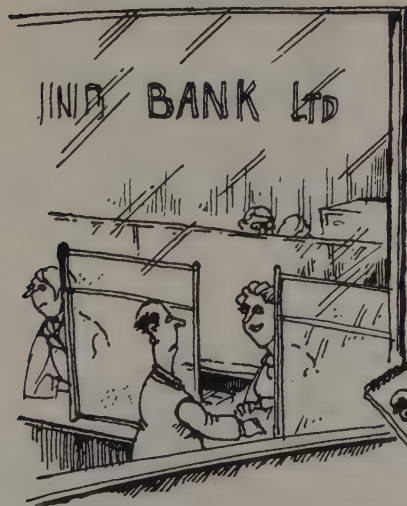
"Oh-oh! Looks like another Rolls has been written off."



"I don't suppose you fancy half an hour on the Parkinson show?"



"...and at this, our annual get-together, we meet not as management and staff but relaxed as friends..."



HONEYCUTT

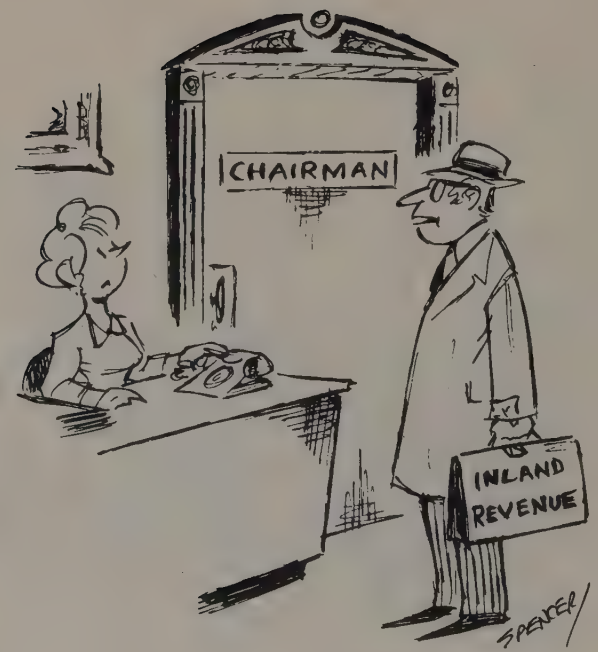
"Head Office have promised us a closed circuit television by next year."



"Miss Gardner, tell the staff they can come in quietly, one at a time, and have a look at my Christmas tree."



"Good Heavens, Adkins! Didn't they teach you *anything* at the Harvard Business School?"

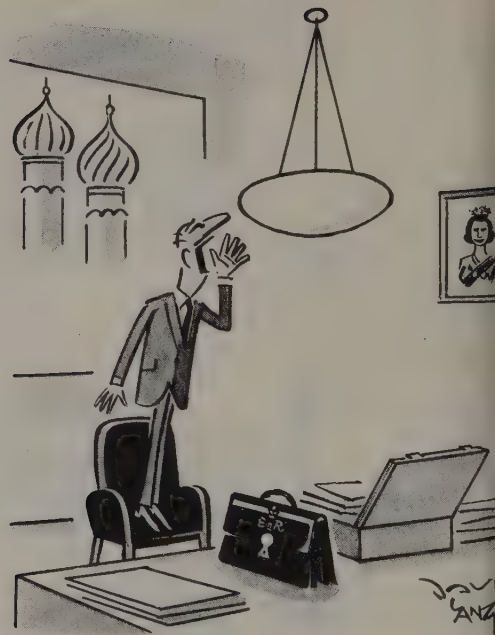


"I come to bury Caesar!"



H. M. Farris

*"I wish I could just press a button and foosh!
You and square dancing and bridge and bird
watching and cheese fondue would be out of my
life forever."*



"And I'm not sorry to be going."



"Business is really terrible – we're supposed to be a tax-loss."





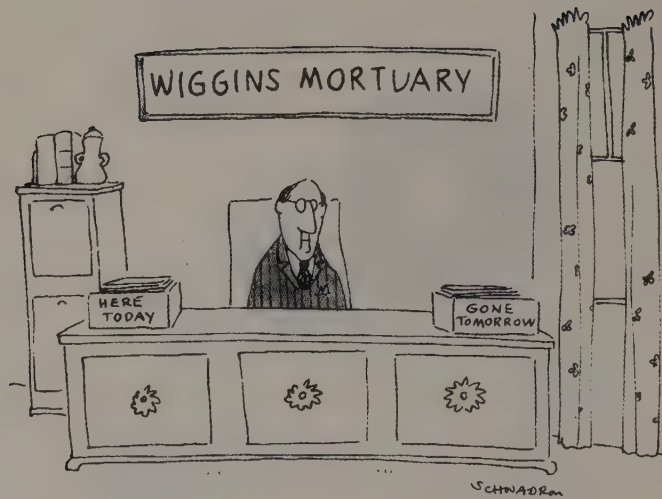
Handel P.

*"Sexual harassment? Because I admired
your notebook?"*



J.W.A.

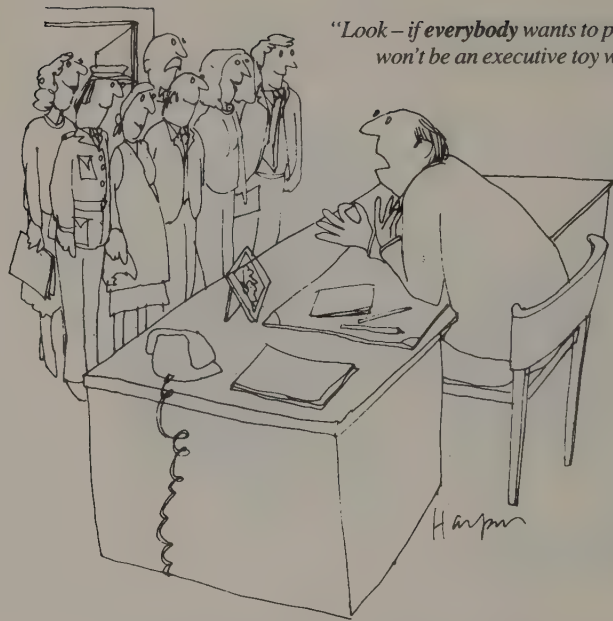
*"Magnificent job you've done on this loophole project, Jackson – sorry
we're going to have to let you go."*





Handelman

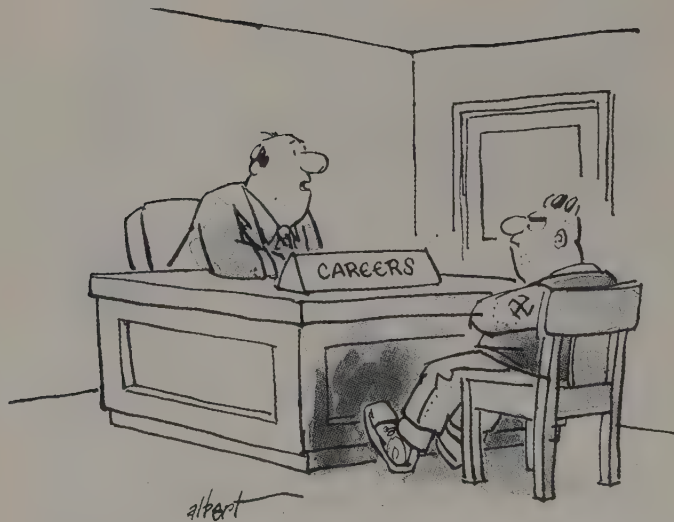
"I have to compliment you, Rogerson. With hardly any power to speak of you've become damned near the most corrupt person here."



"Look – if everybody wants to play with it, it won't be an executive toy will it?"

Harper

"When you hear the tone you will have reached retirement age. Beeeeeee! Please clean out your desk and leave the premises in a gentlemanly fashion. Your severance pay and gold watch will be forwarded to you within thirty days. Thank you for working for Conglomerex!"



"Solicitors can make a lot of money. Yes, if I were you I'd mug a solicitor."



