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EWD 442: Inside “Mathematics Inc”

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Inside "Mathematics Inc."

From the private correspondence of the Chairman of the Board:

"In passing it is a pleasure to inform you that Mathematics Inc. fully lives up to its device "Semper floreat et crescat." Recently the chairman of its board has been invited to deliver the keynote address at the 108th Annual Meeting of the International Federation of Mathematical Societies IFMS, to be held in the fall of 1976 in Loempia, the capital of Angora. In order to reflect this international recognition we are considering to move to more sumptuous apartments, viz. the top twelve floors of the Hosanna Building. But the negotiations are very difficult, as the even floors are owned by mr.J.Simpson --not the well-known J.F.Simpson, just J.Simpson-- while the odd floors are the property of a certain mr.Hayes, mr.Simpson's father-in-law's brother, a very old gentleman who considers himself a keen businessman. His price is exorbitant and his conditions are utterly preposterous: currently he wishes to impose upon our personnel that they will only use the toilets on Simpson's floors! To appease the old gentleman we may have to install --at our expense, of course-- a Toilet Flushing Water Recycling System; I have already contacted an architect. Mr.Hayes, however, is already 87 and his health, I am told, is not too good.

But as you will understand, all these negotiations, time-consuming as they are, make me a very occupied man, and whether I can accept the IFMS invitation depends on whether I can find a free weekend to write my address; the deadline is 1st October 1974 (in duplicate, double-spaced)."

From an address to the senior staff members:

"As token of our deeply felt gratitude for what he has done for the Company we shall send a large bunch of orchids to mr.Hayes, the weary traveller who has, at last, reached his final destination...."

From the minutes of the Board of Directors:

"Our Manager International Promotion has reported political troubles in some countries, caused by the fact that in our Brochure MX-783-5456-a: "What Counts what Counts", a reference is made to "Arabic Numerals"; a quick investigation has shown that a switch to "Arabian Numerals" would solve the problems there, but would create similar difficulties in the rest of the world. If switching to "Arabesque Numerals" is not an internationally acceptable solution, we shall try to escape nationalization by delegating, where necessary, our activities to a full daughter "Algebraics Inc." After a long and nostalgic monologue by our Chairman about the good old days when we were not operating on a multinational basis, the Meeting returns to the order of the day. The decision is postponed until the next meeting."