

is trying to outdo the others improves services and brings prices down.<sup>1</sup> The record speaks eloquently for itself on this point.

The Postmaster General sees that the carrier pigeon business would have a bright future had A T & T been organized as has the Post Office Department. Yet, he recommends another government monopoly to displace the one that has failed! Does he not understand the vital distinction between the two? One is private, competitive, and for profit, while the other is political, monopolistic, and not for profit.

### **Collectivizing the Problem**

And now to the heart of "the problem." Why is mail delivery a national problem, whereas no such problems arise in the delivery of the human voice, or of human beings, or of drugs and groceries, or of gas and oil? It is because mail delivery, as distinguished from the others, has been nationalized. In other words, this activity has been collectivized. Were we to break the monopoly of mail delivery, "the problem" would

<sup>1</sup> Some will argue that A T & T has little if any competition. True, it has about 88 per cent of the business, but we must not overlook the fact that there are 2,500 independent telephone companies in the U.S.A. A T & T has to operate as if there were enormous competition—"run scared," as we say—or there will be!

vanish, disintegrate; it would shatter into 200,000,000 fragments.<sup>2</sup>

Nationalize or collectivize verbal communication, that is, consolidate into a single system the 200,000,000 individual desires to transmit the spoken word, and immediately we would have "a problem" incapable of solution. Suppose it were up to you to coordinate 200,000,000 desires to talk! What to do? Just as the Post Office Department does, you'd doubtless lump these millions of requirements into a few dozen divisions or categories. But even these you could not manage to the satisfaction of the customers. You would have "a problem"!

Our nationalized mail delivery is lumped into categories. There is the personal message called first-class mail, 5¢ for the first ounce if by surface, 8¢ if by air. There is the no-charge or franked mail, billions of envelopes containing everything from subsidy checks to political propaganda. There is Rural Free Delivery. And library literature that goes across the nation for one-fifteenth of a cent an ounce! And highly subsidized delivery of magazines, newspaper, catalogues! And then there is below-cost freight delivery lumped under the heading of "parcel post." There are other

<sup>2</sup> Approximate population of U.S.A.

categories; but when all is said and done, the Post Office Department has a daily deficit of \$3,000,000 and several million dissatisfied customers. This is indeed "a problem," primarily because the industry is collectivized.

### **Free the Market**

How is the national problem of mail delivery to be de-collectivized? The solution is simple enough to outline but difficult to implement within the prevailing political climate. Only two steps are necessary:

1. Repeal all laws that prohibit anyone from delivering mail for pay.

2. Let the Congress appropriate no more funds to defray Postal deficits, forcing the Department either to close down or to charge rates sufficient to cover costs.

Should the Post Office Department elect to stay in business, the rates would zoom. Rural Free Delivery might have to be discontinued. But, what's wrong with a rural resident picking up his mail in town as he does his groceries? No more franked mail! Politicians and bureaucrats would be obliged to include postage in their budgets. And the mail order houses with their subsidized delivery of catalogues and merchandise! Are they to go out of business? Perish the thought! These ingenious folks

will discover how to handle their own delivery problems, better and at lower cost.

Gone would be "the problem." In its place would be 200,000,000 individuals each with his delivery requirements and with numerous competing services trying to please. One might even expect postal services to advertise for customers, just as the privately operated telephone companies offer attractive suggestions that more people make greater use of the telephone. No "problem"—just millions of requirements and business opportunities.

There are two major stumbling blocks to free market mail delivery.

First, governmental mail handling is a habit of long-standing. We inherited the practice from the Old World where it was instituted more as a system of censorship and snooping than as a means of efficient delivery. Without giving the matter a second thought, our forefathers wrote into Article I of our Constitution, "To establish post offices and post roads." The practice is surrounded by an aura of sanctity—however irrational.

Second, neither Mr. Kappel, nor any other man, can possibly envision how people acting freely, independently, privately, voluntarily, cooperatively could deliver mail