"You're good, Fenster, very, very good! How many of these can you knock out during a typical nine-to-five?"



"If I had wanted your opinion, Trousdale, I would have had it beaten out of you!"

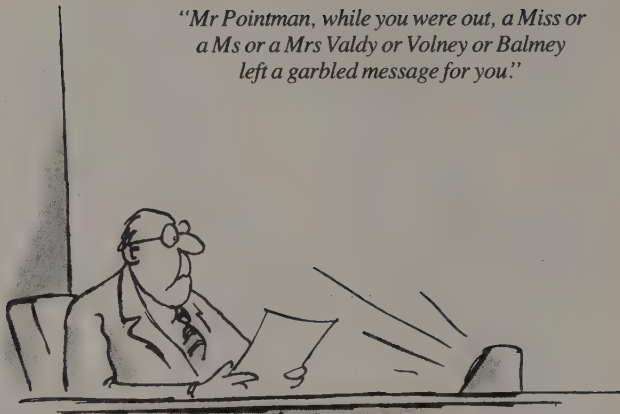
MR
MINISTRY
OF
CORPORATE
DEVELOPMENTS
ETC



HECTOR
GREENE

"I'm sick to death of being a bureaucrat. I'd resign tomorrow if I only knew the correct procedure."

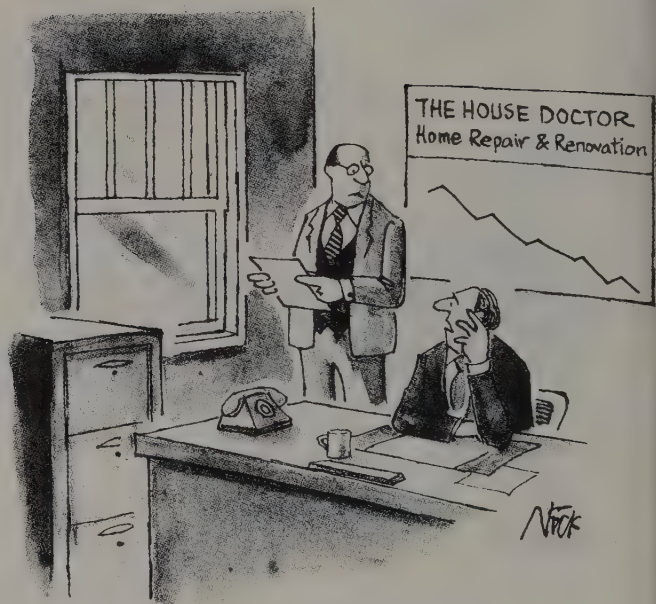
"Mr Pointman, while you were out, a Miss or a Ms or a Mrs Valdy or Volney or Balmey left a garbled message for you."



HECTOR
GREENE



"I like the job -- I've got responsibility and the chance to stamp all over somebody every now and then."



"If only I could get that damn window open, I'd jump."



"Damn it, Brookner, it seems to me your time could be better spent than by consolidating all your little notes to yourself into one big neat one."



"Would you mind going around the corner, Mr Humphreys? That's the Chairman's space."

Handel's music



"I don't call that a contract, Carlson. I call it mumbo jumbo. Please re-write it in plain mumbo."



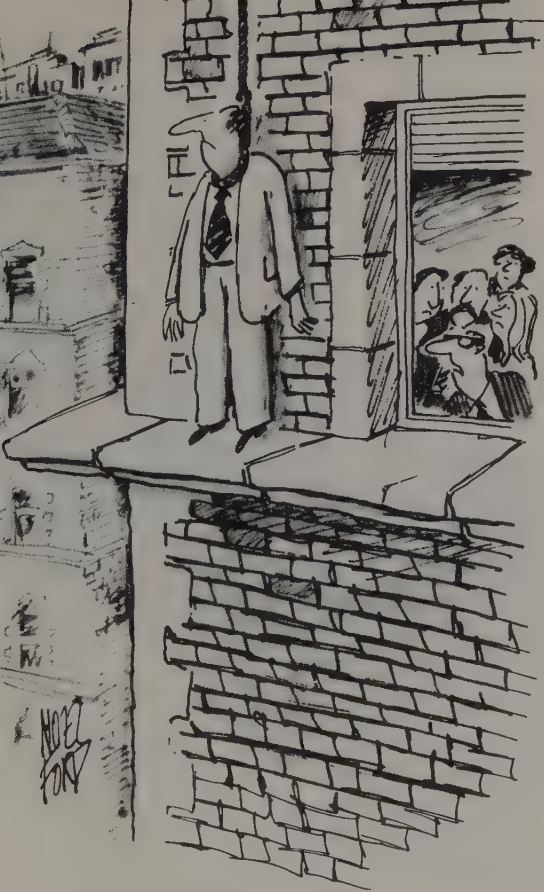
"It's my wedding anniversary. Telephone my husband and tell him you're going to choose me a present."

Harper

"Someone who loves New York is here to see you."



"As soon as my nail varnish is dry I'm going to claw my way to the top."



*"Run up to the helicopter pad, Miss Chatterway,
and for God's sake hurry."*



*"I've been longing for a seat on the
board – it's lovely to get the weight off
one's feet."*

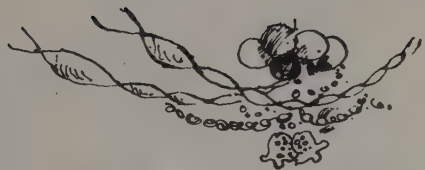
Hampson



"Someone has complained about our product, you don't happen to know what we make, do you, Miss Hopkiss?"



"Pardon me for interrupting. Mr Wertenbaker, but aren't you going to apologise for keeping me on hold for two hours and seventeen minutes?"



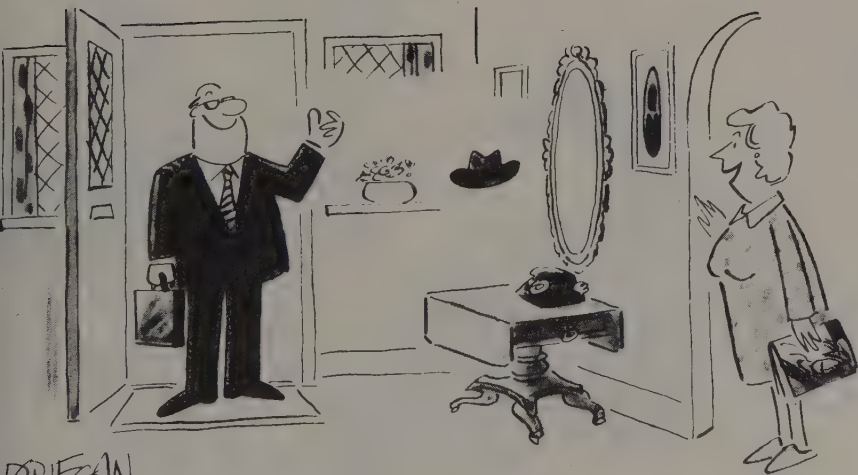
HONEYBETT.

*"You know Miss Fishgrove,
comma, or may I call you
Mary, question mark, I've
often..."*



"You know what I miss? Paper aeroplanes."

NOEL
PORTER



DORFMAN

"Don't tell me - you finally fired him!"



"This is Mr Palmer's office - a par three."



"I have to be frank with you. Promotion prospects are terrible."



