

of hold-up man, beach comber, toll-gatekeeper and gambler. The politicians know that and say it for the public—investigators have proved that the poor farmer gets about a millionth of a thin dime for a bushel of potatoes while the poor housewife on Park Avenue has to pay sixty cents for a small portion, French fried, brought up by a waiter from the restaurant downstairs—and all because of the wholesaler. Everybody knows, because the economists have proved it, that a chicken lays an egg for nothing while a poor stranger in New York has to pay three dollars for a dish of ham and eggs—with cracked ice—at a night club—and all because of the profits of the “big butter-and-egg man.” These political-economic investigations into the cost of distribution are based on the same sound scientific theory as that of the farmer who wanted to do a little investigating on his own. He wrote on an egg, “When you get this, write me and tell me how much you paid for it.” He got a letter many months later from a nearby town which said: “It cost me nothing. It wasn’t so good when I got it. I picked the shell out of my eye. I am an actor.”

What does the wholesaler answer to these indictments? So far his most frequent answer has been “So’s your old man!” To the charge that wholesaling is uneconomical he has replied vigorously and with righteous indignation that wholesaling is economical—all of which proves conclusively that wholesaling is either uneconomical or economical. “Yes, you are,” “No, I’m not.” “You’re another”—this profound discussion as to the economic value of the wholesaler has not brought out the truth—because real attempts to find it out have been as scarce as a flashlight at a spiritualistic seance.

The defendant reiterates his innocence—and he can go on doing it until he is led away behind the bars—because the public is against him. The evidence may be circumstantial, but “it certainly looks bad.”

#### THE REAL PROBLEM

THE trouble is that there is just enough truth in the cry that the wholesaler adds to the cost of distribution to make his doom seem justifiable—and deep down in his heart, the wholesaler knows it. But the question is not whether the wholesaler adds to the cost of distribution—of course he does—because distribu-