

Guayule Rubber in the Post-War Economy

THE GOVERNMENT IS GOING into the rubber business. Recently enacted legislation authorizes the leasing of 75,000 acres of land for growing the guayule rubber plant and the purchase of facilities for processing the raw product. In the light of existing circumstances such a step is probably necessary. Certainly we need all the rubber we can get and it is doubtful that private enterprise, already circumscribed and hedged about by the dislocations of war, would be equal to the emergency.

But after the war, what then? Do we want the state exercising the functions of industry in competition with free enterprise? These are people, of course, both in the Administration and out, who have lost faith in free institutions. They honestly believe that collectivism is better for mankind. Practically always, when speaking of maintaining or extending social gains, they refer to something in the nature of state socialism.

Such persons will view the encroachment of the state upon the domain of private enterprise not with alarm but with satisfaction. It is not necessary nor does it do any good to ascribe unworthy motive to anyone. In the final analysis we are all obeying the primal impulse to gratify our desires with the least effort.

But it may be of passing interest to note the attitude of two men high in the councils of state at the present time, one holding an appointive position at ten thousand dollars a year, the other an appointive position at nine thousand. Each was an early brain truster; each was at one time a college professor.

Says the first gentleman: "Business will logically be required to disappear. This is not an overstatement for the sake of emphasis, it is literally meant . . . National planning implies guidance of capital uses . . . Capital allocation would depend on knowledge from some planning agency of how much, for a measured future period, ought to be put to one use rather than to another. The first step in control would be to limit self-allocation."

Says the second: "The government will have to enter into direct financing of activities now supposed to be private, and a continuance of that direct financing must inevitably be that the government will own and control most of the productive plants of the United States."

Now let me quote a third, a man who died some time ago and whose philosophy, no doubt, would be indignantly repudiated by the gentlemen quoted above. This third speaker is none other than Karl

Marx, prophet of socialism, and he outlined the first point in his ten-point program for socialism in the following terms: "Centralization of credit in the hands of the state by means of a national bank with state capital and exclusive monopoly."

The similarity in the views of the three men is interesting, not to say jolting, to those of us old-fashioned enough to believe in private enterprise, in a free economy subject only to needful social restraints. Call them what you will, the three are birds of a feather, and that's that. By any name they'd smell the same—and that's terrible.

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