Experiential Activity

Cinematic Movie – The International (2009)

Plot Summary

The International describes one of the most powerful banks in the world – the International Bank of Business and Credit (IBBC) – which funds many illegal activities. The illegal activities including weapons deal, money laundering, and the turmoil of government even the world. The conspiracy was discovered by an Interpol, then the game of cat and mouse begins. It is not a classic business-ethics-focused movie, but I found many business activities and business ethics in this movie.

The business world in my eyes

■ Positive

Business is everywhere. It is one of the most important activities in our economy.
Business is the bridge that provides people with the necessities in everyday life, and it’s a unit that link different countries together. It is business that makes our life colorful and it is business that makes the world as a whole family.

The International portrayed the business world in a fairly negative light, but I still found some normal business activities in many ways. In the movie, the lawyer in the Manhattan district attorney’s office wants to expose the illegal activities of the IBBC. She made a phone call to the wife of the insider in order to get some information and his wife told her another insider – the president of CALVINI DEFENSE COMPANY – because she didn’t want her husband die in vain. This is not a purely business activity, but it reflects the business world to some extent. Though there are many law offenders in the business world, people still strive for justice for the greatest all. Those who painstakingly play a trick in business world will surely be punished at last.

■ Negative

This movie mainly portrays the business world in a negative light. For example, the IBBC wants to purchase millions of dollars worth of missile guidance and control system from CALVINI DEFENSE COMPANY, but the president of the company refused to sign the contract because the IBBC assassinated his trusted friend – the insider who could provide rock-solid evidences to the Interpol. Though it’s weird for a bank to buy so many weapons and arms, I regard this deal as neutral because I don’t know the exact purpose for this deal and the potential damage caused by the deal. When I finally know that IBBC buy the weapons in order to control the debt that the conflict produces, I regard the deal as negative because the bank purposefully gains a profit at the expense of others. “The IBBC wants to
make us all, whether we are nations or individuals, slaves to debt.” Once they control the debt, they control everything. It sounds horrible to me. All most all the businesses exist to generate a profit, and business is an entity that produces a profit by using time, effort and capital. The essence of running a business is to produce a profit, but the purpose and outcome of making the profit shouldn’t be malicious. In the movie, the function of a bank has changed and the systems and the laws of the country begin to serve and protect the IBBC. Just as what said in the movie, everyone becomes salves to debt and the IBBC controls everything.

The movie also portrayed the IBBC an entity that every multinational corporation and even everyone – government of Iran, German, China and the US government – need banks like the IBBC, so that they can operate within the black and gray latitudes. Sometimes businesses turn out to be negative at the beginning of the transaction. Businessmen become so profit-oriented that they crazily and greedily gain profits by cheating to their customers. For example, the government of Iran and Syria want to purchase missiles from the IBBC. It’s a good opportunity for IBBC to become the weapon broker to the Third World, so they have to get another way to get the missiles from SUNAY – one of the only two companies in the world which produces the VOLCON (the other is CALVINI DEFENSE COMPANY). Since the Israeli government is SUNAY’s biggest customer, so the IBBC is not sure whether the president of SUNAY would agree to help them provide missiles to the Iranians and the Syrians that have a first-strike capability against the Israelis. The IBBC’s strategy is to persuade SUNAY to keep this information in complete confidence. If the buyers (the government of Iran and Syria) find out the missiles are worthless, they will pull all their orders, which will be a huge loss to the IBBC. In this case, the IBBC intentionally sold the
useless missiles to the Third World even though it knew that the Israel has already got the countermeasures to defeat its buyers.

Business ethical dilemmas

■ Issue one

The first scene of the movie is two men talking cautiously in a car, the driver is an insiders and he is real enough to blow the whole conspiracy of the IBBC wide open. The other man is the Interpol who’s the partner of the lead actor. The insider – the IBBC executive – doesn’t fully trust the Interpol because he knows that once he is exposed to be an insider, the bank will get to him. The power of justice overcomes the power of evil at last. The insider decides to provide the Interpol the important paper of the whole conspiracy. We can tell the destiny of the insider, but it’s the way he chose to do – the right way he chose to make the business world healthier in his own way.

In my point of view, the issue was resolved in a good way, and I would do the same if I were in that situation. This situation is very common in the real business world, if everyone is blind to the corruption in business, our business world will collapse. We need the “insiders” to provide strong evidence which can guarantee the development of the business world.

■ Issue two

The highlight of the whole movie is the dialogue between the Interpol and the executive of the IBBC -- a true communist spent 30 years fighting against the evils of capitalism in his early time, but now the old man waste his final days working for an institution that was the
very embodiment of everything he once despised. Finally, the old man realized that he had gone so far from his dream, so he wanted to look for redemption in his late years. His soul finally got free when he insisted to his faith.

I respect that old man, though he was working for the IBBC. Obviously, he was killed by the bank, but he is pure. I will strive for my own faith to the end of my life and I will stay far away from the legal edge.

■ Issue three

When the old communist asked the Interpol: Should you sacrifice your own ideals for the greater good? The Interpol still insisted that if he goes outside of the boundaries of the system there has to be a way to bring down the bank. So he decided to kill the CEO. When he finally found the chief instigator – CEO of the IBBC – of the whole conspiracy and it was a good opportunity to kill the CEO but he gave up, because the CEO told him a fact – there will be 100 other bankers to take his place, and everything will continue. This is the difference between truth and fiction. People are sometimes afraid of truth, so they will be timid. Keep on, and stick to what you believe in. If I were the Interpol, I would kill the CEO because I never know what will happen in the next minute. Things will change without notice, what we should do is to do something for the greater good and to stay calm when something unexpected happens.

Other issues

■ Honesty, truthfulness and fairness in marketing
- Involvement in the arms and weapons trade
- Trading with repressive regimes
- Bribes in order to secure contracts
- Sell worthless products to customers
- Doing what it takes to reach someone’s goal by reciprocating with others

There is an interesting part in the movie. The Interpol found that the assassin is a man with prosthesis, so he decided to find the orthopedist of the assassin to get some information. The doctor refused to cooperate at first, but when he was told that this patient wanted to kill him he became eager to provide as much as information to the agent. See, people always seek benefit in their everyday life. That is why mutual benefit is so important to all of us and countries.

To sum up, business, government and society are three important units in the business world. Businessman has to hand in the government part of profit in the form of tax. Some people regard it as a burden. However, this burden is a necessity to my point of view because government guarantees a safe business environment and maintains the stability across its territory. What’s more, government can carry out clear strategies or policies to eliminate the trade barrier of other countries, which is good for corporations to explore the global market. Government and business are mutually benefited from each other. To businessmen, they should aware of the importance of government and obey the rules or policies set by the government in order to act so that the greatest good for the greatest number is achieved, thus our society develops and prospers.

From this exercise, I begin to know that ethical dilemmas are everywhere in the business
world. Obviously, unethical business practices or activities can lead to immediate or potential legal troubles, while businesses that act ethically can establish a positive image which can lead to business profitability. Everyone knows that businesses should act ethically because it’s the right thing to do. However, people act in many roles in the world which makes them hard to do everything ethically. To me, the right thing to do is to act intuitionally. Stick to what you believe in and hold on to the last minute. In the movie, the insider, the Interpol and the communist all confronted to a dilemma, and they all choose to adhere to their beliefs and moral values.

Most people are in the Stage 2 or 3 of the stages of moral development. People are always concern for others and reciprocate with others to reach their goals. I am not sure which stage am I in, or maybe both 2 and 3. What I should do after this class is to strengthen my faith and moral values, to learn more about the business world and to stick to my faith when I am in the business world.