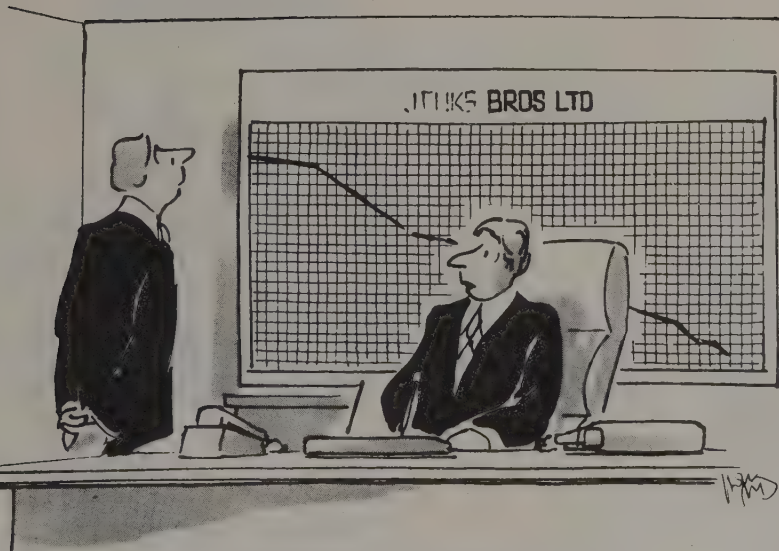
"I'm afraid I must replace you, Miss Thomas - you are releasing in me frustrations and passions which I normally reserve for the business."



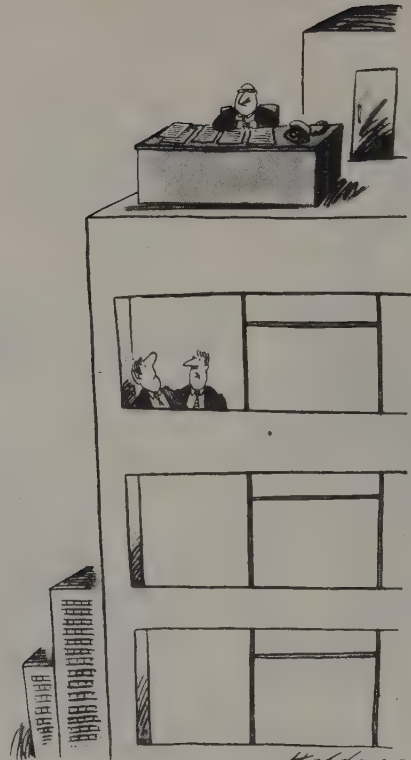
"When I say I want your resignation on my desk in the morning, Caldwell, I don't mean at three minutes to twelve."



*"So I gave it to him straight, I did—
'In a time of recession, go for
expansion, borrow, re-equip and fight
back,' I said . . ."*



"It's at times like this that I wish Nannie were here!"

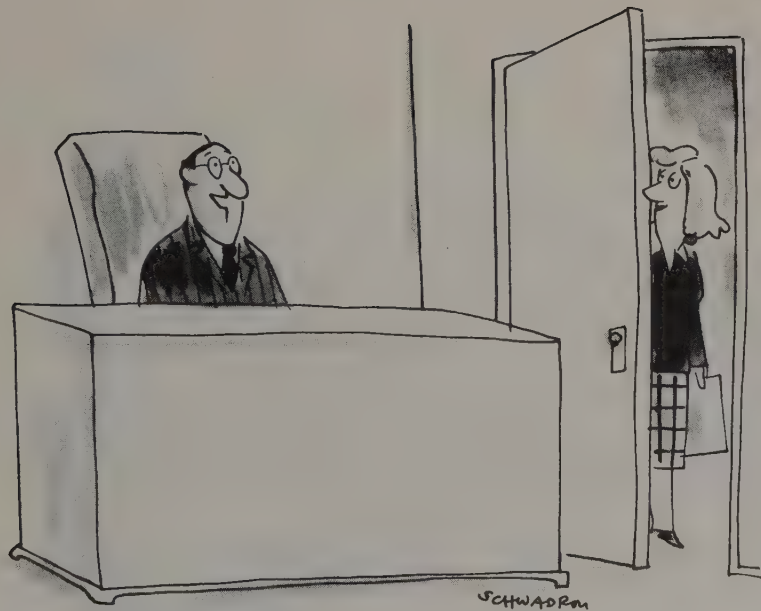


"Poor H.J. He thought he'd been moved up as far as he could go."



"... I find myself sitting here waiting for it to cross its legs..."





"Miss Huntswell, I'd like some paper clips, staples, glue, pencils, erasers, memo paper – all arranged in an atmosphere of creative clutter."



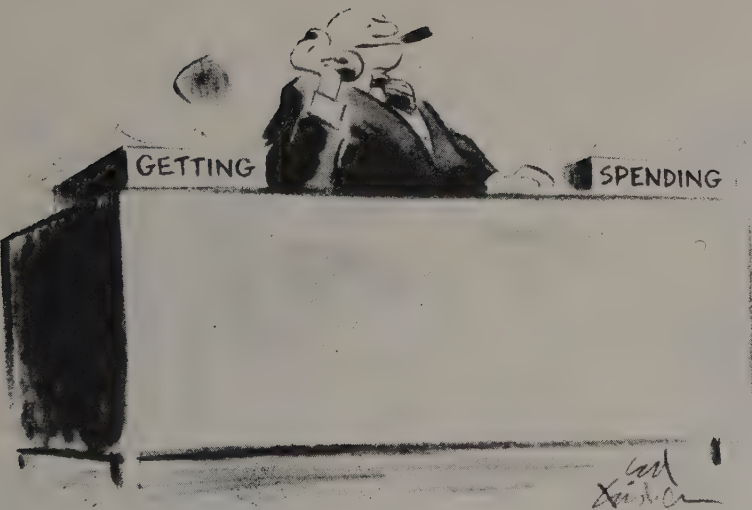
"My mother was a secretary – my father was an office party."



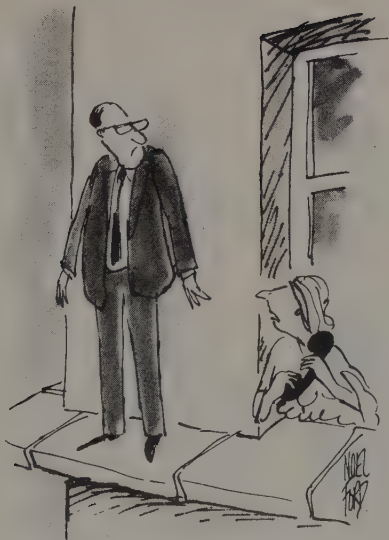
"My pocket bleeper's at the dry cleaners."



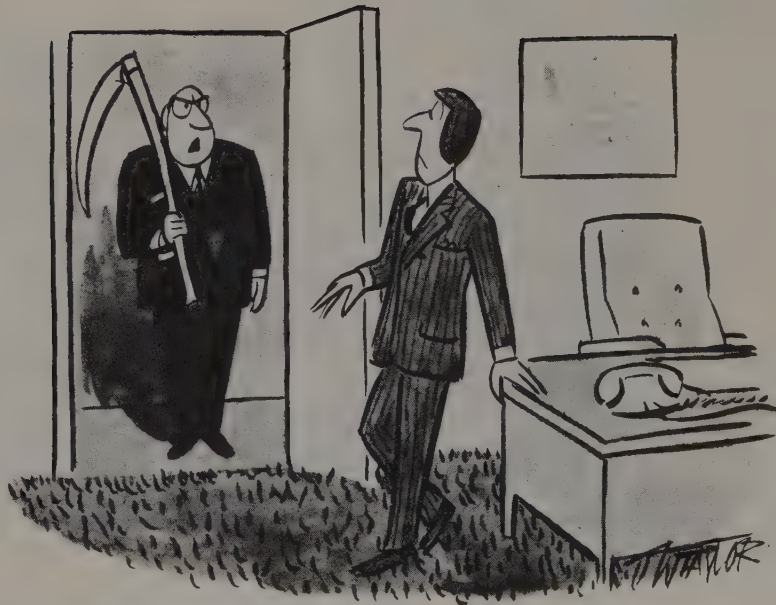
"I hear that following her participation in a reduction of stationery stock levels, Miss Henderson has been restored to a non-working situation."



