

Rubber Patents.

NM 2/10/42
THOUSANDS cheered a couple of weeks ago when Jesse Jones of the Federal Loan Agency announced a \$400,000,000 appropriation to produce synthetic rubber. Within a short time, we were told, there would be enough rubber to satisfy the demands of our tank, aircraft, and naval weapons. And after that might come relief for the millions who get around on rubber tires. This country has the natural gases and petroleum oils from which synthetic rubber is made. And it has the chemical genius, too.

But across our editorial desk this week comes a provocative memorandum on the subject. It's from the Union for Democratic Action and it asks Senator Truman's investigating committee to look into the charges that the Nazi concern, the I. G. Farben dye trust, may actually be preventing us from getting the best possible patents for rubber manufacture. According to this memo, the trouble lies in the tie-up between Standard Oil of New Jersey and the I. G. Farben.

Back in 1929 these two companies formed another organization called Jasco, the purpose of which was to enable German and American engineers to share their experience in chemical research. When the Nazis came to power, IG Farben refused to let Jasco have its most secret patents, and according to the memo, a few insiders in the Standard Oil of New Jersey declined to press the Nazis to share their information on rubber manufacture. The result was that the Nazis got started seven years ago in their synthetic rubber development, and the United States was left far behind.

Just a few months before the war broke out, IG Farben transferred hundreds of its patents to Jasco, presumably to escape the action of an Alien Property Custodian in case of war. This transaction was carried out, says the memo, to hide the patents behind the Stars and Stripes, and enable the patents to go back to Germany when the war was over. Again, a few Standard Oil officials—not the majority of its patriotic stockholders or directors—have acquiesced in this procedure. Net result is that these patents are hidden away in an American company at a time when America needs all its talent for rubber research.

We don't know whether the memo is justified in every detail. It's quite possible that other companies do have enough knowledge about rubber to outrace the Nazis. But certainly, the tie-up between Standard Oil of New Jersey and I. G. Farben is worth investigating. It's a matter of record that such tie-ups have already put us way behind in the matter of beryllium and magnesium production, as the anti-trust division of the Department of Justice revealed last year. We can't afford to let the same thing happen in rubber.