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Economic Planning Implies Control

THE alternative to free enterprise is government regulation. It is safe to predict that in 1978 the trend toward more federal control of agriculture, business and industry will continue.

Federal agencies still are issuing regulations faster than President Carter's vacillating campaign to reduce needless rules is rubbing them out.

An associate explained the president believes government regulations are a bother but also recognizes government must step in at times for the good of society. Probably all regulators believe that.

By its very nature, national economic planning implies continuing control by a central authority. Effective planning is futile unless the planners have power to carry out their plans.

More legislation calling for additional economic planning is being prepared for the new session of Congress, and proponents claim acceptance of the idea is gaining, even

among businessmen.

Probably many are only resigning themselves to what seems to be inevitable. "Businessmen, after all, today must cope with the structure of not a free, but a regulated, enterprise system," writes Frank Vogl in the November issue of *Financier*.

Businessmen and economists appear to be either naive or misled when they suggest government ought to "bow out" of the action once national planners have set production or other guidelines. Government agencies don't just "bow out."

An article in *Fortune* magazine titled "Deceptive Allure of National Planning" observed "planning can work wonders when a nation has an unambiguous goal — say, winning a war or going to the moon — with few distracting concerns."

But the article added that mixing the market system and government contaminates both and "confuses government's own useful role as umpire with that of player."

More than anything, excessive

regulation intrudes on personal freedom. Andrei Sinyavsky, Russian writer, served a 5-year sentence just for writing about human rights.

"You see, our people have entrusted their rights to the state," Sinyavsky explained, "and the state decides what is useful to them and what is harmful to them. The state knows best."

Americans are being told the federal government knows best.

"The free enterprise system is dying," Cornell C. Maier, president of Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corp., said to a Miami University Business Conference in October.

"The battle is not over our economic system," Maier declared. "The battle is over our political system. Will we retain our individual rights and liberties as a people, or will we surrender them to an all-pervasive state that will decide what's best for us, and make us take it, whether we like it or not?"