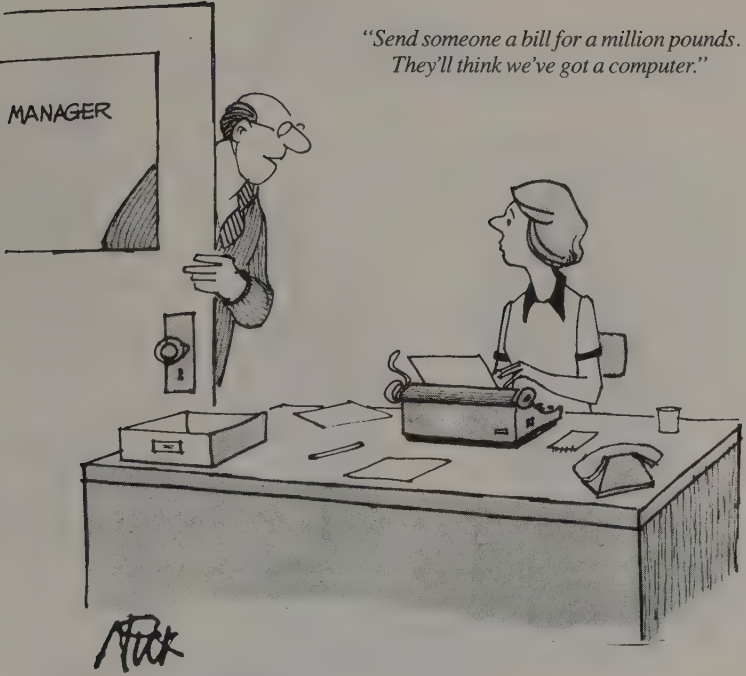
"How many more times, Miss
Graham – not harassment,
harassment!"



"Are you in or out?"



"Nobody has a deeper pile than JB, young man."



*"Send someone a bill for a million pounds.
They'll think we've got a computer."*



*"I think you'll have to watch that new
trainee manager, Mr Hepworth."*



Falkes

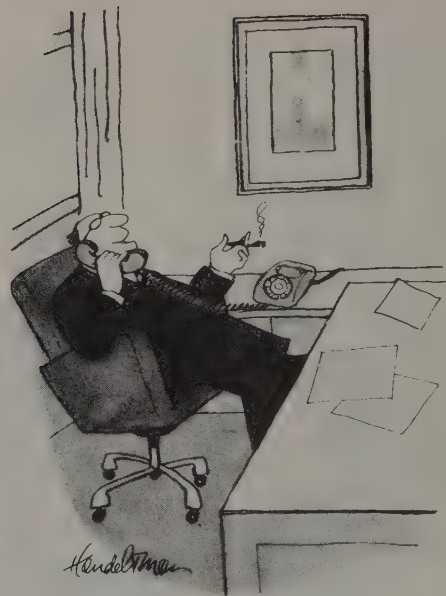
"Goodness me, Miss Stubbs, why do I keep looking for your card under T?"



"Fill her up!"



"This Job Opportunities scheme can be quite fun if you handle it the right way."



"I'm afraid I can't spare the time, Harry, but you may certainly feel free to have lunch by yourself."

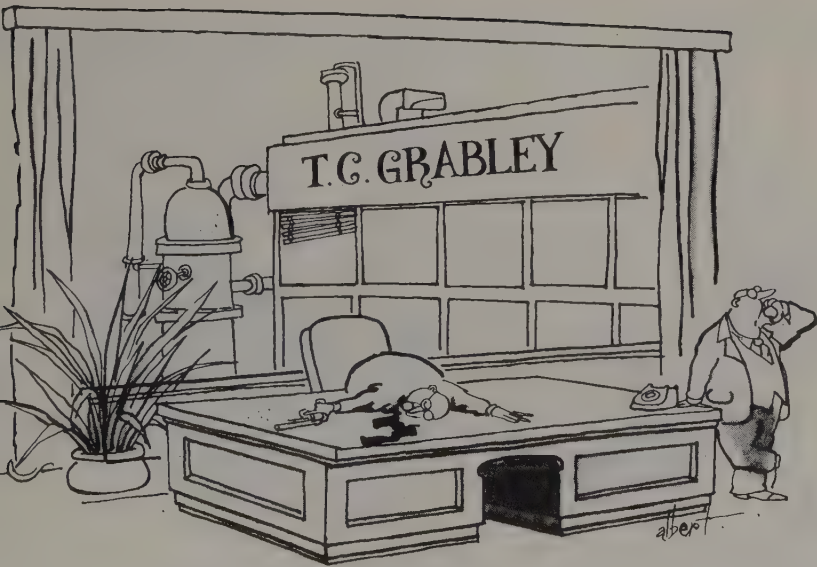


"I think it's in lieu of time off for Christmas shopping."

DAVID
ANDERSON



"Miss Rogers, make a note for me to have tried to call Mr McNab yesterday and been unable to reach him."



"Hello, 999, get me stockbroker, police and ambulance!"



"Your wife rang me to remind you to send me out for her birthday present from you!"

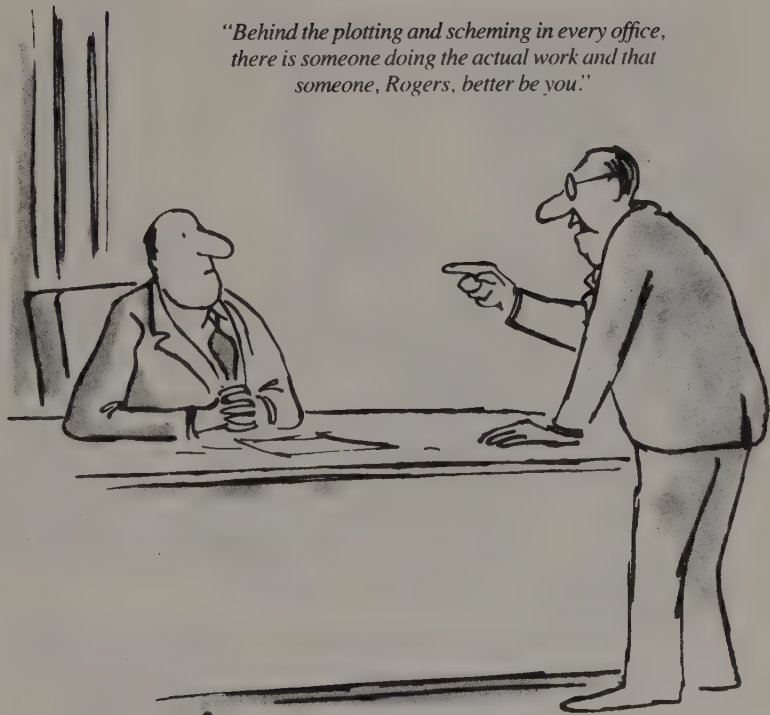


"Everything I turned my hand to was a disaster until I started a School of Business Management."



*"There are, however,
some disadvantages to
being self-employed."*

*"Behind the plotting and scheming in every office,
there is someone doing the actual work and that
someone, Rogers, better be you."*



H. K. Fisher



"Under the new business, Mr Chambers announced he was retiring as President effective December 31st. A power struggle ensued lasting nearly 45 minutes from which Mr Watkins, bruised, battered but smiling, emerged the victor."



"It'll take some little time for me to re-adjust to her as an audit clerk."



“... so anyway, there we were in the outer office, and Pemberton was about to sign the chitty for me to get the XP90 requisition forms... you remember, they're the ones that authorise the throughput of interbranch communication data... when who should walk in bold as brass but Flaxton of Sales. 'Hullo,' I said, 'What are **you** doing in this neck of the woods?' 'Come and see J.J.,' he said. Now I know for a fact, and Freddy Robinson of Home Accounts can back me on this... that Flaxton is pushing for a promotion situation at Head Office, and that he's been muddying up **my** prospects in that area for some time. '**You're** a crafty so-and-so,' I joked casually, not letting him see how niggled I really was... when all of a sudden, the intercom buzzed...”



"I'm getting bored – let's go and bully Molesworth again."



McLACHLAN

"Gottle of geer . . . gottle of geer . . ."



"Could you come back later, Ernie? We're busy right now, hatching a new plot to bilk the consumer."



"What do you mean, Them? We are Them."



