Shaw Board

COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

July 16, 1917.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
Women's Committee,
1814 N Street, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Miss Tarbell:-

The "cash-take-with" basement I spoke to you about is in connection with the new Lasalle and Kock Company's store in Toledo, Ohio, which is now being built, and for which Starrett and Van Vleck are doing the architecture. I do not know that there is another basement like it in the country. I do not believe there is, although I have heard that the Hudson store in Detroit has a similar scheme. There, however, I understand that they use their basement for a distinctly cheaper line of goods, and advertise that part of the reason for the lower prices arises from the fact that the goods are sold only for cash, and to be taken home.

Mr. Kock's idea enlarges very much on that principle, and I think more nearly goes to the root of the matter. It happened that he was here in Washington the day after the evening you spent at my house, and I went over the matter with him again. His idea is as I stated it. The same goods that are sold upstairs will be sold in the basement at a lower price but on the "cash-take-with" basis. The fact will be advertised and the public will be encouraged to patronize the basement.

The arrangement and structure of the store is very little changed by this question of policy. As a matter of accommodation, stairways are provided directly from the street to the basement, although the basement is also accessible from the inside of the building. The counters and trade fixtures in the basement will be less elaborate than elsewhere in the building, but will be substantial and adequate. The idea in the outside stairway and plainer trade fixtures arises from a fact which might at first point to an invidious distinction, but which upon examination turns out to be a proper point of policy.

It is found that the poorer women do not like to go through the magnificent first floor of the modern high class department

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store, and it is hoped that this direct access from the outside will be more agreeable to the class of people the owners are most anxious to reach. For the same reason the trade fixtures are made plain, to avoid giving the impression of luxurious surroundings.

There is really no reason why the principle could not be applied throughout the store with one price for goods if paid for in cash and taken, and indeed a third price could be made if charge and delivery service were included. I do not believe, however, that any merchant is as yet prepared to carry this perfectly just principle to its logical conclusion. I might say, however, that if it were done, it would probably turn out that the stores could be much more simply constructed in some of the details of their accessories and it is certain that the accounting, book-keeping, delivery, etc., could be greatly simplified, which would probably eventually result in smaller shipping rooms, shipping platforms, office space, etc.

Any discussion of this thing, however, needs the master mind of a man like Mr. Kock to conduct it. I took occasion to tell him of your interest in his basement project, and he, of course, was most interested in having you know about it to the fullest extent. I might say, however, that the basement is not the only interesting part of Mr. Kock's plan. His welfare and educational policies, I think, are the most advanced in this country. His profit-sharing scheme with employees is already in practical operation, and he is showing results with it. A very considerable part of one floor of the new building is ~~going~~ to be given over to the health and comfort of the women in the store. Such things as a modern emergency hospital, rest rooms, etc. have been included and the roof is being prepared as a large play ground to be given over almost entirely to recreation.

Mr. Kock will be back here in two or three weeks and I hope that I can bring about a meeting between you. I am sure you would find him interesting. He is most sympathetic with the work you are doing and altogether, I feel that the meeting would be a mutually profitable one.

If in your interest in the matter, other questions should come up which I might be able to answer, please let me hear from you. It would be a pleasure to help along the good work you have in mind.

Yours truly,

W. A. Starrett

WAS/EC

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