

Congress Unreliable Ally in Fight To Save Free Enterprise System

ATACKS on our 200-year-old system of free enterprise did not cease when the Bicentennial passed its peak July Fourth. The drive to replace it with national socialism is continuing.

In order to save it, business and industry might find a much-used governmental device helpful — "affirmative action."

In a speech on "The Right of Election" in 1790, John Philpot Curran, an Irish statesman, said that "the condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance."

No less than to protect liberty is vigilance needed to preserve free enterprise. The two are inseparable, and if either is destroyed, it is doubtful if the other could survive.

Congress has before it a number of bills, any of which could cripple business and industry just as critically as divestiture would destroy oil companies when we need more petroleum.

The Senate Commerce Committee is considering legislation that would require corporations with more than \$250 million in annual sales to obtain federal charters in order to engage in business. This law is being pushed by overrated consumer activist Ralph Nader and his "corporate accountability group."

Federal chartering legislation is regarded by many as a major step toward nationalization of private business. The United States Industrial Council points out that business firms would be required to make drastic changes in management structures.

One of these changes would place important decisions in the hands of outside interests, with "public," labor union and probably government employees serving on boards of di-

rectors, with authority to overrule business management.

Corporate business already is overregulated, according to many business executives, with numerous agencies exercising power to require reports, inspections and questionnaires. Chartering of corporations is now handled by the separate states.

Government takes about one-fifth of the Gross National Product (GNP) from the private sector of business for public purposes, but it spends almost one-third of the GNP. As a result, the national debt mounts higher every fiscal year.

This is the kind of business management the government offers to business. It is apparent that many reformers would like for government to become the ultimate "middleman" in business.

The next step, if federal corporate chartering were to be made law, logically would be to reduce the specified volume of sales to require chartering of smaller businesses. Carried to the extreme, all businesses would be federally chartered.

Preceding our Bicentennial, a group with identifiable Communist associations called the Peoples Bicentennial Commission has steadily attacked the successful American system of free enterprise. It is just an organization, without official status.

However, spokesmen for PBC have indicated they may change the name to Peoples Business Commission, or something similar, and keep hammering away at the American business system.

Business and industry will need positive action to protect free enterprise. As presently constituted, Congress is an uncertain ally. Anti-business is an anti-consumer attitude.