

# MORALITY OF BUSINESS LIFE

Business exists of the people, by the people, and for the people. Accordingly, it can easily be acknowledged that business cannot be amoral in its human relationships. To be amoral surely would be to negate the very premises upon which the relationship between business and society exists, because to perform its very function business presupposes morality.

Managers should ever appreciate that management, being a social process, entails responsibilities, not only to the job holders and the shareholders, but also to the public. Managements should possess a constant diligence and vigilance to ensure that the worker obtains a fair share of the fruits of the tree of productive enterprise consistent with the rights of shareholders and the public. To preserve the confidence of investors the shareholders must be the recipients of a fair and adequate profit commensurate with risk undertaken. The public are the residuary legatees of the manufacturing process. They, the public, represented by their government who are the ultimate umpires demand for the participants of all business activity a fair deal.

The social responsibility of business is no empty phrase; it is an obligation to which modern management must pay more than lip service. This obligation will be honoured, I am sure, with dignity, as today the future of humanity is in the hands of younger executives of high ideals who, in one voice, reiterate the



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words of the greatest young executive of this century, the late President John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

The businessman is under an obligation to use his wealth in a manner not detrimental to society. He may not corner essential goods and charge exorbitant prices. He is bound to use his property so as to make its fruits available to the community of which he is an integral part. Business must perform exactly its function, namely the satisfaction of economic needs. In the achievement of this function it performs its social responsibility. There is present the problem of how to pierce the apathy, of the wealthy in the face of destitution and want and, above all, how to sting our own complacency and hardness of heart in the face of so many urgent social problems. If the owners of wealth accept their responsibility they can play

a great part in the defeat of poverty, in the establishment of an environment worthy of men made in the image and likeness of their creator. The aesthetic vision of a world free from hunger and want will not come about simply because it is technically possible. It will demand a commitment to this task as a moral duty, as a claim of priority on our charity and justice. The whole world would bow before this elevation of thought and before the transcending value of the precept.

It violates right order whenever a business employs the workers or the proletariat with a view and on such terms as to direct business and economic activity entirely at its own will to its own advantage without any regard to the human dignity of the workers, the social character of the economic system, social justice, and the common good. One must surely salute the thinking of Richard Eells and Clarence Walton when they wrote, "Affluence need not corrode moral fibre of organizational greatness toward the significance of the individual man," but these things will occur "unless we examine the certain concepts which make man, his institutions and his forms of organization meaningful."

Businessmen should be ever conscious of the potential of possessing the virtue of charity; when justice among men has been established a wide field remains open for charity. Justice alone, however faithfully observed, can never bring a union of hearts and minds. Yet this union binding men together is the main principle of stability of all societies. A country cannot have peace and happiness if its citizens are hard and ruthless towards one another. The New Testament quotation provides a guiding light to all businessmen. "As you would that men should do to you do you also to them likewise." In this context of justice, charity and social order one, irrespective of creed, must surely pay homage to the late Pope John XXIII when he wrote, "the fundamental law of the economy does not lie in the convenience of individuals, or of groups of men; nor in the unbridled rivalries of competitors; nor in the outrageous power of the wealth; nor in the lust after national power and prestige; nor in anything of a like nature. On the contrary, economic enterprises must be governed by justice and charity, as the sovereign laws of the social order." (Master et Magistra 38.9).

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