

Businessmen Need to Be Aware Of Hidden Government Controls

OKLAHOMA small business people have been invited to attend a five-state seminar at Dallas March 16 and 17, so that representatives of 20 federal agencies can tell them what they can and cannot do under government regulations. The fee is \$25 per person.

The meeting is billed as "Government Assistance to Small Business Conference," but titles of some sessions suggest that political philosophies may be brought up also.

For example, one seminar announced by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) raises the questions: "Are you up to date on all of the anti-trust laws?" and "Do you want a strong free enterprise system?"

No indication was made as to whether FTC favors or opposes a strong free enterprise system, but actions of FTC indicate clearly that it upholds the concept of strong federal control over businesses and industries of all sizes and shapes.

This is significant, because the federal government is becoming increasingly a member of management in business. In the first place,

federal income taxes take as much as 48 per cent of corporate earnings, including those of many small businesses.

Almost daily businesses face additional regulations issued by Washington agencies and probably no one person in management of a business of any size either is aware of or comprehends all rules under which it must operate in order to avoid violations.

This caused one executive to observe that more decisions affecting his company's business were made in Washington than were made in the corporate board room. Just how free is our enterprise system when such a situation prevails?

The ostensible motive for the Dallas meeting is to assist small businessmen, since they will "receive information on regulations" and "counselors will be available," but why should such assistance be needed in a free enterprise system?

Why should it be necessary for a businessman to make a trip taking at least two days of time just to find out about more federal regulations that will cost him and his customers money?

A new book entitled "The New American Ideology" by Harvard Business Professor George C. Lodge introduces a new term that may apply here, also. It is communitarianism. In his book, Lodge attacks business and political values of competition, property rights, limited government, and rugged individualism.

"The movement in belonging to a community — communitarianism — is replacing the old individualism," Lodge writes. He explains that in corporations, communitarianism has taken the form of consensus between management and labor as the source of authority, supplanting the old system under which management alone ruled.

Harvard and other liberal universities have spawned many ideas of this kind and some of them have been implemented by the numerous alumni holding key government positions. This idea of management by non-owners is supported by labor leaders and professional consumerists for obvious reasons.

Free enterprise, like democracy, is highly desirable but it is fragile. Like dictatorships, government regulation of business is very thick and hard to break. The conference at Dallas will strengthen government's control of business; not weaken it.