BUSINESS' MYOPIC VIEW-PROFITS IS BENEFITS FROM SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

Dear Mr. DeYoung:

The urban blight, because of its concomitant insurgency of the city dweller, has finally been thrust before the all-too-unwilling eyes of the American public. Studies indicate that to alleviate the problem, we should spend many billions on our cities within the next decade. The problem grows worse daily; however, business resists government intervention and control.

Our skies are filthy with smog, smoke, soot, and stench; yet only legislation could force industry to place antipollution devices on its automotive products and the same seems true for its smokestacks. Our rivers are already fecal conduits; yet, for purely economic reasons, industry continues to dump its noxious by-products into public waters rather than otherwise dispose of them. Our cities are a snarl of transportation congestion, yet business solves that problem by merely running away to develop new branches in unaffected areas.

Dear Mr. Booksman:

Unquestionably our central cities are faced with the explosive pressures being built by the interacting ill of slum housing, relative poverty, hard-core unemployment, traffic congestion, air and water pollution. These are not new problems, but the urgent demand for solution is underscored by the many episodes of readily-triggered violence now so commonly seen.

Yet paradoxically, as these crises worsened, our overall economy has witnessed a remarkable acceleration of employment, and better living standards for the larger majority of our population than ever in history.

In turn, this has precipitated a trek to suburbs of such proportion that many downtown residential areas have been virtually abandoned to a highly explosive, usually non-white, residual population.

There are no pat solutions to these problems. Consider for a moment the magnitude of the efforts during the past thirty years relative to urban renewal, public housing, and the war on poverty.

The results have fallen far short of the expectations voiced by those who advocated massive public spending and the multiplication of additional governmental agencies promoting urban renewal. In this context, I think it is not an exaggeration to say that the defining of goals for the community, and the determination of the means for their achievement, was generally acknowledged, but for the most part, there was the concern that these could not be financed in the public sector.

Yet there is now an increasingly vocal ground swell that private industry somehow holds the key to solving the pressing urban problems and that only its attention can be diverted from its "blind pursuit of profits." And its social conscience is being awakened.

As Kenneth Clark, the well-known Negro psychologist, has said: "Business and industry are our last hopes because they are the most realistic elements of our society."

To assess the collective activities of business, we must realize that business is in business to develop and sell—"$27,000,000 worth of equipment and services." We must bring this fact to the attention of the public.

We must be bragging too much about Beechwood Ageing. Because we're starting to get some flak about it. Like, "Beechwood, Beechwood...big deal." And "If Beechwood Ageing is so hot, why don't you sell everybody what it is?"

So we will.

First, it isn't big wooden casks that we age Budweiser in. But it is a layer of thin wood strips from the peach tree (what else?) laid down in a dense lattice on the bottom of our glass-lined brewing tanks. This is where collectors at foundries, to intenser research for economically practical air and water exhaust controls... Crown Zellerbach has developed means to eliminate 90 per cent of the solids and 98 per cent of the hydrogen sulphide from gases leaving its improving facilities.

Dow Chemical has instituted various successful methods to reduce water pollution from industrial plant wastestreams, and to reclaim certain types of otherwise useless natural streams... In Goodyear, installation of a $750,000 waste water treatment system at our facilities in Gadsden, Alabama, assures purification of millions of gallons daily before return to the Coosa River. Moreover, air and water pollution control equipment which we installed in some eight other plants, while all new facilities under construction, or those recently built, have such controls in their specifications. All of this has been done voluntarily. Does this action bespeak of "Profits Now," as you suggest?

But industry isn't the only source of air and water pollution, much needs to be done in the areas of public and private housing, sewage control, and garbage disposal—just to name a few.

Slum housing, hard-core unemployment, education, and traffic congestion also are the focus of direct business involvement. In short, business is responding to the challenge of the times by channeling some of its capabilities directly to public sector requirements. The task and the spending millions in this area and the list of others is considerable.

Business' success in such programs results solely from capabilities which have been perfected through the disciplines of our fraternities and other social service and charitableqas relies in its effective meeting of customer needs and demands through the application of creative research, production abilities, and resources through managerial skills under the incentive of profit-making. The profits generated as a result of this process provide the underpinnings of our entire economy.

In other words, business is in business to make a profit. It is only through these accruals of profits that funds are available for all social improvement programs, whether originated by the public sectors or by business, for instance, in the arts at the instigation of Senator Lever Dickson.

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