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FROM THE PROGRESSIVE BUSINESS INTERESTS OF OLYMPIA TO THE CONSUMING PUBLIC, GREETING:

Knowing there is much merchandise purchased from out-of-town concerns under the honest though generally mistaken impression that it can be bought from such houses cheaper than from our home merchants, we have arranged to have Mr. David Powell tell you in a series of stories how the people of many communities in the Central West came to see the fallacy of this widely prevalent belief.

Knowing our lines and our ability to meet competition if but given the opportunity, we earnestly urge every open-minded consumer to give careful consideration to the facts Mr. Powell will present in these articles, which will appear in The Washington Standard beginning August 14. It will mean dollars and cents for you and a bigger, better and more beautiful city for all of us to live in or near.

Sincerely yours,

J. E. KELLEY,  
HARRIS DRY GOODS CO.  
PAUL H. NEUFFER, Jeweler.  
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**LARGE SHARE OF MERCHANT'S  
SO-CALLED PROFIT GOES  
FOR FREIGHT CHARGES**

OFTEN NOT TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN COMPARING PRICES.

Comparison of Selling Methods Prove Regular Dealers Have Great Advantage.

By David Powell.  
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In a preceding article of this series the conclusions of a factory cost expert were given as to the comparative buying power of different classes of merchants which very clearly demonstrates that the larger concerns have very little, if any, advantage in the buying of merchandise. In this article the selling methods employed by catalog houses will be compared with those employed by the regular dealers.

The first item of expense the local merchant has to consider in fixing his selling price is freight charges, and the next is his cost of doing business. In freight charges the local dealer has a little, if anything, the best of it. All of his goods are shipped direct from the factory by freight, and much of it in car load lots that give him a still lower rate. Against this the mail-order merchandise must stand the initial freight charge from the factory to either the central or branch house, and a second transportation charge from the distributing house to the consumer. This second charge averages very high, as a large part of it is either express or postage. That the catalog house has no advantage here is quite apparent.

Upon the merchant's ability to properly regulate his cost of doing business depends his ultimate success or failure. To the consumer not versed in commercial terms, the true meaning of this expression is often not quite clear. It is determined by totalling all items of expense connected with the running of a business for a certain period, say a year, and the percentage this amounts of the total sales for the same period is known as the "cost of doing business." This, however, is entirely apart and separate from the percentage of profit a merchant adds to the cost of an article to determine his selling price. By better methods and stricter economy one merchant may do business at a less expense than his competitor, which would enable him to sell the same article at a lower price and still make exactly the same percentage of profit on it.

It is plainly evident that if the large city stores and catalog houses have no advantage over the small dealer in buying an article, it is manifestly impossible for them to sell it for less than the small dealer, unless their cost of doing business is less than the local merchant's. From many sources it has been learned what different merchants figure their cost of doing business and it very rarely exceeds 20 per cent. It would simplify matters very much if a few of the big catalog houses would publish the same information. As of course they won't, in order to make a comparison it will be necessary to estimate it. For example, take one of the large mail-order houses situated in Chicago.

Such a concern has an immense

overhead expense entailed in maintaining a large office force as well as a corps of high salaried advertisement writers. These are the men who paint in such attractive word pictures the virtues of the goods sold by the house. For this work they secure the best men they can get, paying them salaries ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 per year. Did it ever occur to you what it costs to put in your hands one of these beautifully illustrated catalogs? In their literature you are informed that they are generously giving away something free, postage prepaid, that represents an outlay on their part of some 25 cents, and they hope you will appreciate their efforts to aid the oppressed and downtrodden in reducing the high cost of living, etc. Now, as a matter of fact, although they put out several millions of copies of their books each year, it costs them far more than 25 cents.

Taking a catalog issued for this season by one of the two largest mail-order houses of the country as a sample, and, the same number of copies the same house sent out last year, a careful estimate shows that just for printing and mailing the cost would exceed 60 cents. Add to that, pro-rata, the enormous sum it costs them for their staff of "Ad" writers and illustrators and the total would very probably exceed a dollar. Many people receive a catalog who do not buy a cent's worth throughout the whole year, so it is very apparent that the statement given out recently by a former employee of the house in mind was very near the truth when he said the expense of publishing their catalog for 1913 amounted to 2-3 per cent of their total sales for the year. With their immense office force, high real estate values, general advertising, etc., it is reasonable to suppose that their cost of doing business could not by any possibility be less than 20 per cent—probably more.

If it costs the catalog and large city houses as much to do business, and they can buy their goods no cheaper, there is only one way left in which they can sell under the local merchant, and that is by being satisfied with a smaller rate of income on the capital invested in the business. How many of your merchants make more than 10 per cent on their invested capital? Not very many. Yet the mail-order house referred to above declared a dividend last year of a trifle more than 22 per cent.

A very natural mistake is made by many people in thinking they can buy goods cheaper from stores doing a business in a large city than they can from their own home town merchants. There are many reasons why this belief exists among dwellers in small towns and rural communities, but the main one is because people simply take for granted the statements made by such concerns in their advertisements and in catalogs, without taking the time or making the effort to investigate for themselves. Many go to the large nearby cities to make their purchases because they think they have a larger and more varied stock of goods to select from. In a measure that is true, but bear in mind the fact while you are considering this question, that the large city stores cater to the extreme of society, the millionaire, as well as to

the dweller in the slums. The successful city merchant who owns such a store, you can depend upon it, has made a most exhaustive study of his trade, and knows that he has to gather his stock from the four quarters of the globe to meet the demands made by his wide range of patrons. Just so with the merchant in the smaller towns. He has neither the millionaire nor the slum dweller to consider and naturally does not burden his shelves with goods that he knows there is no demand for, but within the range of the demands of his community his stock is just as varied, and just as large, as that of his brother merchant in the large city.

Claiming to have located her in the Catholic school at Everett, J. S. Elswick this week obtained a writ of habeas corpus from the local superior court to compel the mother superior of the Dominican Catholic school at Everett to produce his daughter, Thelma, in the Snohomish county superior court Friday of this week. The girl disappeared some two weeks ago and investigation brought forth the fact that her mother, who was divorced from her husband some years ago, had been in Olympia just prior to the girl's disappearance. Elswick contends she was taken away from his home illegally and is being detained against his wishes and her own will.

Mrs. William Myers left this week for an extended visit with relatives and friends in Nebraska.

There has been considerable excitement out at the Crescent Oil company's well the last few days, owing to the strong gas pressure. The drill is now pounding away on a cap rock, just below which, it is believed, the paying oil sands will be struck.

**LET 'ER  
BUCK...  
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