

ERIC BOGOSIAN: JUST BUSINESS (1994)

In this extract from Bogosian's play an employer talks to one of his senior employees whose call has just been put through.

What's on your mind ... what can I do for you? ... Yeah ... Yeah, I know ... Yeah, it's kind of sticky ... Yeah (*stretching as he talks*) ... Yeah, I can see what you're saying ... Well, but, yeah, Jack ... Jack, I think it's great that you're sticking up for the guy, I mean I really appreciate it, I really ...

5 It's good to hear your point of view, Jack, you know I respect your opinion on things. ... Yeah. ... Yeah ... but listen, Jack ... Jack, I like Barry too, OK, but I had to let him go because, look, he's just not ... yeah, but he's not producing, Jack! He's not profitable. ...

10 Jack, the guy's fifty-nine years old and he doesn't come in and do a day's work! We all gotta pull our weight around here. ... Jack, the amount of money I'm paying him, I can hire three kids out of college who will hustle and break their little behinds right in two! Start 'em at 22K and watch 'em run!

15 Bushy tails and bright eyes are what I need, Jack, not the Geritol and shuffleboard set. What do I need the guy for? Yeah, I like the guy too. I've known him for twenty-three years. Our kids played ball together. ...

20 Yeah, but he, uh, Jack, LISTEN. ... NO, he doesn't give me an alternative! I didn't want to fire him. I offered him a job in shipping, but he turned me down! He said he couldn't take the pay cut! Well, now he's got a pretty big pay cut if you ask me!

25 I know, I know ... it's tough, but what else can I do? I can't pay a guy sixty-five thou a year to sharpen pencils and goose his secretary! I know he's got a pension coming up. ... Well, Jack. ... WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD? I'M NOT IN THE FUCKING WELFARE BUSINESS! I'M IN PROFIT BUSINESS HERE!

[...]

30 You like, you like that place you just bought up in the mountains? You like your swimming pool? You like that Mercedes station wagon your wife drives? You like having your kid in Exeter? Jack, listen, that stuff costs money and there's only one thing that makes money for you and that's this business.

Now, if you want to tell me that you want to trade your job for his job

... because ... BECAUSE THAT'S EXACTLY ... THAT'S EXACTLY
WHAT ... THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE DOIN', JACK!

35 Jack, if we're not making money in this place I can't pay anybody, can
I? Now if you want to take a pay cut so I can keep Barry, be my guest ...
but that's the way the cookie crumbles and I'm sorry. I really am. You
gotta look out for number one or there ain't gonna be no numbers at all,
kid. ...

40 Look, I got a call coming in in a few minutes so I better get off the
phone. ... I appreciate you sticking up for Barry, Jack, but in a funny way
that makes me want to get rid of him even more, because now he is
wasting your time as well! And I can't have people wasting time in this
company ... [...].

45 Yeah, I know. I know. ... No, I don't blame you. OK. Yeah. So ... so ...
say "Hi" to Jeanette for me, all right? Yeah. OK. OK. Yeah. Yeah. ... OK ...
OK. ... Yeah. ... Bye. ... Bye, Jack. OK. ... Yeah, you too!

Source:

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Annotations:

- l.12 *22K*: *infml.* twenty-two thousand dollars
- l.14 *Bushy tails and bright eyes*: here reference to young and dynamic people
- l.14-15 *Geritol and shuffleboard set*: here derogatory reference to old people
- l.22 *sixty-five thou*: *infml.* sixty-five thousand
- l.22 *goose his secretary*: *infml.* touch or squeeze his secretary's bottom
- l.24 *for crying out loud*: *infml.* used when you fell annoyed or impatient
- l.29 *Exeter*: here name of an expensive boarding school
- l.38 *to look out for number one*: *infml.* look after yourself without caring for anybody else