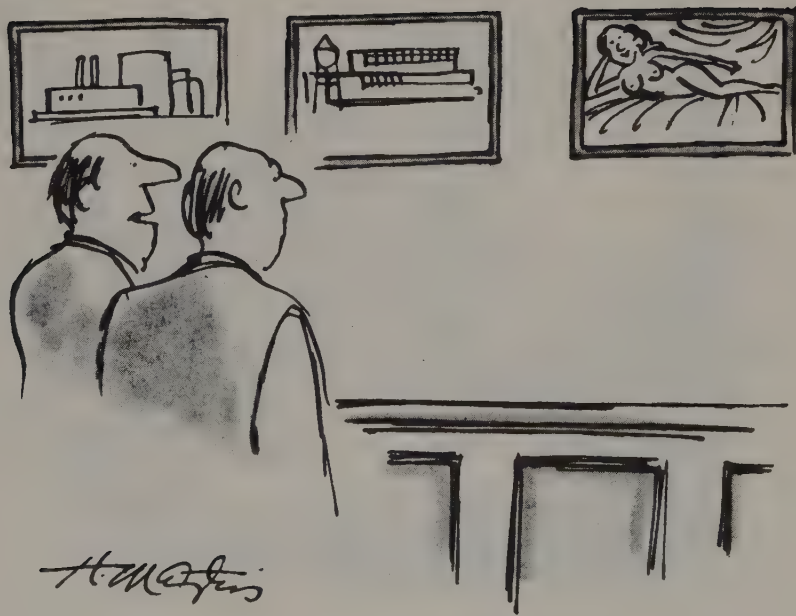
W. Scully

"Robinson! You call this legalese? Why, damn it, it's as plain as a pikestaff!"

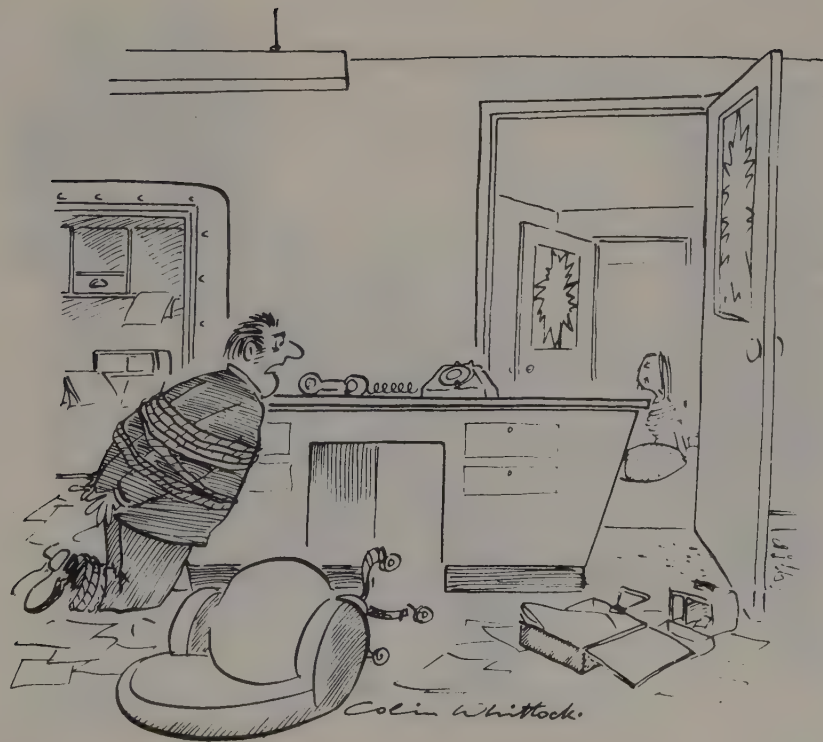


A. Martin

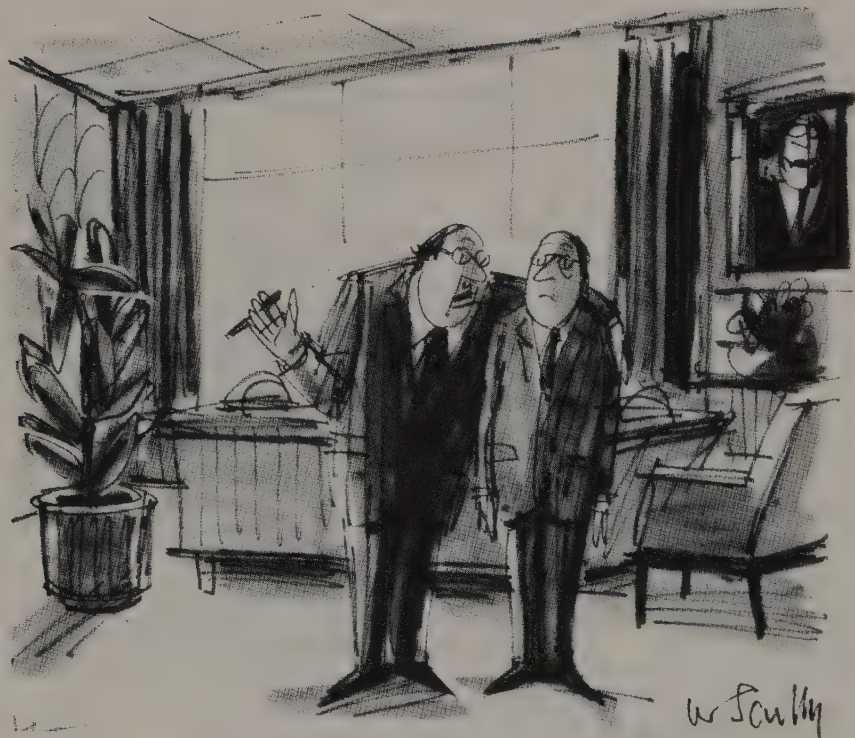
"I'll have to put you on Hold, Mr Blacock, because Mr Jackson is on Hold with Mr Plunket who is on Hold with Mr Froshner who is on Hold with Mr Tilden who is on Hold with Mr Warburton who has stepped out of his office for a minute."



"This is the installation in Fulton, N.Y. And that's the plant in New Brunswick, N. J., and over there is Miss Willett in Accounting."



"For goodness sake! Why are we never being bugged when we need to be?"



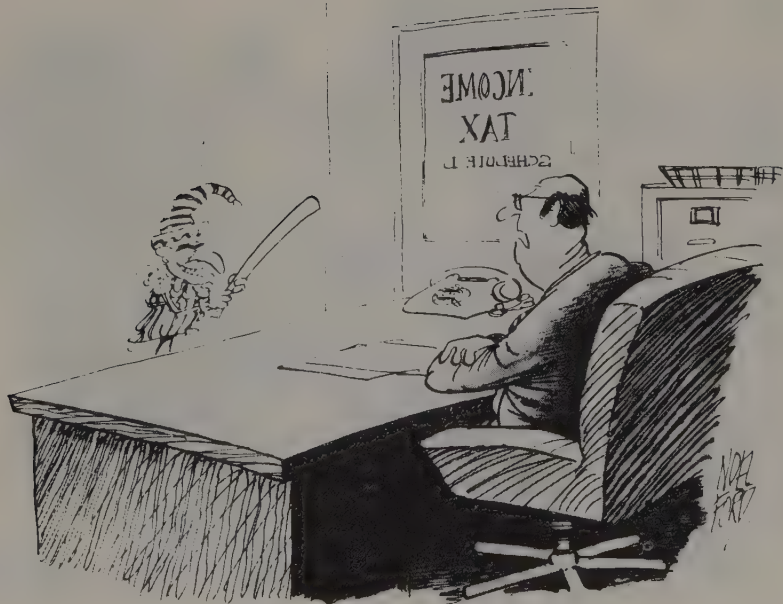
"I've got a big mortgage on my house, the Rolls is crippling me, two kids away at school is ruination, but need I go on . . . we're both victims of the system."



"Be ever mindful, Farson, that not only must justice be done – it must be paid to be done."



"Am I in or out, Miss Fowler?"



"Come, Mr Atkins, surely we can discuss your part-time summer earnings in a civilised way."



