

Social responsibility is a collective duty of the public as a whole, which has its roots in morality and ethics.

All civilized countries and societies emphasize social responsibility. This does not only apply to individuals, regardless of their professions, it also applies to enterprises of all kinds, and the degree of responsibility increases as they grow in size.

Morality and ethics are about altruism. They are affected both by external factors, such as crime and punishment, and internal factors, such as enlightenment of the mind.

The social responsibility of enterprises and “enterprising spirit” are often juxtaposed.

After World War II, an increasing number of companies began calling themselves “enterprises,” but the term is often used simply out of convenience, even for firms that lack an enterprising spirit. Some use it simply to make a profit, and have no sense of their responsibility toward employees, products, customers or the environment.

Many people, who lack true religious conviction and only pray for superstitious reasons, pray for protection in the presumptuous hope of blessings, despite engaging in unethical or immoral activities.

This kind of social ill became prevalent after World War II, when the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) came to power.

The post-World War II era had a hugely negative impact on Taiwanese spirit. The 228 Incident saw just, righteous and enterprising people suffer, while unworthy and dishonorable people prospered.

Parasites in business, politics feed on nation

Written by Lee Min-yung 李敏勇

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In Taiwan Forsythia, a book written by Taiwanese novelist Wu Cho-liu (吳昌利), the author refers to the “half-mountain” — a Taiwanese person who went to China and joined the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) during Japanese colonial rule and later returned with the Nationalist army — syndrome, in which he includes a high-ranking official of the former KMT administration Lien Chen-tung (連戰) and others.

Lien Chen-tung’s son, former vice president Lien Chan (連戰), and his grandson, Taipei mayoral hopeful Sean Lien (連錫堃), are still part of the political elite.

The nation’s political sphere is full of these people.

For example, former KMT chairman Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄) was successful both politically and in business because his father, former Taoyuan County commissioner Wu Hung-lin (吳興林) followed a different path to his twin brother Wu Hung-chi (吳興志), who was the victim of political persecution by the party-state — murdered in the 228 Massacre.

After World War II, many big enterprises in Taiwan grew and benefited from the privileges awarded to them by the KMT regime. The benefits that these enterprises gave back to the party-state were also significant.

The network of political and business leaders and their sharing of the nation’s spoils has deep roots, and the companies they own do not have a strong sense of social responsibility.

The recent series of food safety scandals revealed that some of these big enterprises — whose products are part of many people’s lives — are unscrupulous.

Big companies that were guilty of food safety violations in the past and moved their operations to China, where they were successful, have returned to Taiwan with their illicit profits to conquer new markets in an attempt to expand by continuing to cheat and deceive the public.

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With a rotten government and rotten enterprises, how can the country possibly continue to develop into a morally and ethically sound, civilized nation?

Lee Min-yung is a poet.

Translated by Perry Svensson

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