

The Postoffice and the People.

The abhorrence in which socialism is held by the American people is in part responsible for the fact that we have permitted public utilities to be made the sport of private monopolists. The only important public utility that is completely in the hands of the national government is the postal system, and the same foolish fear, encouraged by the false statements and half-truths of private interests, keeps us from receiving anything like the benefits we should from our postal system. This is not a matter of opinion, but of demonstration; for in Great Britain and other European countries the postal service is as much more complete than our own as our present service is better now than it was in the days of the stage coach.

Nowhere else is socialism more severely frowned upon than in Great Britain; yet over there the postal service includes a parcels post, the telephone, the telegraph, the savings bank, insurance annuity, money order, and other lines of business, and it is the universal verdict that all are well conducted and at the minimum of expense.

An incident that illustrates the vast difference between our own advantages and those enjoyed by our British friends is told by James L. Cowles, secretary of the Postal Progress league of New York. Mr. Cowles recently mailed a suit case, weighing eleven pounds three ounces, at a New York sub-station, paying 2 cents an ounce upon it as first-class matter, or \$3.58. A 10-cent special delivery stamp was added. In less than six hours it was delivered to its address in New Haven, which is said to be somewhat better time than is usually made by express companies for this distance. Writes Mr. Cowles: "Switzerland would have carried the same case for 8 cents, Germany for less than 10 cents, England for 25 cents, and for 75 cents the English postoffice would have carried this suit case from any station in the British Isles to any station in New Zealand. For the same postage paid for transportation to New Haven our own postoffice would take it to the furthest home on the most remote rural route in California, to the Philippines or Sandwich Islands, and after the 1st of June to Shanghai, China. And it ought to be done for a much smaller sum. For a single cent will pay the cost to-day of the transport of a bushel of wheat between the two furthest railroad terminals on our Atlantic and our Pacific coasts."

Why do not we in this land of the free enjoy such privileges at such low cost? The dread specter of socialism (although national control of public utilities is not socialism at all), and powerful lobbies representing great franchise interests unite to block the way. Talk about a postal savings bank and the whole banking fraternity is up in arms, and what Congressman wants to offend a banker? Talk about a national telephone, and from every State in the Union

will hasten the representatives of that huge monopoly to put their veto on congressional action. So of the telegraph. And when it comes to a parcels post there is your Uncle Thomas Platt, president of the United States Express Company and "boss" of the controlling party in New York, with his friend and colleague, Chauncey M. Depew, prepared to dynamite the whole scheme rather than that special privilege should be affected. And on the other hand the country merchant, who fears the mail-order houses of the metropolis, and declares that, if the farmer could buy in the cities and get a carrying rate such as the government would give him, the rural store would go by the board; so he lends his influence to the opposition.

Thus do special interests stand in the way of the general welfare. The people of the United States ought to have everything in their own hands that belongs to the public, and they should begin right now by adding to the postal service every convenience that can be attached to it. The farmer is one of the men most directly interested, and he should impress his views upon his member of Congress in such a way as to insure action—or the member's retirement to private life. "The cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy," says Dr. Lyman Abbott. That is apropos here, for there are many ills in the postal service to-day that would be cured if the public were brought into closer touch and interest with it by extending its usefulness in all proper ways.—Chicago Rural Voice.

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