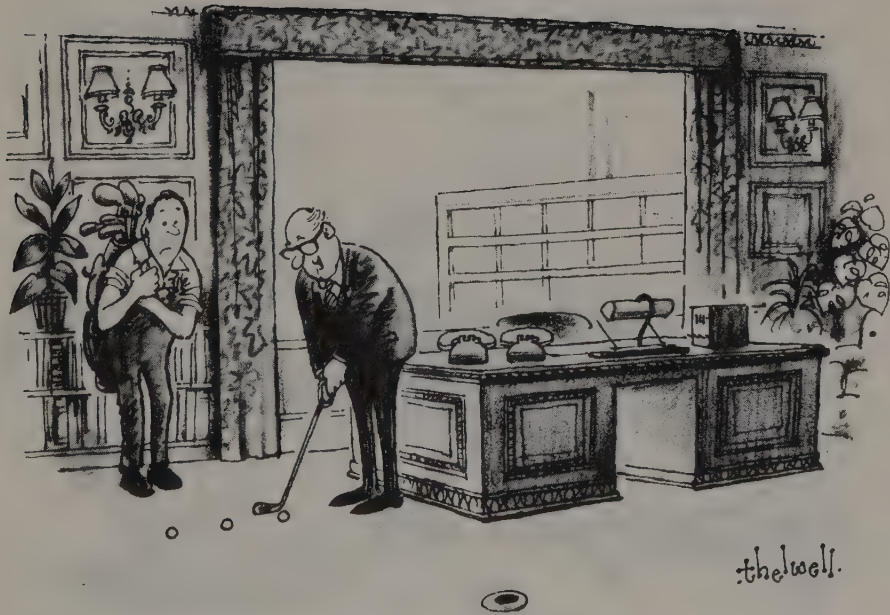
"Miss Nugent! The Christmas party was over months ago."



*"I don't think you've quite grasped the meaning of the term
'token black', Petherbridge."*



"We had one or two power cuts while you were away, Gerald. I'm afraid you were one of them."



"How do you like being on the board of directors, Wilkinson?"



"For God's sake control yourself, Mason - he's not a real shop steward!"



“Miss Millington – Mr Beggs has failed to turn up for his interview. Would you ring him and tell him he’s got the job?”



W. Sully

"Mr Johnson, I feel I'm entitled to a little more of the gravy."



"I'd like you to clean my windows, since you do it for peanuts."



67

"In appreciation of Harry's good work in sales, he's to be known in future as H.B."



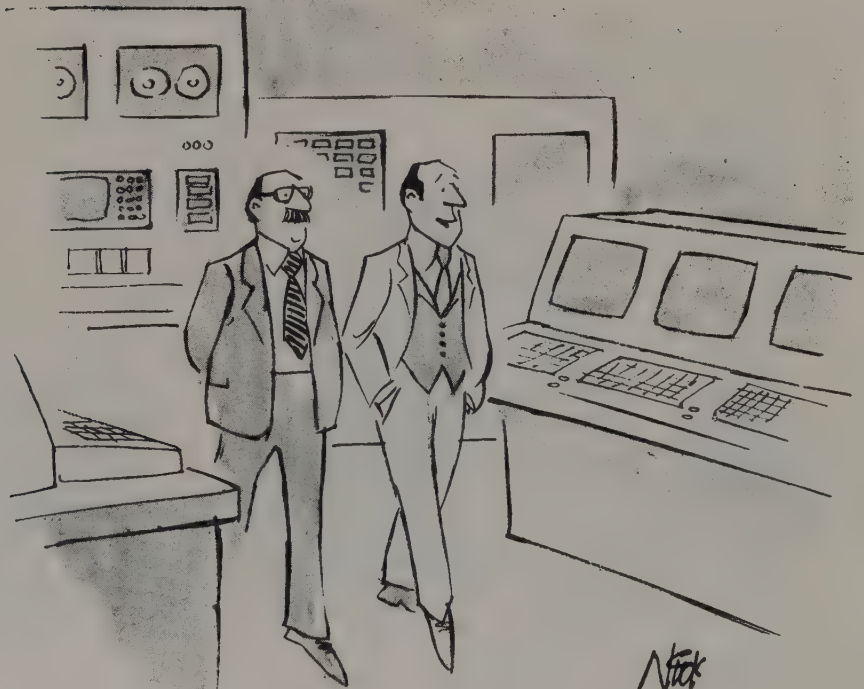
"As you were saying, Primley, before Ferguson sneezed – we have here the ultimate micro-electronic breakthrough of the Eighties . . ."



"Would you mind awfully if I went in first?"



"Six thousand a year may not sound much, but look at it this way."



"Know what I really miss? Office rumours."



H. Martin

"Collins, in turning over to you the office of President of Wolford Industries my last official act before retiring is to reveal to you the hiding place of the button that unlatches the door to the executive bar concealed behind the portrait of our illustrious founder, Wilfred R. Wolford."



"Good grief! This balance-sheet won't do — why damn it, a child could understand it."



*"I have an executive brief-case, toy, car, house – and I still haven't
been made one."*



"Do you think the directors ever pretend to be us?"



"Aha! Trying to buy us off with huge salaries and great working conditions, huh?"



*"Let's come to an understanding, Miss Garrett.
If I sexually harass you,
you have the right to
sexually harass me right back."*



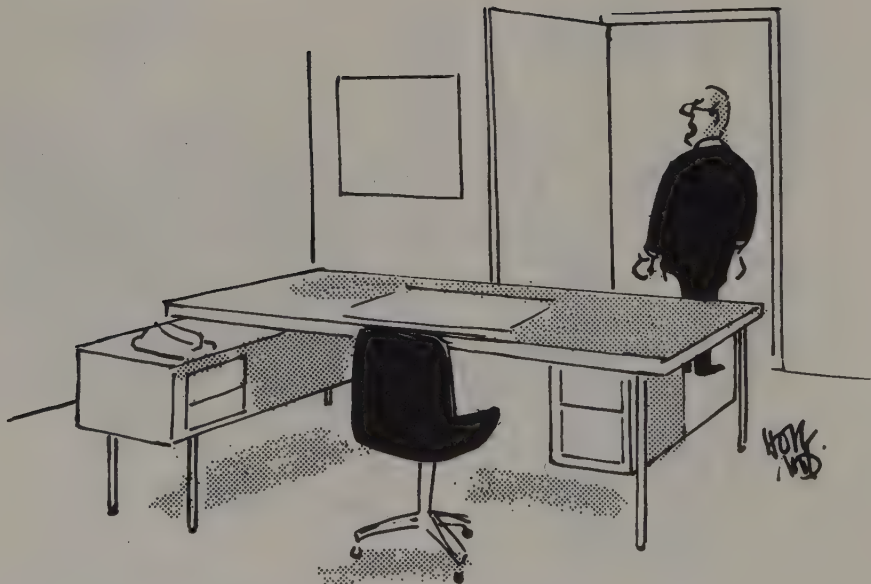
*"Why, Kilburn, how quaint! You want a rise
because you deserve one."*



"Mrs Bradford, take a ditty. . ."



"Mr Jepson said that while I was sending out for coffee he would like a hamburger. Mr Willis said that he thought he would like a hamburger, too, medium with no tomato. Ms Lester said that that sounded good and that she would like a hamburger, too, rare with a side of French fries. Mr Anderson said that if everybody else was going to have something to eat he might as well have a meatball sandwich and a piece of apple pie. Mrs Colby said she'd like a slice of anchovy pizza and a bag of Fritolays . . ."



"Who put a middle-management chair at my top executive's desk?"



"Ah, THERE you are, Peterkin. So you received my 'Get Well' card!"



"He always rewards good work..."



"I'll say this for him – he treats his staff just like they were his own children."



"Your wife does tend to spoil you with her sandwiches . . ."



"Let's put it this way, Mr Greame: every man's conscience has its over-ride button."

