

Stop Badgering Business

IF YOU listened to some of the little bureaucrats in Washington and elsewhere you might get the idea that a successful businessman was an undesirable alien who might be sent back to any old country whence he came. By some curious twist the governmental regulators are becoming business badgers. They think there is a perpetual open season on successful business and that abusing business is the sure road to political promotion.

The notion seems to be that business is something that belongs to a few rich reactionaries who would not be hurt by a little extra beating. Nobody at this particular moment likes rich reactionaries and so it is perfectly safe to make the conduct of business as difficult and disagreeable as possible.

Of course the public interest actually does now require a governmental regulation of business far greater than would have seemed probable or reasonable a few years ago. Government regulation in one form or another is destined to continue. Our machine civilization, with our national markets, assures this.

But governmental regulation does not need to be hostile, suspicious, petty, vacillating or predatory, as too often it now appears to be.

A few years ago business was too little regulated and abuses developed. Samuel Insull and his ilk still leave a bitter taste in the mouth. Honest business is still paying for their sins. But ruthless, reckless men are not limited to one trade, profession or social or economic class. Now business regulation is extreme and the abuses are political rather than economic.

American business, whatever its limitations, has produced a better living for more people than any other system of production. The American motorcar manufacturer does not have to apologize for his performance. Neither does the telephone man nor the fellow who provides the other services so much a part of our American standard of living. Moreover, as any scrutiny shows, American business belongs not to the few but to the many.

Businessmen are no better than the common run of humanity, and big businessmen are certainly no worse. The bureaucrat politicians have been so aggressive that too many businessmen have at times doubted the integrity of their own enterprises. We need more courageous and clear thinking than that.

Big business does not have to justify the sum of its achievements in the United States. Measure American big business by any other human enterprise. The business record does not suffer in any comparison.

Big business created the highest material the bonds of corporations. All of the income savings banks possess for their depositors is derived from this same source. Most of the income from the endowment funds of colleges, churches, hospitals, foundations and other institutions devoted to serving the public welfare comes from corporate securities.

The entire public is the beneficiary of these revenues. The entire public is beneficiary of the employment provided by business when business has the chance to employ workers.

If we do not like private business we have, of course, the alternative of public business. We don't seem to like that very much. Certainly we are reluctant to turn the operation of the railroads over to the federal government. Railroad employees are definitely not eager to exchange private operation for public ownership. They fear their pay might be less.

If we don't want the public operation of business, that is to say, Communism or Fascism or one of the other varieties of Socialism, we ought, in all reason and decency, to give private business a chance to operate successfully.

Bureaucrats can badger business to death. Enterprise can be strangled in the red tape of pettifogging regulation and the mischievous interference of small and somewhat malicious minds. But nobody in this potentially rich land is truly benefited by such tactics.

We need a new co-operation between government and business if we are to get back swiftly to productive enterprise. Let the bureaucrats stop badgering business and relieved businessmen will, on their part, be only too willing to co-operate. Out of such a rational partnership prosperity will return with amazing rapidity.