

Now, I am not trying to put the wholesaler in the antique class—but one trouble with us Americans is that we are too farsighted. As soon as something new turns up, what we have becomes old and “doomed” as a last week’s weather report or an election poster of last November stuck on a fence. We live in headlines which change with every edition.

WHOLESALE IN NEW INDUSTRIES

PERHAPS we can understand how it would be possible for a few wholesalers to hang on in such old lines as drygoods or hardware—those industries grew up with the wholesaler and maybe are keeping a few specimens for sentimental reasons. Of course, the drygoods wholesaler is doomed—look at Clafins going out of business after more than eighty years. Well, maybe the drygoods business isn’t snappy and modern enough to get rid of all its wholesalers. But how about the automobile industry, in which the wholesaler is growing in power—not only in accessories, but in car distribution? And how about the latest infant industry—infant prodigy, I might say—the radio industry? Surely such up-to-the-minute live wire industries didn’t have to pay any attention to a doddering poor relation like the “has-been” of a wholesaler!

If the wholesaler is so useless, such an unnecessary burden on distribution, why has he developed in the electrical business and the security business?

It looks like a queer kind of doom to me. And yet, of course, a grocery wholesaler can get little nourishment out of the fact that an electrical goods wholesaler is flourishing. What the doomers are forgetting is the fact that this is a big country and that there is room in it for every conceivable method of distribution as long as it gives some consumer the kind of product, at the price and with the service he wants. We find the most primitive form of merchandising, the peddler, flourishing side by side with the most intricate of modern forms like a chain of leased departments, owned by a manufacturer, in independent department stores, or a cooperative group of independent retail grocers buying through a partially-owned wholesale house. No form of distribution is doomed as long as it can perform its functions economically. New forms may spring up and be hailed as more