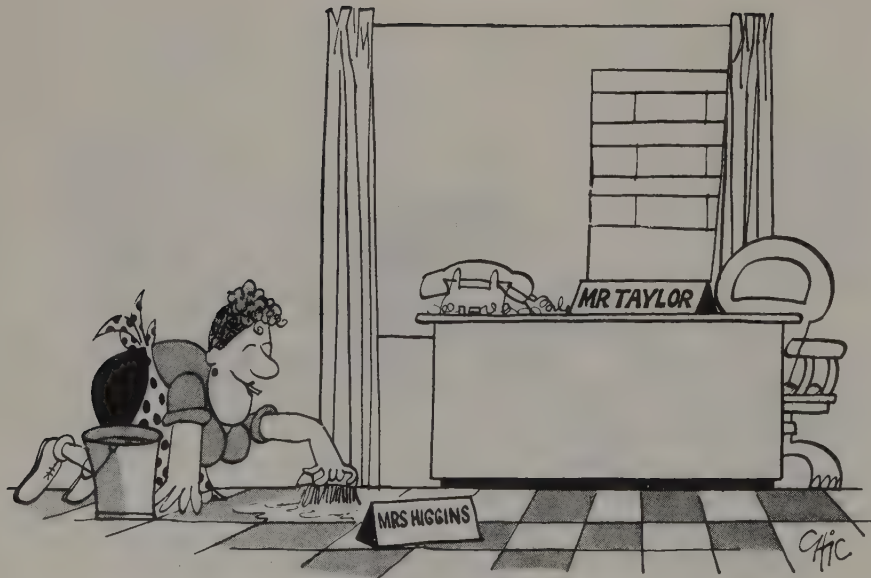


"He's a glutton for work – that's as close as he ever gets to a holiday."



DONEGAN

*"Ebsworth, you're a man of the world – what's my wife's
telephone number?"*



CHIC



"Why can't I get married in the firm's time? I got pregnant in the firm's time!"

*"Refresh my memory, Miss Grimes.
Am I hiring Mr A. P. Larkin
or firing him?"*

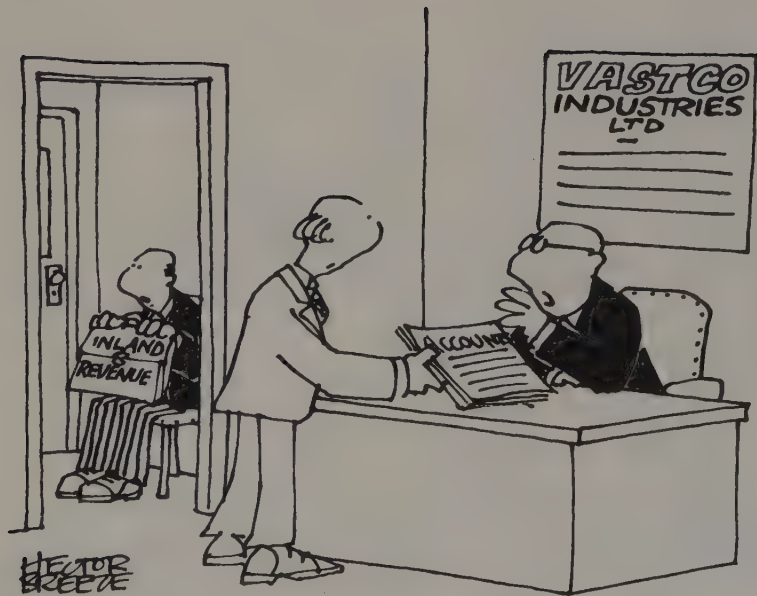




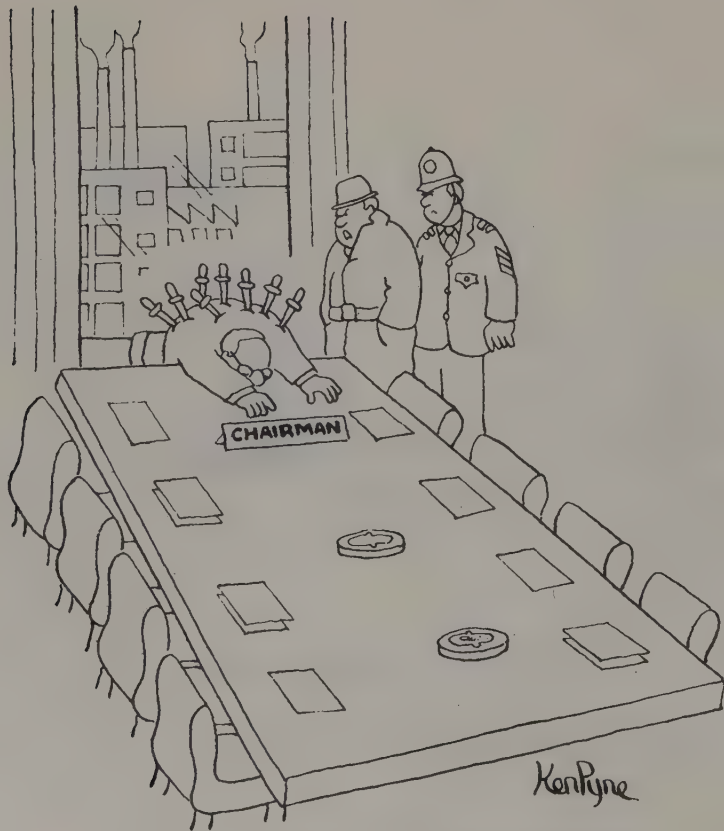
"Your calendar for the afternoon is as follows: lunch with Mr Hornsby at 1; an appointment with Mr Rodley at 2.30; correspondence and dictation with me at 3.15; review and corrections of dictation with me at 4.15; further reviews of spelling corrections and typos with me at 4.30; additional corrections, emotional outburst and fit with me at 5.30. Close office at 6."



"He works his staff hard but he can be kind."



*"Not the 'Yet-another-record-breaking-year' set, you fool!
I want the 'Just-about-keeping-our heads-above-water' figures!"*



Ken Ryne

"So far, sergeant, we've narrowed it down to eight suspects."



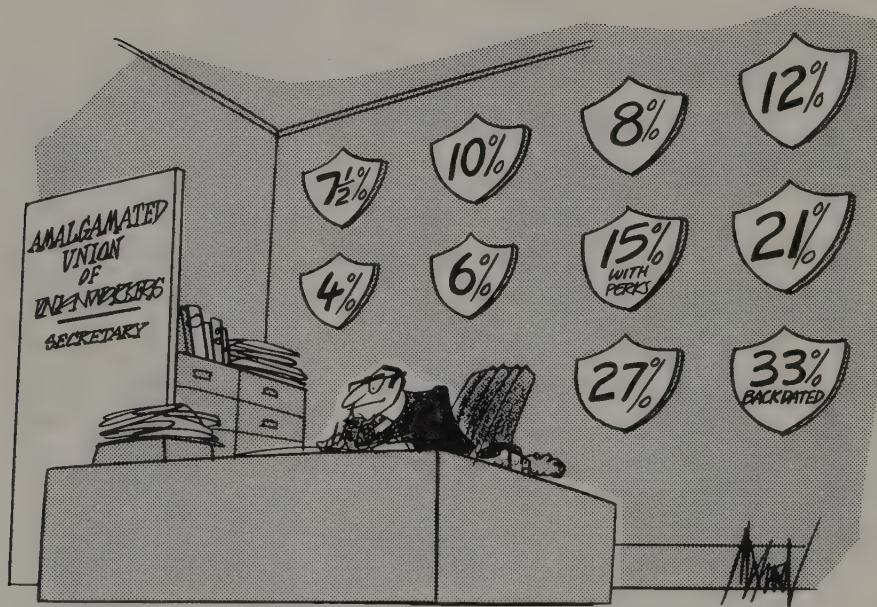
"Typical! The file on women is in the very last drawer."

