

Sunday, November 25, 2007

### **How to keep a conscience when working within big business?**

Â Image from Bureau of Engraving and Printing's website.Â For a year before law school, from 1985 to 1986,Â IÂ workedÂ as a financial auditor with the Irving Trust CompanyÂ in the belly of the Wall Street capitalist beastÂ that loved the money flowing during Reagan's reign. I know by now that enlightened capitalists exist, but on Wall Street I often felt like I was searching for a needle in the haystack, including with the unapologetic and very open racially insensitive comments of too many of my colleagues in the financial auditing department, even when not at happy hour, of which there were many.Â For personal growth, ofÂ great benefit to me at this job was rubbing elbows with a much larger cross section of people thanÂ I had everÂ dealt with before on a daily basis, Â My job at Irving Trust seemed neither to contribute much to nor detract from society. I essentially was obtaining and reviewing raw data to assure that the bank was following proper accounting, financial, and regulatory controls, in order to protect the bank's profits, to keep shareholders and customers happy, and to keep bank regulators interested in spending most of their time elsewhere. I liked having a chance for the first time in my life to live a full year on the income I earned myself, and ordinarily to be living on bankers' hours with plenty of free time on the weekends and evenings to enjoy Manhattan, except when holed up at hotels on a few assignments in upstate New York. Â I did not find anything to whistleblow about at Irving TrustÂ -- I made clear in brief words to my colleagues my attachment to the American Civil Liberties Union's agenda --Â although I cannot imagine any fears that would prevent me from doing so anywhere. Of course, some people pay a high price for whistleblowing. One of them is Cynthia Fitzgerald, who relocated to a new city and joined a very large health care company, all bright eyed and bushy tailed. Read this article and see this videoÂ to see how lonely and costlyÂ it can become for such pure-intentioned people asÂ Ms. Fitzgerald to blow whistles from within the capitalist beast's belly, rather than keeping focused on the almighty dollar. Jon Katz.Â

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 00:00