

EVENING SESSION.

The Institute met at 7:30 P. M. H. C. TAYLOR in the Chair.
 Music, First Congregational Church Choir.

RURAL MAIL DELIVERY.

Hon. JOHN M. STAHL, Editor Farmers Call and Sec'y Farmers' National Congress, Chicago, Ill.



JOHN M. STAHL.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:—I want it distinctly understood at the beginning of what I have to say tonight, that we, who labor for better mail facilities for towns and villages, and for the farm, are not animated by any spirit of enmity to city people. We recognize the inter-dependence of industries. We know that other industries cannot be solidly prosperous

unless the farm is prosperous, and we deem it as equally true that the farm cannot be solidly prosperous when other industries languish. If we made war on city people we would be making war on our own, because statistics show that more than 85 per cent. of those who are successful in commercial and professional pursuits in the city come from the farm. We would not by one iota reduce the profit of city industries or take from the pleasures of city life.

City People Favor It.

I am glad that I can say tonight that the city people are heartily in favor of rural free mail delivery. When my little article in support of it appeared in the North American Review, clippings were sent me from more than four hundred city papers commending my article and favoring rural free mail delivery, and I have found only one city paper that opposed it.

The necessity of such rural free delivery service was touched upon in the house of representatives the 6th of March, 1896, by Mr. Pickler, who referred to the fact that no effort is made to improve the service for country people, while immense amounts of and there was not a single word spoken money are spent every year in the cities improving the postal service. Mr. Hepburn, also speaking in the house, gave figures along the same line

in opposition to these gentlemen, because every member of congress knew that what they said was true.

As a resident of the city of Chicago, mail is brought to my residence, which is more than five miles from the post-office, three times every day, but as a farmer of central Illinois, mail is not delivered to me once a year; when I want mail I must go four miles and a half to get it.

What Congress Has Done for Us.

Even when congress has endeavored to improve the mail service to country people the postoffice department has taken the money and used it in the city, so that notwithstanding the efforts of our friends in congress, who secured an increase of \$500,000 in the appropriation for country service, there was actually expended \$170,000 less than was expended the year before.

During the past four years the post-office department has been hostile to any improvement in the country mail service, and so they have maintained that in order to deliver mail in every town and village, and on every farm in the country it would make a net cost of somewhere between eight and twelve million dollars. I have demonstrated to my own satisfaction that it would not increase the net cost of the postoffice department a cent. For five years free delivery in villages was tested and it was found that it not only paid for itself but made net profit, and the hostile postoffice department has had to acknowledge that. It made a profit of 161½ per cent. in the town where longest tested, and that is better than any other business that I know of. The Loud bill to correct abuses in the application of the second class rate of postage, which passed the House in the last session of Congress, but which was killed in the Senate, would have made a saving of about eleven million dollars a year, and that would have paid the expense of delivering mail to every person in this country except a few in isolated

localities. That bill will come up at the next session, and I hope every person who lives on a farm will write to his senator in favor of the bill. It is supported by every agricultural paper in the country. Bills have been passed appropriating many million dollars for the inland transportation of mail by railroads, and that appropriation was increased practically ten per cent. at the last session. Mr. Wanamaker declared that carrying the mails costs this country three or four times what the service was actually worth, and he was postmaster-general and ought to know. In a debate in the senate on the 2nd of this month Senator Butler showed that we were paying a little more now to carry a ton of mail than we paid for the same service twenty years ago, while in that time charges on freight have been reduced more than forty per cent. Yet twenty years ago we paid more than anybody else, so that according to the Senator we pay now about twice as much as private parties pay for carrying similar freight.

Big Money for Postal Service.

To show again how nicely the railroads get money out of Congress, I will mention another thing. According to the bill enacted the 2nd of this month, we shall pay for the year beginning July 1st \$3,600,000 a year for the use of certain railroad cars in which to carry mail. Now, it has been repeatedly shown in congress that those cars can be built and equipped for \$1,800,000, just one-half of what we pay every year for their use, and it has been shown that on an average they last twenty years, so that at the present rate we are paying \$72,000,000 for what costs the railroads less than \$2,000,000, and if I had time I could show you even a more shameful misappropriation of funds by the post-office appropriation bill. Senator Vilas has tried for years to get the compensation to railroads reduced, or to have the government build its own cars. I

want to be fair to the railroad men. I have rather a wide acquaintance among them, and I know of no class more progressive or honest, or patriotic; but I must say that according to all the evidence the \$29,000,000 that they get for carrying the mails is about \$15,000,000 too much. I do not blame the railroad men for getting all they can, but I do blame the people who elect the senators who pass such bills. I haven't a particle of pity for the farmers who have to plod through the dust and mud to get their mail as long as we elect senators of this kind, as, long, for instance, as the great agricultural states of Illinois and Iowa have not a single genuine farmer in either branch of congress. The trouble with the farmer is, he is too modest, he won't demand his rights; farmers will never get their rights until they send their own friends to congress. Why shouldn't the mail be delivered to the farmer just as much as to anybody else?

What Can the Farmer Do?

Now, what can you do, what can every farmer do to help along rural free mail delivery? You can do just one thing; write letters to your congressmen and senators in favor of it. They probably will not pay any attention to the letter in the way of a reply—they will be too busy for that—but you need not worry that they will

not read those letters and consider them. The congressman or the senator knows that the man who has the intelligence to write him to support this bill or to oppose that, has the intelligence and the independence to vote against him if he does not do as he should. When I began this agitation six years ago I met only ridicule. My best friends told me I was a fool, but now only one agricultural paper opposes this rural free mail delivery, and it would seem that the majority of the farmers are in favor of it, and in the discussion in the session of 1895-6 on this Post Office Appropriation Bill many congressmen spoke on this subject, and nearly half of the senators, and not one word in opposition to rural free mail delivery was said; they all acknowledged it ought to come, that it was a question of only a short time when it should come. So I hope you will write to your congressmen and senators and let them know that you are in favor of rural free mail delivery. I know of nothing that will do so much toward making the people happy and prosperous as rural free mail delivery—happy and prosperous because their prosperity and happiness are founded, as they must be, on a progressive and contented husbandry.

Music, choir of men and boys, 105 voices.