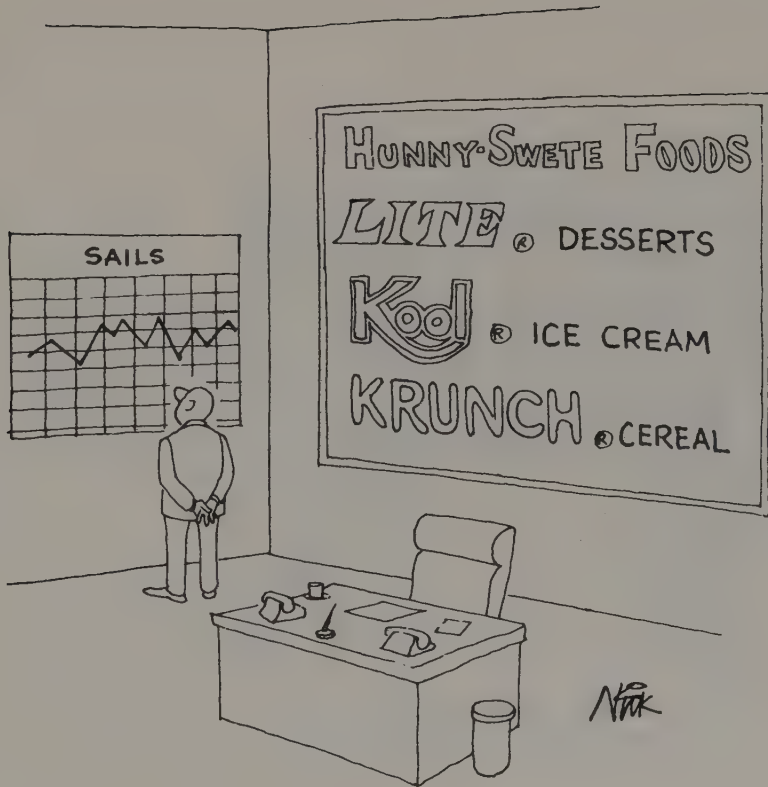


"No, J. R., you were supposed to bring the management efficiency study."

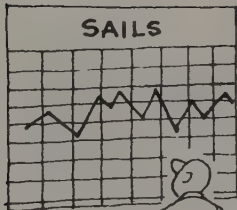


"He's having a working breakfast, a working lunch and a working dinner . . . in between he's playing golf."





SALES



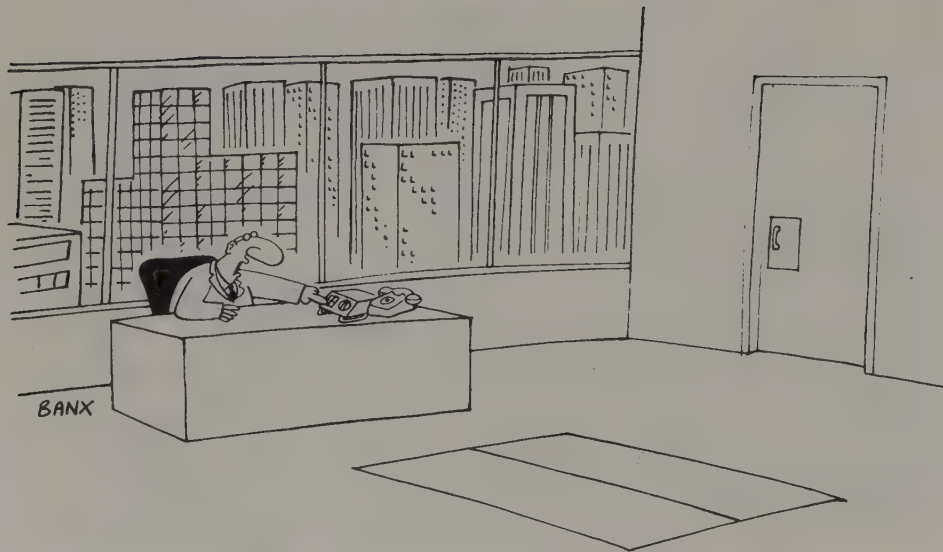
HUNNY-SWETE FOODS

LITE® DESSERTS

Kool® ICE CREAM

KRUNCH® CEREAL

NTR

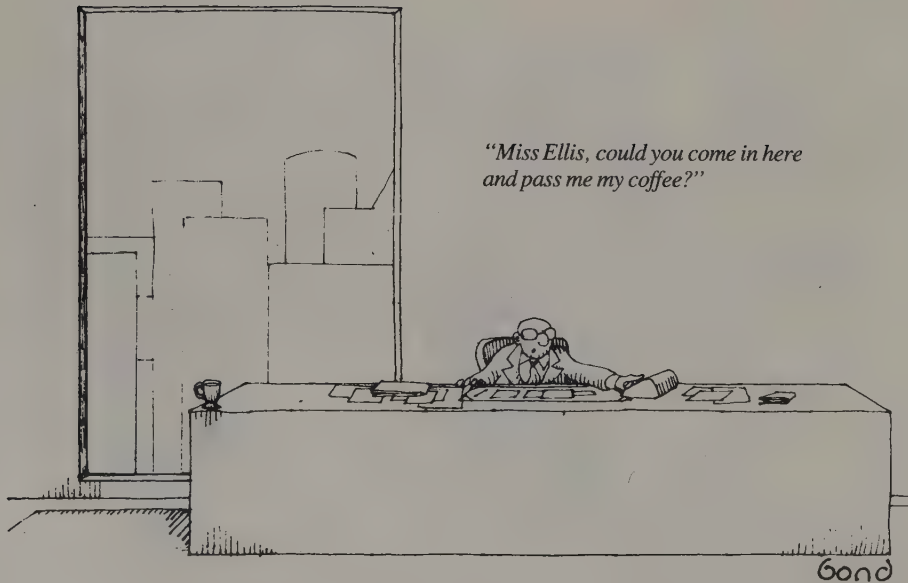


"Miss Hitchcock, my trapdoor button's malfunctioning again."



"Look, I'm sorry you're so depressed, dear, but I've told you before never to ring me at the office!"

*"Miss Ellis, could you come in here
and pass me my coffee?"*





"She's either drunk, protesting against the Bomb, or feeling sexy."



"Take the lift to the sixth floor, Mr Frensham. The computer will meet you there."



A. Martin

"It's clear from reading your report, Anderson, that you have emerged unscathed from the information explosion."



— CLIVE COLLINS —

"Naturally I'm very sorry you didn't get the housing contract, Harry, but you know the rules . . . all bribes must be submitted in writing in a sealed envelope within two weeks of the tenders going out."



"Melville! Your trappings!"



*"He's not what you would call a wildly
imaginative personality."*



Art Martin

*"Good morning, sir. I'm Ridolfi Zingonni,
the human fly."*

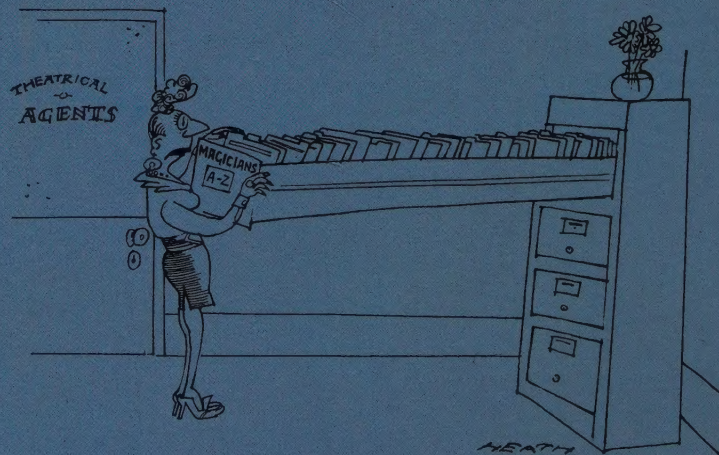


*"The job may interest you **now**, Mr Harvey, but do you honestly feel the interest would be sustained?"*

PUNCH in the Office

One for the in-tray of every boss, 'executive' and secretary! The office has long been a hotbed of sex, status-seeking, back-stabbing, nepotism, and empire-building – to the almost total exclusion of work.

Now *Punch* cartoonists expose the secrets of office life with wicked and gleeful accuracy. If fewer bosses chase their secretaries around the desk today ('You men in Duplicating are all the same!'), sexual harassment is still on the agenda. ('Let's come to an understanding, Miss Garrett. If I sexually harass you, you have the right to sexually harass me back.')



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Printed in Great Britain

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ISBN 0-246-1



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KO-960-185