

Openings: Winston Churchill offers us an antidote for our current political morass.

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

Spotlight: With national elections occurring in both Canada and the United States this year, the issues of governance are in the forefront of our awareness. This is an excellent opportunity to explore the same issues as they apply to private enterprise and how, in our roles as stakeholders, we influence the governance of these enterprises.

In our democratic governmental systems, elections are the point in the process where, in our roles as citizens, we exercise our power. In our free enterprise economic system, we exercise our power on a daily basis. We vote with our time and our money for the businesses with which we want to be associated. Choosing where we shop, work, and invest expresses our beliefs, hopes, and aspirations.

Our values determine the enterprises with which we choose to do business. When our values are well aligned with those of an enterprise, there is the opportunity to establish a long-term relationship. Relationships that span a significant period benefit both the individual and the enterprise making it good business practise to do what is necessary to foster extended relationships.

The manner in which a business is governed is the major influence in determining an enterprise's values. Once these values are set, people can assess whether their values match those of the enterprise. Good governance then focuses on keeping the day-to-day activities aligned with the enterprise's values. The measure of good governance is the ability to consistently satisfy stakeholders resulting in an accumulation of goodwill expressed in terms of strong customer loyalty, low employee turnover, and high investor confidence.

As individuals, part of our responsibility for our enterprises is to voice our concerns when those in leadership positions do not appear to be guiding the enterprise in the correct direction. By surfacing our dissatisfaction, we provide the opportunity for issues to be addressed. It is not sufficient to protest the current situation. Instead, we must come forward with suggestions for the betterment of all stakeholders and adopt an attitude of cooperation. If our efforts are dismissed, we can then sever the relationship and find an enterprise where our efforts are appreciated. Very few aspects of our lives remain under the control of monopolies or oligopolies always leaving us with choice.

At the polling booth and the checkout, actively exercise your franchise.

Musings: In most communities, minor sport teams are sponsored by businesses, unions, and social clubs. Be it baseball, soccer, or hockey, the uniforms worn by these young athletes bear the names of the community's organisations. Year-after-year, these organisations voluntarily fund activities with which they have little if any direct connection. Particularly in smaller communities, the existence of minor sports depends on the generosity of these organisations.

The stated reasons why these organisations choose this form of community participation are varied including civic duty, advertising, and giving something back. Notwithstanding the explicit statements, implicitly, any rationale is a recognition of our communal interdependency. What we put into our communities comes back to us even if the return path is indirect.

Having spent a good portion of my youth playing on one sports team or another, I have been the recipient of the largess bestowed by these benefactors. I am deeply indebted to these people, many of whom I have never met. All that I am able to do to address my debt is to agree to pass on the gifts that I have received.

Lexicon: In its broadest, most ennobling sense, *Politics* is the ideal means for resolving potential or actual differences between people. It is the fostering of supportive relationships where our differences are reconciled not through homogenisation, but through accommodation. Cooperation rather than confrontation is its highest virtue. In our public and private lives, we are political beings.

Links: In his book, *The Principle of Liberty*, Michael Sartorius presents a compelling treatise on politics. While the focus of this book is on public office, the ideas presented apply just as appropriately to the governance of any business. The full content of this book is freely available via the following link:

www.libertyandlaw.org/liberty00.html.

Quote: The British jurist, Lord Denning, expresses the importance of political freedom.

"What matters is that each man should be free to develop his own personality to the full; the only restrictions upon this freedom should be those which are necessary to enable everyone else to do the same."