

W-K-678-37

LAW OFFICES OF WEIL & THORP

821 FRICK BUILDING

A. LEO. WEIL
CHARLES M. THORP

GEORGE K. WARN
FERDINAND T. WEIL
W. D. STEWART
CHARLES M. THORP, JR.

PITTSBURGH, PA.

September 25, 1920.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 East Nineteenth Street,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Ida:

Your letter of the 21st inst., and the papers under separate cover, were duly received.

I sympathize with you in being compelled to move, even if I benefit thereby as you suggest. I presume you never had time to read these papers, but you know enough of the story to realize how much it affected me at the time, and even since.

I appreciate your kind messages to Mrs Weil and the family, and complying with your suggestion to let you have a word about how things are going with us, would say, I am a grandfather "three times", my daughter having a daughter and a son, and my son having a boy. The oldest of these grandchildren is my daughter's little girl, who is about three years old. The youngest, my son's boy, is a little over two months old, so you see we are blessed in this particular, and are naturally doting grandparents.

I still get a great deal of pleasure out of my farm in Virginia, and spend my summers there and two or three weeks shooting during the fall. On account of oper-

ating this farm I have gained a lot of information about the high cost of living and the "whys" therefor, and find two chief causes, - first, the inability of the farmer to market his perishable products, such as garden truck, except through commission men, where he is wholly at their mercy. For example, I shipped 350 dozen of magnificent sweet corn to Washington, and the price there for the same corn ranged from 35 cents to ~~50~~ cents per dozen. The average received after paying expressage was less than six cents. The corn was worth more than that on the stalk, as food for the cattle. I also shipped a good many bushels of Lima beans and the net receipts did not pay for the picking. At the same time this corn was selling at retail for 50 cents a dozen and the beans were selling at from 35 cents to 50 cents a quart.

When I shipped some of these products to my son, mother and friends here in Pittsburgh, although I put them on the express car myself at Widewater, 40 miles from Washington, and knew they reached Washington before eight o'clock on Wednesday, some of the boxes were delivered in Pittsburgh on Saturday, three nights and two full days afterwards, but the majority of the boxes were not delivered until Monday, five nights afterwards and four full days. Of course, the corn, beans, etc. were spoiled when they reached Pittsburgh.

I have taken the matter up with the express company, -- that is, the general principle, -- and am contemplating making a complaint to the Interstate Commerce Commission with a demand that some such principle as the following be established, namely: Expressage is paid for quick, prompt delivery. Where this delivery fails the expressage paid must be returned by the company to the shipper without any special demand therefor, under pains and penalties. If you rely upon the special demand, the express company is practically immune, because it would not pay any ordinary consignor or consignee to go through the forms, delays and often litigation of the demand, for the small amount of expressage he would receive. The return, therefore, of the expressage should be made compulsory upon the express company without this demand.

I am satisfied that if some such rule could be established, - and I have very serious doubts of it unless there was a government agency to enforce it, - expressage would be promptly delivered. I see no other way, however, of reaching the difficulty, as those cases in which either the consignee or the consignor would go to the trouble of making demand upon the express company would be the rare exceptions. For example, in my case the whole value of the shipment would not pay me for the time and trouble to which I would go, and

I only do it as a matter of public service.

What do you think of the general proposition?

If the express companies would give the service that we have the right to expect, there is no reason whatever why I could not have shipped from Widewater to Pittsburgh so that the shipment would be delivered the following morning, or to New York just as quickly. If I could have done this, instead of allowing immense quantities of garden products -- I will say tens of bushels of tomatoes and tens of bushels of beans and peas, and hundreds if not thousands of ears of sweet corn -- to go to waste, I would have shipped barrels and barrels of these products to the Settlement here, or to other agencies for distribution among the poor. I could not do this, however, because it would only be an expense to me and no benefit to anyone after the goods arrived.

Upon inquiry among the farmers in that section of Virginia where my farm is located, only 40 miles below Washington, I found that on account of like experiences in past years there was not a single garden within a radius of 20 miles in which there was not enough of garden products going to waste to feed from one to a dozen families. Now this is all sheer waste, due entirely to the want of shipping facilities.

The effect of the war, as you say, has made the world

a different place for most of us, and while that it is true of all, it is particularly true of the Jew. There never was a time where there was so much prejudice, so much discrimination, against the Jew as today, and this is true even in our own country here. What is the cause of this? I am unable to account for it. I have always been an optimist on almost all public questions, but I am willing to admit that I am losing a great deal of this optimism, and am saddened thereby.

I expect to be in New York some time next week. If you are not too busy then I would be delighted to have an opportunity of talking over some of the things that are on my mind and get your views on certain current events. If you are not too busily engaged, let me know what you think of my express company proposition.

Mrs. Weil I know would join me in greetings and regards if she knew I was writing.

Now, as always,

Faithfully your friend,

Adolphus