

lieve competition to be neither generally good nor generally bad, but that a "middle-of-the-road" process will most likely produce a healthy society. They are all for competition in a horse race or in the American League or even among the suppliers of the things they have to buy, while going to no end of trouble to eliminate it, by law if necessary, in their own field as sellers.

Regarding competition, *per se*, they have no definite convictions. But persons with definite convictions about anything appear to be in rather short supply. Strong beliefs are developed by intimate knowledge of the true nature of the subject. If this be true, then it follows that we need to find the true nature of competition and then judge its merits.

A Noncompeting Society?

It is useful, at times, to examine the extreme point of view to show the probable effects of a particular policy or action and to indicate the direction most likely to produce desirable results. My study convinces me that there is but one "alternative" to competition. If I can show what the "alternative" actually is, that may help the part-time competitors in making a clear-cut choice.

Let us assume that we abandon competition in our society as of

tomorrow. At once there would be a mad rush of people from their present jobs to more glamorous or more highly paid jobs. Thousands decide to be big league ball players. Hundreds of thousands decide to be movie stars. Those ready to become bank presidents are in oversupply. No one hauls garbage. No one waits on tables or digs coal. And since price competition is eliminated, no one knows how much to charge or how much to pay for a particular product. As a matter of fact, the dislocation would be so complete that the economy would come to a standstill. Clearly, competition cannot be eliminated overnight. A great deal of advance work would be needed if such a move were not to result in total confusion.

So let's go at it another way. Assume a society in which competition is to play no part from the very beginning. Our first problem is to decide who will do what. For instance, who will be the doctors? Who will write music? Sell shoes? Make shoes? What will determine prices and wages? Who decides all these things? Certainly not one person because he would be a dictator. A committee, perhaps, but who shall choose the committee? It's difficult, indeed.

It looks as though we'll have to have some competition — at least enough to select a committee. And

so we have to select nominees, take a vote, and of course, accept a decision arrived at competitively. We will select those with the most votes. Now, perhaps, can't we do away with all competition?

Who Shall Be the Doctor?

Then the committee is faced with the questions: Who shall be doctors and who shall write music and so on. Before they face up to that one, an infinitely more difficult problem faces them. How *many* shall be doctors? Will specialization be allowed or shall that become a subproblem after deciding how many doctors? And what about fees, prices, and wages? How will they be determined? Will any persons be appointed to act as inventors? Will anyone be set apart to occasionally don an asbestos suit and step into a flaming oil or gas well out of control? Who will become the lawmakers? This last may give a clue as to where the committee will locate itself.

It is not necessary to labor the point further to show that the committee has its hands full. But let us assume that a formula has been worked out by the committee. An extremely large catalog of possible occupations has been set up which takes account of the innumerable differences in jobs and which describes each in sufficient detail to render selection a little

easier. Now we are ready to select the actual people to man these occupations.

"Everybody stand up and count off. The first 2,000 are doctors, the next 1,000,000 go to the factory suboffice and get divided up there." And so on. Ridiculous, isn't it? Of course, that couldn't be the way. "We'll give tests — aptitude tests, of course." And so a long series of aptitude tests are evolved with thousands of subtests and gradations in order to match as easily as possible the many variations in a particular job category. Now, shall the "best" jobs be given to those with the highest grades? Or is that too competitive? Finally, we decide that we must introduce that much additional competition.

Where Shall He Live?

Where shall people live? Obviously, all the doctors can't be in one town or state and all the blacksmiths in another. The formula must be applied and all the jobs filled in the right proportion. The committee, of course, must decide who lives in what towns, too. Well drillers can be easily placed, you see, because it's well known where oil can be found — isn't it? And this brings up an interesting point. Who decides precisely where the bit shall bite? And how shall a test be devised to find that man?