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THE SPIRIT OF ROTARY IN BUSINESS

AN ADDRESS

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THE SPIRIT OF ROTARY IN BUSINESS

In 1793 Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin. In 1807 Fulton and Livingston put into operation the first successful steamboat. In 1830 the invention of an improved rail made possible a great advance in land transportation. In 1831 McCormick invented the reaping machine, which was to cheapen the cost of bread to the world and produce wonderful economical changes. In 1844 Morse perfected the transmission of intelligence by electricity, an agency which was thereafter to make the commercial world a unit. In 1845 Elias Howe invented the sewing machine. In 1866 the first permanent Atlantic cable was established. In 1876 the commercial telephone was made a possibility, and in the same year inventions were made which perfected or were to result in the perfection of the gas engine. During the closing decades of the nineteenth century innumerable inventions and improvements of machines designed to create and distribute electrical energy and apply it to the processes of manufacture were made.

From these and other fundamental inventions there flowed during the last half of the nineteenth century a stream of adaptations of the ideas conceived by these great inventors by means of which steam, gas and electricity were applied to almost every process of production and transportation. These inventions and discoveries came with the opening up of a new continent. At the beginning of the nineteenth century this country was a veritable mine of natural resources, an infinitude of unappropriated wealth in various forms, which lay awaiting the coming of its owners. Vast areas of fertile, arable lands offered almost limitless opportunities for the expansion of agriculture, commerce and transportation. People from across the oceans flocked to our shores to share in this wonderful provision of a bountiful nature. The natural disposition of humankind to ac-

quire land and amass wealth was tremendously stimulated, and as a people we engaged in a mad scramble to acquire for our individual benefit as much as possible of this great treasure which was to be had for the taking.

Accumulation of Property Dominant

The whole process of creating and accumulating wealth was speeded up by the application of steam and electricity; changes were so rapid that it was difficult for the average man to keep his bearings. Many clung desperately to the traditions of the past, only to find themselves outdistanced in the race by their less cautious but more daring and fortunate fellows. The prospect was indeed alluring. The forests, mines and lands of the country seemed boundless in extent and richness. We bent every energy to the creation and appropriation of wealth. Why think of distribution when each could take what he wanted? We became careless of methods; we disregarded the future, and we lost sight of some of the fundamental principles which govern society. Our people were imbued with the ideas so often declared by the early fathers, that all mankind needed was equality of opportunity to produce the most beneficial results. The individualistic tendency of our people was strengthened, sense of social responsibility was weakened, and the government, state or national, did little more than to facilitate the exploitation of our natural resources.

Under such circumstances as these it is not strange that material considerations soon predominated over all others. The age in which we live is admittedly materialistic. It is not strange that it is so. It would be strange if it were otherwise.

Wealth Paramount

As a nation we have literally wallowed in wealth. We have allowed it to seem the sole end of our ambition, the chief reason for our existence. Apparently we have had time for nothing but the accumulation of money and property. It has absorbed our thoughts and energies. Our schools and colleges have had for their aims mainly the making of their graduates more efficient in money getting. The success of teachers has been measured, not by their contribution to the welfare of society, but by the amount of salary they are able to demand. In this

connection I cannot help thinking and speaking of Stephen M. Babcock, a professor in the University of Wisconsin, who refused to patent his invention of a cheap and simple milk testing apparatus and gave it to the world as his contribution to the general welfare, and thereby signally served his employers, the people of the State of Wisconsin. This man, who had fairly within his grasp a great fortune, was big enough and public spirited enough to rise above the materialistic tendencies of his day. If we were not submerged by materialism we would as a people respond to the splendid sacrifice of this great man and noble citizen and so reward his ability, faithfulness and unselfish service as to do credit to ourselves, honor and justice to him, and stimulate in others the desire to render like service in the future.

Materialistic in Our Tendencies

Even our religious life has not been free from the taint of materialism. The work of a preacher is often measured, not by the inspiration which he gives to the community in which he lives, not by the spiritual power which he exerts and by which he directs men's thoughts to nobler and higher things, but by the size of his salary.

