

Free Delivery for the Towns and Villages

Speech of Hon. Warren Worth Hailey in the House of Representatives

Mr. Speaker, I wish in a few words to direct attention to what seems to me a most unwarranted and an extremely flagrant and inexcusable discrimination in our postal service—a discrimination so rank and so utterly indefensible that it is a marvel it has gone so long practically unchallenged.

I refer to the denial of that free delivery and collection of mail to the towns and villages of the country which have long been enjoyed by the cities and which in recent years have been extended to rural districts. The injustice to the towns and villages is obvious. It puts them at a distinct disadvantage. It subjects them to a handicap which would not be tolerated for an instant were it to come in the form of a different and a higher rate for postage. Yet a different and a higher rate of postage would not be a worse hardship than that imposed by a discrimination in service such as that which actually has been accepted with scarcely a murmur for so many years.

City delivery service is now in operation in 1,709 towns and cities, serving approximately a population of 47,000,000, at a cost of \$38,000,000. Experimental delivery is in operation in 114 communities, at a cost of \$90,000. Officials of the post-office department estimate that there are 6,604 communities, with an average population of 2,000 where there is no carrier delivery service. Estimating that it would require an average of two carriers, at \$600 each per annum, to serve each of these communities, should delivery service be established, the cost would be \$7,924,800 per annum.

Mr. Speaker, can there be any sound reason why the 12,000,000 residents of towns and villages should be denied what is freely and most properly given the residents of city and rural districts? To me the situation seems abominable. It is glaringly inequitable. In proportion to number the towns and villages are bearing an equal burden with cities and rural districts in supporting this government. They are therefore equally entitled to all its benefits and advantages.

Can there be any gentleman on this floor or elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, who would seriously propose that letters mailed in a town or village should bear a 3-cent stamp while those mailed in the city or on a rural route were required to bear only a 2-cent stamp? Such a proposition would be rejected instantly. Yet little protest has thus far been heard against a discrimination which in effect is just as little capable of defense. If the patron of the postoffice who lives on Broadway or out in the country is entitled to have his mail collected and delivered at his door, is not the patron who lives in a town or village equally entitled to similar service?

Mr. Speaker, he is not getting it. Two or three or more times every day he must drop his work to go to the postoffice to receive or to deposit his mail. This means loss of time; it means inconvenience; it means just as much to him relatively as it would mean to the banker or the farmer if he were obliged to quit his counting house or his plow for a trip to the postoffice. The notion that time in a town or village is a negligible quantity is as idle as the notion that we may tax ourselves rich or that to ship more goods out of the country than we bring in is to create a "favorable" balance. Time is money in the town or village as much as in the city or the rural district, and the resident of town or village is entitled in all con-

science to every consideration and advantage which we accord to the broker of the city or the farmer out in the remote rural district.

It was with these thoughts in mind Mr. Speaker, that a few days ago I brought in a bill (H. R. 8947) under the provisions of which free delivery is to be extended to all towns and villages in the United States which are not entitled under existing laws to such delivery. I am extremely glad to say that this proposal met with an instant response from communities which it is designed to relieve. Newspaper comment upon this measure has been wide and mainly favorable. The tone of the country press is especially enthusiastic. Everywhere the proposal has been hailed as a sound one, supported by every consideration of reason and justice. I shall ask leave, Mr. Speaker, to append to my remarks some of these newspaper comments, believing that the members of this house will be interested in them, as I have been, and that they will lend strength to my appeal for what I deem to be simple justice to many millions of our best and most useful citizens, for everywhere the quality of the citizenship of town and village is recognized. It is largely from the town and village that the best element of the great centers of business are recruited.

The town and the village are the nurseries and the schools where strong, capable, ambitious, and resourceful men and women are fitted for the great things which need to be done. It seems to me a safe assertion that five out of six of the membership of this body were village bred. The foundations of the careers they have made for themselves were laid in these small communities, where the touch of elbow was close, where human sympathy was spontaneous, where life had room to expand, and where the social amenities were unrestrained by dubious convention.

It was my good fortune to grow up in a village myself, and I can therefore speak with some knowledge of village life and of village needs. There may be a sneer here and there from the city dweller, who fancies that the villager has nothing to do, and that going to the postoffice two or three times a day is a mere diversion, a break in the dreadful monotony. But life in the town or village is just as earnest a proposition as life in the city or in the country. It has its cares, its interests, its compulsions, its necessities, its exacting duties, not less than life elsewhere. Thank God it is not so sordid, not so hopeless, not so steeped in monotony as we see it in some of the crowded centers; it is not so frivolous and idle and meretricious as we see it as it flaunts its fine feathers at the resorts of fashion; but it is sincere, full of zest, alive to its responsibilities, stimulated always by neighborly kindness and by that relative freedom of movement which the overcrowded city makes impossible.

The bill as introduced by me is as follows:

"A bill (H. R. 8947) to authorize the postmaster general to extend the free-delivery mail service to towns and villages of 1,000 population or over.

