**The Ethics of Business and Politics:  
The Connection and Impact on Society**

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Foundations of Business –Paper 3

**Business and Its Role in Society**

The role of the business should be to provide goods and services. When companies are able to successfully persuade us, the consumer, to willingly part with our funds in exchange for their products and services, we all win. A company can do this by providing superior services and goods. Winning public support through community and social endeavors can also bring a devoted following. In addition, a company who is known to invest in their employees will bring the best workers to them (Welch, J., & Welch, S.).

Corporate managers and leaders should be ethically responsible for the company they represent and upheld to the highest standard. The status quo of today is the opposite of that and the economic and social impact can be felt by all. Corruption is expected by the public, endorsed with tax dollars and corporations are sheltered by the government officials they are in bed with. As much as we bemoan the current state of affairs, this situation is not a new one and is arguably it is as old as civilization.

Prior great empires, such as the Romans, the Greeks, more recently, the Soviet Union, saw their power increase with the aid of smart businesses and intelligent government management. They began with the belief that we are all guided by the ‘Invisible Hand’ (Smith, A.). As corruption grew to dominate their businesses and political systems, these countries saw their power and global influence rapidly decrease.

The United States of America was originally conceptualized through a perfect storm of both rejecting taxation without representation and government over involvement. Despite our historical independence and spirit of entrepreneurship, we are caught into paying for government safety nets funded through unevenly mandated taxation. Although I can sympathize with the good intentions of government over involvement, I believe that just as the previously mentioned great empires fell, so will we.

**Business and Lack of Ethics**

We, the public, look to our leaders for direction and motivation and yet rarely do we find examples of integrity. Election year after election year, scandals continuously erupt as politicians without any experience in business, management or accounting are placed in positions of immense power and responsibility. Naturally, many politicians flounder on the job, neglecting constituents and breaking impossible campaign promises. It seems that the news reports daily on improper and shady deals between government officials and Wall Street while the same accused politicians denounce the same companies.

Our distrust is only underscored as television and the internet flash yet another indignity highlighting government and business corruption. My generation has become apathetic; we rarely question the speeches we are fed. We rarely become involved in even local level politics and government. We are conditioned to believe this is ‘Business as Usual” and we have lost our belief in our ability to achieve individual and nationwide greatness.

**Evidence: Reflecting Discord**

As the tone of discord between businesses and political parties continues to escalate, so does the friction amongst the public in our dealings with each other. Pam Jenkins, president of Powell Tate, in defining incivility, states “Rudeness and a lack of respect for those who have different points of view and who don’t share the same view of the world.” (Las Vegas Sun, 2010).

We see the debilitating issues in our government. We are aware most of them lack the ability to communicate and most possess little, if any, principles. We understand our government and Wall Street and many ‘big’ businesses are unable to say anything with civility; they can only snarl, lie and hiss at each other in their announcements and campaigns. Jack Leslie, chairman of Weber Shandwick, stated “[we] are fed up with the polarization of our political system and the uncivil tone of our country as a whole.” (Las Vegas Sun, 2010), yet we, the public individually polarize each other. Have you ever listened to a Republican argue with a Democrat or a Libertarian with a Socialist? They are simply engaging in a shouting match without listening to the other’s reasoning.

Other available evidence clearly shows this connection. A survey conducted with [Weber Shandwick](http://www.webershandwick.com) and [Powell Tate](http://www.powelltate.com) and [KRC Research](http://www.krcresearch.com) last year (Gaines, 2010) shows “Seventy-two percent of Americans view the political world and government as uncivil – the highest percentage recorded in the poll – and the absence of civility appears to be having an impact on participation and interest in the political process among broad swaths of the public. Nearly half the American people (49%) are tuning out government and politics, and almost two-thirds of those people (63%) cite the general tone and level of civility as a major factor in their decision.”

Proof of this apathy is found in our low voting turn out here in the United States, especially in the age group of people under thirty. Even with the increasing number of younger voters galvanized during the 2006 elections ‘Youth Voter Turnout Increases in 2006’ (Circle) (2006), only 25.5% of all voters in the age bracket of 18 to 29 cast their vote. This age bracket contains 44 million people and only a staggering 10.8 million vote. Is this indicative of an indifferent public that just doesn’t care enough to vote? Or is it because they are completely uninspired by the actors on the political stage? If we do vote, we vote for with the advertised candidate on MTV. We swallow blatant campaign lies and impossible promises and then when they do not deliver they blame the other party.

I look to at my peers and find elitism without knowledge; desire without motivation, entitlement without understanding of personal responsibility. I look to businesses and find either swaggering arrogance or those that stoically produce. I look to the government and I see ‘looters’, as they so often referenced in Ayn Rand’s ‘Atlas Shrugged’;People who steal from the ‘rich’ to feed the ‘poor’. I do not see myself as rich but I do often feel stolen from by a government who holds me hostage with their laws.

**Conclusion**

“Check your premises” Ayn Rand frequently said. The “safety nets” demanded by our society and provided by an invasive government are indeed nets; they hold us back from becoming our best.

Business has an essential role in society and Government does too. The first is held best in check by the ‘Invisible Hand’ (Smith, A.). When overregulated and over taxed, businesses will seek aid from the same entity that imposed the rules. By seeking a relationship with the government, corruption will grow. Many of today’s woes were created by a few greedy bullies with political power. Health care could be drastically more affordable without the over regulation, taxation, fees and limitations imposed. I argue we would see more health care improvements too. Wall Street would be wiser if they did not have friends in government sure to dole out our tax dollars when their bets go awry. Government needs to get out of business. Kickbacks must be halted. Only then will the fair market determine success based on services and products produced with innovation and effort.

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