We have not been satisfied to deal alone with purely material things, which are properly the subject of trade and commerce, but almost every human activity has in some form or other been capitalized and commercialized, until as a people we think almost entirely in dollars and cents. Even in the present great crisis which stirs our natures to their depths, we as a people do not think as much of what we may be called upon to sacrifice for or the principles which are at stake or the welfare of future generations as we do of what it is going to cost us in cash and loss of comfort. Someone re-echoed this sentiment recently in the remark that we have made lots of money out of the European war and we ought to keep it and not spend it as if money was the real thing. Nations have been great without material wealth, but no nation has ever been great that was spiritually weak.

Reaction Due

It is perfectly natural therefore that there should be a reaction from materialism; that men should come to realize that

there are other things of priceless value both to the individual, to the nation and to the race, which are not susceptible of measurement by the yardsticks of commerce, or of being weighed in scales or stated in terms of money. In recent years there has been a conscious attempt to restate many fundamental truths. No one should belittle the accomplishment of our people along material lines; no one wishes to do so. But we should all recognize and realize that material advancement is not everything, in fact it may not even be the chief thing.

Rotarianism

Rotarianism is not so much a protest against materialism and the materialistic tendencies in our life as it is an effort to restate in terms of the experience of the average business man of our own day and generation those great fundamental ethical truths and facts which underly our existence as individuals and as a nation. Rotary asks that age old question which has been put to every generation and will be put to every generation as long as mankind continues, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Rotarianism is an effort to realize in the business life of to-day the consciousness of the true worth of things of the spirit. Our motto "He profits most who serves best" is as clear and direct and concise a statement of the deepest aspirations of mankind as can be made. The fundamental idea of service is the doing of something for others. One who does something for others for his own material benefit does not serve others, he exploits them. Service is unselfish, and while, as the good book says, it is more blessed to give than to receive, the lasting benefits derived from unselfish service are nonmaterial. After all are not the spiritual things of life the real things? Have we not as a people, always believed and realized this? What man engrossed in getting money and in the struggle for power does not even in his busiest moments thank a kind Providence that he has a home, a wife, children, friends and a fireside? Who does not realize that without these all his material accumulations are incapable of satisfying the human heart? Without home and without friends, of what possible worth can accumulated wealth be? So that after all it is the things of the spirit rather than the material things that give life its genuine worth and it is in things spiritual that we find our highest satisfaction.

While in the struggle for wealth which has absorbed the energies of this country for so many years we have perhaps overlooked and undervalued these greater things, we are endeavoring to give them a larger place in our everyday life, and realize anew their genuine worth and real present value.

Rotary an Inspiration

It was because of the fact that business had become selfish, because the mere accumulation of wealth had lost its fascination, and because of the relation of things spiritual to our business lives, that Rotary was born. It is because Rotary supplies in the business life of the average man an ethical stimulant which was theretofore lacking that it has had such a wonderful growth and made such progress. It is because men having applied the principles of Rotary to their everyday business life have found in it the greatest satisfaction and the highest reward, that Rotary continues to be an inspiring thing. I should like to see its code of ethics printed in plain, clear type, framed in a neat frame standing upon the desk of every business man in America.

If every business man in America, before he took up his work in the morning, would stop and read carefully its code of ethics, and endeavor to apply it to his business during the day, a sweeter, kindlier spirit would prevail throughout the business world, and the pursuit of money would be sanctified and ennobled, and when accumulated it would be used to benefit and bless mankind and not be devoted to some selfish and unworthy end.

When the principles of Rotary are fully applied in the life of our people, as I believe they will be, if not under the banner of Rotary then in some other way, we will look with wonder upon many things of which we to-day unconsciously approve, or at least of which we do not disapprove. For one thing it will quicken our sense of social responsibility. It will produce a creed for the country such as the City of St. Paul has adopted.

