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## **Perspective**

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### **Businessmen in Politics—II**

**by Raymond Moley**

**T**HE title of this piece is designed to draw the distinction between "business" and "businessmen" in politics. The distinction is vital. The revival of interest among businessmen in their civic and political responsibilities is not, as some imagine, to bring back the days of ruthless corporations striding heavy-booted over the planted fields of public interest. Those days are gone forever, and no one knows it better than management.

The interest of corporations and trade associations which have developed programs is to encourage political activity in the local communities where management employees live, just as the unions have encouraged such activity by their members. The objective is the ideal of democratic government: Everybody should have an active interest in the nomination and election of those who run their government.

What corporations and trade associations and other groups are actually doing and propose to do is described in an excellent roundup of the why's, how's, and where's of the challenge faced by businessmen, in a new book, "Politics Is Your Business." The authors are William H. Baumer, special assistant to the president of Johnson & Johnson, and Donald G. Herzberg of Rutgers University (187 pages. Dial Press. \$3.50).

#### **PRACTICAL PROGRAMS**

A considerable number of programs have stimulated many thousands who have hitherto been negligent. Such programs are directed toward management employees and have also included interested individuals such as independent retailers, distributors, agents, and professional people. The National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce began their interest at about the same time. Meanwhile, many companies established programs of their own. Johnson & Johnson and General Electric were pioneers, followed by such corporations as Ford Motor, Republic Steel, Hercules Powder, Aerojet-General, American Can, Gulf, and Esso, together with other companies in almost every line of business.

Programs vary in format, content, and suggested locations and times for

instruction and discussion. In many, a trained leader handles small groups in six to twelve "lessons" scheduled over a number of weeks. Programs have encouraged participation by local political leaders with their wealth of practical experience.

Companies publish material encouraging registration, voting, and active support of a party or candidate of the voter's choice. This is non-partisan and noncoercive.

Beyond this, some companies have employed a man at the top level of management, such as Baumer, to organize and direct company programs. Some use representatives in Washington to gather information for publication on vital issues before Congress and the executive departments.

#### **NOT ANTI-LABOR**

The Baumer-Herzberg book specifies what is lawful and prudent for companies to do or avoid doing.

This is not a movement to mobilize "business" as such as a national political force. Nor, with rare exceptions, is there any disposition to criticize labor unions for their activity. It is my opinion that the unions have performed a distinct service to the cause of truly representative government by starting their programs. Their operations in politics have been masterful and have provided no little instruction to the businessmen who have more recently decided to enter practical politics. Only when the unions have used their general funds for direct contributions to candidates or parties or for purely partisan activity are they subject to criticism.

The frightening threat to party government in this country has been apparent for a good many years. Up to 1940 the Presidential vote grew with the population. Since then, the Democratic Party has actually been shrinking. The Republican vote, except for the Eisenhower turnout in 1952 and 1956, has been on a plateau. Meanwhile, in those twenty years somewhere between 16 million and 21 million more eligible voters have appeared. The parties cannot do it alone. Other forces must help, or our institutions will wither away. Business management is fortunately awakening to this grave situation.