

dom of entry into the German market which it might never have secured under a single schedule tariff. The trade between Germany and America much exceeds four hundred million dollars; not only is it an immensely valuable trade in itself, as indicated by these figures, but it is particularly valuable because of the difficulty which, in the event of a tariff war, either country would experience in the endeavor to obtain certain commodities elsewhere.

COLD STORAGE

Through a combination of their interests, the packers may have considerable to answer for in the manipulation of supplies and prices, as the beef investigation at Chicago may show. But last week a Grand Jury in Jersey City, New Jersey, decided to bring indictments against the directors of a packing company on a charge of conspiracy to raise prices by keeping food-stuffs in cold storage. What is cold storage? The term does not mean the ordinary plants for the refrigeration and preservation for a short time of perishable products like meats, poultry, eggs, dairy products, fruits, and vegetables, but far vaster plants where for very extended periods the temperature is kept at a far more abnormal degree—as low as twenty degrees below zero—and where meats and fruit become for the time being frozen like wood. The system of cold storage has been, first of all, of enormous use in affording the enjoyment of food necessities and luxuries out of season, where, under the old system, such enjoyment was not possible. For instance, even the ordinary housekeeper may in the month of February have her strawberries occasionally. Second, the system has increased production; the farmer has augmented his production of perishables, knowing that the cold storage companies would purchase the surplus. Third, by its distribution the system has also tended to prevent waste and loss. Finally, it has helped to equalize prices by limiting their fluctuation. As a total result the cold storage system may, we think, be regarded as in a very real sense a public utility. The present appallingly high cost of living, however, has suggested to the suspicious that cold storage may also be a device to be used

by unscrupulous persons whenever they think desirable to control the supply, and, by keeping meat and eggs and fruit out of market, to fix prices and obtain undue profit. This opportunity for extortion becomes doubly possible when one realizes its extension through the combination of cold storage and transportation in the form of a refrigerator car service. The retailers must also bear their share of the blame. By cold storage, game, fish, and eggs left over from one open season to another may be passed off as recent products. This deceit is most widely practiced in the case of eggs, which may be bought by retailers from cold storage warehouses at not over thirty cents a dozen and then sold to the public as new-laid eggs from the country at sixty cents. Why should the now indispensable system of preservation help unscrupulous retailers to exploit the public? Properly regulated, such a system should serve the public well. No matter how great the gain has been to the public, there is now a suspicion that the gain to private interests, both wholesale and retail, may have been proportionately greater. If so, then the cold storage system, already classed as a public utility, must be supervised by the Government for the general good. The best warehousemen themselves see the advantage of being so regulated by the Department of Agriculture that the ultimate consumer would be notified by a Government stamp whenever and how long commodities offered to him have been subjected to the cold storage process. Fortunately, in its power to regulate interstate commerce, Congress possesses authority to deal with the matter for the whole country.

CHICAGO'S GRAFT INQUIRY

Chicago is turning the light on municipal dishonesty and inefficiency in a manner to excite the interest of all students of the city government problem. The Merriam Commission, headed by a college professor who is also an Alderman, is conducting the investigation. Professor Merriam, of the Department of Political Science of the University of Chicago, was elected last spring to represent his ward in the Chicago City Council. One of his first moves after election was to offer a

resolution for the appointment by the Mayor of a commission on municipal expenditures, to be composed of Aldermen and citizens. The practical politicians did not take the matter seriously. They looked upon it as an academic proposition advanced by a college professor. The resolution was passed without serious opposition. Alderman Merriam was named as Chairman of the Commission, and Mr. Walter Fisher, former Secretary of the Municipal Voters' League, one of the members of the Commission by appointment of the Mayor, was made counsel, and was authorized to conduct the examination of witnesses at public hearings. The Commission is without legal power to summon witnesses, to administer oaths, or to compel the giving of testimony. However, city officials and employees were directed by the resolution creating the body to supply it with such city documents and information as it might need. Money was appropriated for the hiring of a staff of investigators. Probably at the outset even Alderman Merriam did not expect the inquiry to assume the importance that it has now attained. He planned it as a scientific investigation. He has insisted upon following scientific methods. While the newspapers at times have dealt with the subject-matter of the inquiry in a sensational manner, Alderman Merriam has refrained from what are characterized as brass band methods. The disclosures have been exceedingly hurtful to the present city administration, but it cannot be charged that the Commission has gone out of its way to accomplish any political purpose. On the other hand, the directing members of it have refused to be swerved from following the probe wherever it might lead.

DISCLOSURES OF WRONG-DOING

Fortunately for the Merriam Commission, shortly after its creation other agencies began to investigate certain phases of municipal activity. The State's Attorney, Mr. Wayman, secured the indictment and conviction of a captain of police on the charge of accepting bribes from keepers of disorderly resorts. The "Inter Ocean," formerly a staid partisan newspaper of the reactionary type, violently opposed to "muck-raking," began

the publication of a series of articles attacking the administration of Mayor Busse. It was believed by many that political motives inspired these attacks. Nevertheless, the "Inter Ocean's" work was ably done, and brought to light many facts that the Merriam Commission might not have been able to uncover. This was the situation when the Merriam Commission began to hold public hearings. The investigators of the Commission had been doing their work thoroughly. One of them, Mr. Herbert E. Fleming, a former newspaper man, looked into the subject of the purchases of coal by the city. He had expert analyses made of samples of coal delivered to the city under contract. The samples did not meet the specifications. By means of the shipping bills the cars in which the coal came were traced to their origin. It was found that coal delivered as Youghioghenny nut, to be obtained only from Pennsylvania, and for which the city paid \$3.50 a ton, actually came from a soft-coal mine in Indiana and was worth in the Chicago market only \$1.15 a ton. As a result of these disclosures two coal men held responsible for the fraudulent deliveries were indicted by the Grand Jury. One of them is a Democratic ward committeeman. The city administration is Republican. Lumber and other supplies purchased by the city were taken up in much the same way. As the result of inquiry into the charge that \$45,000 was paid as an extra for the removal of shale rock where no shale rock existed, about a dozen persons were indicted, one of the number being the Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, who immediately resigned his position following the submission to the City Council by the Commission of its report on that subject. The contractor involved was also indicted. The Merriam Commission is proceeding with its investigations carefully and thoroughly in spite of efforts to embarrass it by "honest taxpayers" who are striving to enjoin its expenditure of public funds for investigating purposes, and by others. It is significant that it is the administrative departments of government that are under fire in Chicago, and not the legislative department or City Council. On the contrary, it is the Council that is back of the inquiry. As the result of its fifteen