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EDITORIAL COMMENT

MILLIONS of tons of "hot air pressure" have been wasted on the stump and in Congress in a sham fight over the tariff, and after a hundred years that complicated hobby is still ever present with us, as a vehicle upon which the professional politicians sail into coveted political offices, and it remains the "unsolved problem." What's the use to "solve" it when it comes in so handy to confuse the minds of ignorant voters in each election and obscure the real important economic questions that affect the direct interests of those concerned? For instance, a parcels post, somewhat like that which the Germany postoffice system maintains, would be worth more to the producing and consuming world as an economic means of distribution than any other reform possible at this time, but the professional politician never mentions it unless forced to do by the vigorous and persistent demands of his constituents. In a recent issue of this paper we published a letter written to *The Rural New Yorker* by H. C. Price, who is visiting in Germany, in which he referred to the benefits and economies made possible through the parcels post in that county, where packages up to eleven pounds can be sent through the mails anywhere at twelve cents per package. In this country the express companies would charge you not less than a dollar to transport a package of that size five hundred miles.

WHILE in the eastern countries the parcels post is used in buying, in his second letter to *The Rural New Yorker* Mr. Price brings out the fact that farmers use that system more in selling his products to town and city folks than in buying. He says:

"Next in importance is the shipment of eggs and dressed poultry, especially of geese, which come in immense numbers from Pommern in east Germany. The goose is the national feast fowl of Germany, just as the turkey is of America. Through the parcels post it is possible for the farmers 200 or 300 miles away from Berlin, Leipzig or Dresden to ship eggs each week to customers who live in these cities, and the advantage is mutual; the man in the city deals directly with the pro-

ducer and is able to get fresh goods, and if they are not fresh he can make complaint direct to the one who is responsible instead of to a dealer. Cheese, honey, fruit, vegetables and flowers are also important products in the parcels post shipment from the country. Cream and milk may be sent, but it is not found advisable to ship them to any extent by this means. The general use of the parcels post by farmers is shown by the statistics of the post offices of rural districts, which show the number of packages sent out by the offices much greater than the number received and the farmers of Germany seem to have used the parcels post more freely for selling their products than they have for buying what they consume."

* * *

THERE ARE many reasons why an effective and economic parcels post system would be even more beneficial to producers and consumers than it is in the European country. Mr. Price sums up his observation as follows:

All of the important European countries have had a parcels post established so long that it has become a part of the every day life of the people, just as much as the delivery of mail in the large cities has with us in America. I do not refer to the delivery of rural mail, because that is recent, and while no one would think of giving it up, we have not yet gotten over wondering how and why we ever did without it. Here parcels post has been established so long that no one ever thinks of the time when they did not have it; it is taken as a matter of course, and when I say we have no parcels post in the United States they cannot understand how it is possible that in a rich country like the United States we are lacking the convenience of the parcels post.

Notwithstanding the many advantages that America has over the European countries, one cannot help seeing some of the advantages of having the public utilities, such as the railroads, the telegraph, the telephone and the street railways operated by the government, as they generally are in Germany, rather than by private interests. The private interest operates a utility as illustrated in our express companies, so as to give the largest return possible on the capital invested. The government operates a utility for the sole purpose of giving the best and cheapest service possible, as illustrated in the parcels post here. Any profits from the business, which, if owned by private interests, would be declared as dividends and drawn out, are, if operated by the government, put back into the service for its improvement, or the rates charged the private individual are reduced till they barely cover the cost of operation and maintenance. Our express rates would have been very different if the express companies had been operated on this basis for the last generation.

The advantage of the parcels post as it is found here may be summed up as follows:

1. It gives a cheap and convenient method of sending small packages any distance.
2. It affords a method for farmers marketing butter, eggs, poultry, fruits, vegetables and flowers direct to consumers.
3. It affords the city man an opportunity of getting fresh produce direct from the producer without the intervention of the middleman.
4. It affords the merchant a method of selling and delivering goods direct to the farmer.
5. It tends to establish uniform prices for produce, since the cost of sending produce in packages of 11 pounds or less is uniform when the distance is over 10 miles.
6. It affords a means of transportation that is mutually beneficial to producer and consumer.

STRENUOUS efforts were made by the Nashville jobbers and other opponents of the parcels post to line up the local merchants in convention at Nashville recently to protest against the passage of a parcels post law, and letters were sent out with propositions to pay railroad expenses of the merchants. After publishing one of these letters, the *Weekly Jeffersonian*, of Thomson, Ga., makes the following remarks:

"The above is an impudent attempt to line up the merchants behind the cormorant express companies. The investigations which have been made by the Interstate Commerce Commission have developed facts which are startling, even to those who have suffered from express company extortion.

"Their own lawyers had to admit that they COLLECT CHARGES AT BOTH ENDS, CONSTANTLY; and that they never refund the money, unless a fight on them is threatened.

"These express companies originally put very little money into their business; but, during the last 30 years, they have robbed the American people of \$576,000,000.

"They, and the railroads, are in cahoot, and they divide the booty! *The men who own the express companies, own the railroads—See!*

"Of course, J. P. Morgan is the King-bee. In fact, the infamy of the system that now oppresses our people, to the point of desperation, can be summed in one word; and that word is, MORGAN.

"The idea of our merchants being used as cats-paws, to rake out chestnuts for railroads, express companies, and Morgan!

"One of the merchants who was tempted with a free ticket to Nashville, enclosed me the circular letter. He patriotically wrote me that he did not intend to be used as a tool in this express company plunder of the farmers.

"We must see to it that every man we elect to Congress, this Fall, is pledged to the Parcels Post."

* * *

EXPRESS companies fix their charges arbitrarily. Their charges are not based on freight charges or anything else. They simply charge what they feel like charging, and frequently the charges are so high that it amounts to confiscation. If you want a thorough-bred shote or yearling from a distant stock breeder you must pay half the value of the pig or calf to get the express company to transport it to you. By extended correspondence the writer got in communication with a Virginia stock grower the other day who made a fair price on a good Guernsey calf. After investigating the express company's rate we found that the said robber express company intended to hold us up for a little over twenty dollars for hauling that calf a distance of four or five hundred miles. The "tariff" looked little compared with such robbery as that. By the way, when your candidate for Congress, or United States Senate, makes his long tariff speech, don't get impatient or interrupt him. He has gone through a great strain to prepare that speech on the tariff (a subject which he himself may know very little about) and it wouldn't be treating him fairly to interrupt him in its delivery. But don't forget to take him off privately and ask him how he stands on the express monopoly—whether he is in favor of or against its extortion. Or better still, write him a letter occasionally about parcels post, just to let him know that you are one of his