I hope to live to see the day when the creed of the City of St. Paul is not the creed of a city but of the entire country. Restated, it will be something like this: I believe that this country should be a country where the poor shall be less unhappy, the rich less self-satisfied, for the one shall have a more intelligent understanding of the other; a country where no home shall be

invaded by want, no shadows where vice breeds, and where every child shall grow to mental freedom through proper education; a country where thrift shall be honored, enterprise rewarded, labor respected, and the needs of even the humblest consulted; a country where friends shall be true friends and neighbors real neighbors; a country where the strong shall really sympathize with the weak, where there shall be even more respect for those who have traveled the longer road, and even more hopeful confidence in the promise of glowing youth; a country where progress shall be the result of retaining the good of the old and accepting the tried of the new; where cooperative competition shall be the ideal in trade, live and let live the slogan of business, serving others successfully to serve self the policy of industry and commerce; and finally, a country where each and every citizen shall stand ready to do his duty both to his country and to his neighbor.

New Era is Here

Here is the spirit of Rotary in full flower. What a noble civic ideal this expresses. Gentlemen, do you realize that this is the declaration put out by the St. Paul Association of Commerce, an organization of hard-headed business men? Can you doubt that this marks a realization by these men of the fact that our life, municipal, state and national, is deficient in the spiritual element. I say to you here now that a new era is not beginning, it is here; and it is my earnest hope and prayer that Rotary everywhere may be in the vanguard of this great movement. When this day comes it is my hope that individualism will live, but that there shall be along with it a deeper sense of social responsibility.

Our individualistic ideas, it seems to me, have led us astray in some respects, and to that fundamental question which is asked of every age and every generation and of every society, "Am I my brother's keeper?" our day and generation has not given a correct answer. If he who serves best profits most, then that government and that society which recognizes the responsibility and discharges the obligations which it owes to the less fortunate of its members must be the best.

It has required the terrific economic pressure of a great war to force upon the consciousness of European nations the fact that mere theoretical legal equality does not produce equality in fact. This idea, which was the product of the French Revolution, ig-

nores the everyday experience of mankind and the very structure of society as now organized, and I hope and trust that it will not require such a cataclysm as has befallen Europe to force upon the realization of this country the fact that society is a unit; that it is the duty of the strong to care for the weak, and that we cannot have a submerged tenth, or any other submerged portion of our population, without essentially weakening the vitality of society itself.

Service to Society

Rotary concerns itself not with the immediate benefits which are to accrue to its members commercially; there are many commercial organizations much better adapted to that purpose than Rotary. Rotary concerns itself not alone with the welfare of the community in which it finds itself established, but Rotary is broader and bigger than this and is not limited in its scope by boundaries, state or national. A Rotarian regards his vocation not only as worthy and honorable, but as giving him an opportunity to render service to society at large, and giving him an opportunity not only to improve himself, but as giving him an increasing strength and enlarging field for serving society. Rotary does not discourage business success; on the contrary, it encourages it, the practice of its precepts produces it, but it regards that success as real which is founded on the highest justice and morality. It believes that commerce, and the exchange of goods and ideas are beneficial and legitimate, and the true Rotarian endeavors to set an example and to so conduct his own affairs that others may find it profitable and conducive to their happiness to emulate his example. A Rotarian aims to give a perfect service, and when in doubt to give added service beyond the strict measure of his obligation.

Friendship

Rotary exalts friendship. But that man who takes upon his lips the sacred name of friend for the purpose of exploiting his neighbor, commercially or otherwise, is not only a disgrace to Rotary but to civilized society as well. If there is any social sin more deadly, more reprehensible than this, I do not know what it is. On the other hand, every man is entitled to the benefit of his true and real friendships. They are his greatest

asset in prosperity as well as in adversity, and the advantage that he gains thereby is eminently ethical and proper.

After all, when we come to the evening of life and sit by our fireside surrounded by our loved ones and ponder over the past, will we not realize more fully than ever before the value of true friendship? Our little successes, petty advantages, won in the struggle for wealth or place, will then be of little satisfaction. The game will be over and the counters worthless. But as we think back over the years, the things that will stand out will be our friends and the sweet communion that comes from true friendship. Except home and kin there is nothing that adds so much to the real value of our lives as do our friends, and one of the primary purposes and objects of Rotary is to promote among business men that true, deep, loyal friendship which is so much worth while.

