

"PEOPLE'S EXPRESS CO.," PARCELS POST, HAS PROVEN ITS VALUE

BY GILSON GARDNER

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Washington, D. C., Jan. 5.—The first test of our new parcel post in handling the great Christmas "rush" is a great success! It has filled Postmaster General Burleson with complete gratification.

"It has proved a tremendous success," declared Burleson to me. "While all the actual figures are not at hand and, of course, cannot be compiled for some weeks, we have been in constant touch by wire with every section of the country and have reports from various departments which show without any doubt that our government as a carrier of packages for the people has established a system which meets every requirement.

"The big test of a system like this comes in such a time of rush as the Christmas season. We have met that test!

"The mail kept moving; delays have been only slight. Wired reports show we had only ten per cent of unworked mail as compared with last year. The ordinary mail was not delayed at all. In one small place in the south and to some extent in New York, mail was delayed a few hours, but that was worked out right away."

"How did the departmental service compare with that of the express companies, Mr. Postmaster General?" I asked.

"That is a very interesting point. I am glad you asked," Burleson replied.

"The express companies were watching to see what we would do. I won't say they would have rejoiced at our failure, but I have my own guess as to that. You probably noticed the story which made its appearance on the 19th of December, to the effect that there was congestion in the mails and that there would be serious delay. This was telegraphed all over the Middle West. There was not a vestige of truth in it, and I should judge the only possible purpose was to divert as many parcels as possible to the express companies. We denied the story at the time. There was not, at that time, or afterward, any serious delay ANYWHERE in the country. We put on about 6,000 additional people temporarily to help handle the Christmas rush. This is the usual number put on at the Christmas season. This means our employes worked with wonderful efficiency, for the amount of mail handled this Christmas was immensely greater than at any previous time in the history of the postoffice."

"Is the postal service efficient?"

"Again I am glad you asked that question," said the postmaster general. "There is a general impression that the postal service is inefficient and that its inefficiency is due to the supposed fact that it is a political institution. I should like to say right here that there is not a private or-

ganization or any organization in the country—or in any other country—which is as efficient as the postal service. This statement may astonish some people, but it is a fact and provable by figures. For instance, our postal records show that in 1886 the average number of mail pieces handled per annum per employe was 28,313, at a cost, per piece, of 1.44 cents. By 1912, employes were handling 60,504 pieces per employe, at a cost reduced to 1.34 cents per piece. That means not only that the units of service have more than doubled, but that city and rural delivery have been added, thus doubling the quantity of service, while the quality of service has nearly doubled. Further than that, out of 16 principal nations