Dear Mr. Galvin,

The trend on the nation's campuses is toward greater freedom—and responsibility—for the individual student. Whether the action is extension of visiting hours for women or relaxation of course requirements, the result is the same: a placing of greater trust in the individual, and a growing array of flexible alternatives for that individual.

Yet when he looks at business, and particularly at big business, a student sees an organization oriented to the group rather than the individual, and to that group's security rather than the individual's challenge. That "group" is any collection of administrative peers and immediate supervisors which meets frequently at all levels of the bureaucracy. What began as an attempt to imitate the concept of granting more and more individual freedom and responsibility is not confined to the campus, but is a characteristic of the maturing process. It is not a phenomenon of this generation. And it is a good thing when expressed constructively.

As a college student and member of several important campus committees, you must be aware of the importance of individuals pooling ideas and efforts. University-sponsored research programs inquiring into needed social reforms, and working out pilot projects as prototype solutions—methods to overcome widespread illiteracy in the ghettos; to encourage self-respect through self-help, for example—reflect team efforts. Even actions undertaken by the dissenter and protesters on campus result from "committee action" and not the blandishments of one individual.

The desire of young people for greater individual freedom and responsibility is not confined to the campus, but is a characteristic of the maturing process. It is not a phenomenon of this generation. And it is a good thing when expressed constructively.

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The concept of granting more and more freedom to act responsibly, with authority, is not alien to business. It is fundamental. Individuals demonstrate talents. Those talents need each other for the attainment of composite results. In the pooling there is no loss of individuality or freedom. Business is, and must be, strongly concerned with the individual, but since running a business is a team effort, there has to be group orientation, too.

In business, as in other fields, many decisions and actions result from "group-think" meetings, which do indeed demand substantive thinking from the individual. It is my opinion that more creative ideas come from a number of people "thinking" together than separately. One person's ideas spark the thinking of another; some people are naturally better at conceiving the germ of an idea than at refining it to a practical degree. In a group-think one draws upon a multiplicity of talents and viewpoints.

I have attended many group-thinks but seldom one that approached your description. Certainly some were unproductive, but usually because of negligence in disciplining the group to adhere to the subject. Carefully disciplined, no-nonsense creative sessions often produce table-bettings and heated exchanges rather than affability... and out of them may come solutions to complex problems and decisions involving millions of dollars and affecting thousands of employees and the public. An inefficient or conformist think group would waste talents, manhours, and money.

Business is to blame for the fact that today's college student may make a critical choice between business and other careers without sufficient knowledge on which to base such a decision. Students daily exposed to the campus are well-equipped with knowledge about teaching; an abundance of facts on medicine, government service, and many other fields has long been available. But business has neglected to communicate adequately by way of personal experience, the really significant facts about the realities of business to the very people it is trying to attract.

Its enormous accomplishments that have produced the highest standards of living in the world, the technical know-how or resources to carry come solutions to complex problems and decisions involving millions of dollars and affecting thousands of employees and the public. An inefficient or conformist think group would waste talents, manhours, and money.

The solutions being achieved result from "group-think" efforts within a corporation, or between a number of businesses, or as the result of a cooperative effort between business and government. No one individual possesses sufficient facts or knowledge to direct all growth phases of a major enterprise. No one sector of the economy has the technical know-how or resources to carry the load for the continued forward thrust of our national progress.

Within this framework there are "individual" selective tasks and goals requiring "individual" responses. It is through the intermingling of individual talents that viable solutions to the complex problems of today, and the challenges of tomorrow will be found.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Galvin
Chairman, Motorola Inc.