

Our Imperialist Deal with Britain

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT has bought some protection with \$25,000,000 worth of old destroyers. Maybe it was a good trade. From the point of view of a free economy, it seems very much like the "protection" which business men frequently find themselves impelled to purchase. Let's not cavil about the matter, although we ought to know how many millions in tax money it will take to build the protective equipment in the bases leased from Britain in the deal, how many more millions will be needed for maintenance.

When we have time to think, as we will whenever the national fear psychosis subsides, we might inquire whether our ninety-nine year leaseholds will turn into title deeds, and how. More important, if we ever should own these islands would the inhabitants fare better than those in our poverty-stricken Puerto Rico? Would these new lands also be transferred to rent-collectors? In other words, we ought to reflect on the social and economic effects of what might be a new American imperialistic venture. When we have time, when the present emergency is over, if we live that long.

Those who quibble about the legality or propriety of the purchase, or the price involved, are exceedingly limited in their understanding. They are dealing with an accident in a complex system. They are questioning an act which, under another form, is being consummated with due legality and age-old propriety every day in the week.

We have given England only \$25,000,000 worth of obsolescent vessels—and have received something in return. But many times this piddling amount is being sent annually to England (and to Germany and other countries) for which there is not even the semblance of a quid pro quo. Every cent of rent which is exported from America in money or goods is a sheer gratuity from American workers to foreign landlords.

Through local taxation these landlords must contribute to the upkeep of their respective national military establishments. To the extent that this taxation takes from them the gratuities exported from America do American workers pay for their military establishments, and get nothing in return.

Indeed, it would be cheap if we traded our entire navy for ownership of the American lands which enable foreign landlords to collect tribute from us. With the rent from these lands a bigger and better navy could be built; we would cease contributing to foreign navies which might be used against us, and after the new navy was paid for, the rent could be used for social purposes.

The \$25,000,000 worth of scrap iron we sent to England is so small an item in the gratuitous exportation of American labor products that it is silly even to think about it.