As we gather each week around the table, learn more of each other's lives, of each other's happinesses, troubles and sorrows, the bonds of friendship must necessarily grow stronger and deeper. Any man who does not appreciate, who does not realize the true value of such association, is not worthy to take the word Rotary upon his lips. Any man having gained the confidence of his fellows who so far forgets himself as to make demands upon another in the name of that friendship and to abuse the confidence which he enjoys as a Rotarian, is not only unworthy, he is a traitor to the very spirit of Rotary.

Service being the cornerstone of Rotary, no Rotarian can take or will take any unfair advantage of others or attempt to achieve success by questionable methods. He does not consider himself more obligated to his brother Rotarians than he is to every other man in human society. He believes in the universality of human rights, which are as deep and as broad as the race itself, and one of the purposes for which Rotary exists is to educate all men and all institutions.

Rotary a Gospel of Service

Finally, above and beyond everything else, the gospel of Rotary in business is a gospel of service; a gospel of deeds, not of words; a gospel of doing as well as thinking. Its whole code is summed up in the golden rule: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so unto them," which was laid down by the great Teacher two thousand years

ago. The fundamental idea of this precept is doing. It demands personal service; not alone in the great things of life, but in the little things as well. Living up to this great principle in our business lives will make us better citizens, better men, better fathers and better husbands. Conformity to this principle will bring a change in our ideals, which after all is the real thing for which we as a people should seek. If the American people as a people have any one fault which is greater than all others it is a credulous belief in nostrums, medical, social and political. As a people we think there somewhere exists a panacea for all our ills. If anything is wrong all that is necessary is enact a statute forbidding it or regulating it and our troubles will be over. A stream cannot rise above its source; government in a democracy cannot be better than the people who make it. Real reforms must come from within, not from without. A change in the ideals for which we strive will produce a real change in the life of the nation. Without a change of ideals a change in our laws is ineffectual. When a law embodies the ideals of the people it is strong and productive of good when it does not it is a travesty and a stumbling block.

Service to Community

When this great ethical principle becomes the rule of conduct for all our people men will be judged by what they are and not by how much they have. Our first inquiry will not be, how much is a man worth, but how did he get it? Men will meet the demands of citizenship; they will give to the public service a fair share of their time and abilities. The man who attends public meetings and votes for resolutions in favor of civic improvement and lets his sidewalk go unshoveled and his lawn unmown; the man who cries out against bad government and fails to register and go to the polls and vote and to bear a fair share of the public burden, is not in favor of civic improvement and good government; he is in favor of "letting George do it," and that should be his motto, and not "He profits most who serves best."

Giving of Ourselves

We cannot as business men discharge our obligations to society by writing checks. Contributions to welfare work of all kinds are certainly commendable. Contributions not backed up by the personal service of the contributor are spiritually ineffectual.

The golden rule does not say, Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, hire somebody else to do for them; it says "do *ye* even so unto them." That command lays a personal obligation upon every member of society. Paying may be part of doing, but it is not all of it, nor even the most of it. What people less fortunate than ourselves most desire is not our money, but it is that we should understand their troubles and sympathize with them in their sorrows. Money with this sympathy and understanding is good; without it, it often debases the receiver and defeats the very purpose for which it is given. There is joy in doing, stimulation in the very thought of being able to do, and it is this joy of service which Rotary seeks to bring into the lives of business men of to-day. By means of it business life will be ennobled, enriched and blessed in innumerable ways. Where we give our money, let us give ourselves; let us not hire substitutes. In the giving of ourselves we will certainly realize that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Let us strive to make our vocations worthy, to improve ourselves and our business, to deal honorably with all men, to so conduct our lives and our business as to set an example of right doing before the world; let us hold fast to the friends that we have and by all fair and honorable means gain others; let us *make no selfish demands upon our friendships, and in no way abuse the confidence of those who trust us; let us disdain personal success, material or otherwise, achieved by questionable means; let us realize in our lives as well as in our code the universality of human rights, the depths of love, human and Divine, and let us over all and above all "do unto others as we would have them do unto us,"* and we shall find in Rotary a spiritual inspiration which shall be good for us. That man who in everyday business life lives up to the standards of Rotary will not only have the greatest pleasure and satisfaction in this life, but when the veil parts and he is called from this plane to a higher and more complete existence he need not be afraid to die by the code by which he lived.