"Be it enacted, etc., That the postmaster general be, and he is hereby authorized and directed to extend free-delivery mail service to all towns and villages in the United States having a population of 1,000 or over that are not by existing law entitled

to such delivery, and for this purpose the sum of \$10,000,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, to be available immediately on the passage of this act and to be expended for the purpose named by the postmaster general under such regulations as he may prescribe.

"That all acts or parts of acts inconsistent with the provisions of this act are hereby repealed."

I would hardly be fair to myself did I not admit that I am actuated by a double motive in demanding an equalization of the postal service in behalf of a class now denied almost the best half of that service. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that if we open the way for spending the revenues of the government for useful purposes we shall automatically close the way for spending them for purposes far from useful, say for battleships and big guns, for fortification and military expansion. The waste of money in this direction has been wanton. Had it been thrown into the sea less harm would have been done; there would have been the loss only of the money itself or of the labor it represented. But when it is devoted to the building of dreadnoughts and to the maintenance of a great standing army in a time of profound peace, we add to the unnecessary burdens thus imposed the waste of human effort involved in the drawing of thousands of young men from gainful pursuits into a service which brings no gain either moral or material and makes them pensioners upon the labor and industry of the workers.

I do not care to dwell particularly upon this phase of the matter, but it is one which deserves consideration. We have been running mad over militarism in its various aspects, and even a democratic congress is proposing to spend or will be asked to spend more than \$300,000,000 on the army and navy during the fiscal year to come. Against this I protest. In our platform we are pledged "to that simplicity and economy which befit a democratic government." Our solemn word is plighted to the American people that we will lighten the burden of taxation and sharply depart from the program of extravagance to which the republican party had been committed for years. Shall we disregard the duty which our stewardship imposes? Shall we do even the republican party in lavish expenditure? Or shall we lop off the useless and the profligate and turn our attention to matters which will yield a return on the investment?

Mr. Speaker, I am willing to spend money freely where it can be spent with a reasonable assurance of bringing a return. There is therefore no hesitation on my part in proposing to spend a few millions for a needed improvement in the postal service. This service has always brought substantial betterments. It has always yielded abundantly in public benefits on the investment. No function of the government comes closer to the people than that of the postoffice. Its services are of inestimable value. We can scarcely conceive of the condition which would prevail were this service cut off wholly from all as it is now cut off in part from the towns and villages of the land. Our business and social life is so intimately knit up with this service that to destroy it would be almost to destroy that life itself. And I want this intimate relation to be more intimate still.

I want it extended to include the now neglected element. I want it to

reach out to the communities now relatively isolated. I want it to mean as much to town and village as it today means to city and rural district. And so I appeal here on this floor and to the people of the country for what I conceive to be bare justice in the interest of good business. I appeal for this in behalf of 12,000,000 American citizens whose rights are equal with the rights of all the rest, yet who are getting less than an equal treatment. They seem hitherto to have been voiceless. No one has stood here to speak for them. But in my humble way let me plead their cause. They are the victims of a sheer injustice. A disproportionate burden rests upon them. Advantages as much their right as they are the right of the other millions who enjoy them are withheld from them in the name of economy. But there is no economy in injustice. It always imposes penalties. And the penalty of this injustice is being paid every day by the people of the United States in a postal service that falls short of that highest efficiency which would be attained by carrying the mails to all as the mails are now carried to some.

USED TO SUCH VICISSITUDES

Colonel Roosevelt, at a luncheon at Oyster Bay, told a hunting story. "Smith," he said, "had a narrow escape from being killed by a lion in Nairobi.

"When the lion closed its jaws on you," asked a friend, "did you give yourself up for lost?"

"Oh, no," Smith answered calmly. "You see, I sleep in a folding bed." —New Orleans States.

EVERY YEAR

I feel 'tis growing colder
Every year;

And my heart, alas! gets older
Every year.

I can win no new affection;
I have only recollection,

Deeper sorrow and dejection,
Every year.

Of the loves and sorrows blended
Every year;

Of the joys of friendship ended
Every year;

Of the ties that still might bind me
Until Time to Death resigned me,

My infirmities remind me
Every year.

Ah! how sad to look before us
Every year,
When the cloud grows darker o'er us
Every year;

When we see the blossoms faded
That to bloom we might have aided,
And immortal garlands braided
Every year.

To the past go more dead faces
Every year,
As the loved leave vacant places
Every year.

Everywhere the sad eyes meet us;
In the evening's dusk they greet us,
And to come to them entreat us,
Every year.

Yes, the shores of life are shifting
Every year;
And we are seaward drifting
Every year;

Old pleasures, changing, fret us;
The living more forget us;
There are fewer to regret us,
Every year.

But the truer life draws nigher
Every year;
And its morning star climbs higher
Every year.

Earth's hold on us grows lighter,
And the heavy burden lighter,
And the Dawn immortal brighter,
Every year.

—WILLIAM COWAN.
Chamber's Journal.