

5th CONGRESS.]

No. 12.

[1st Session.]

MAIL STAGES OR COVERED WAGONS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, DECEMBER 28, 1863.

Mr. JACKSON, from the committee to whom was referred the inquiry into the expediency of extending the carriage of the mail of the United States in stage or covered wagons, reported the following letter to, and answer from, the Postmaster General, on that subject:

SIR: SENATE ROOM, WASHINGTON, *November 15, 1863.*
A committee is appointed by the Senate to inquire into the expediency of extending the carriage of the mail of the United States, in stage or covered wagons.

I am directed by that committee to desire answers from you to the following questions:

1st. Has the extension of the carriage of the mail of the United States, in stage or covered wagons, under the act of the first session of the seventh Congress, entitled "An act further to alter and establish certain post roads: and for the more secure carriage of the mail of the United States," been fully carried into operation on the route therein described? If not, what circumstances occasioned its failure?

2d. Has the carriage of the mail in stage or covered wagons, on the route on which it has been established, answered the expectations formed at the time of the passage of the aforementioned act? And has it been of public utility, both as respects the safe carriage of the mail, and the conveyance of travelling citizens?

3d. Will it become an object for the United States, at the expiration of the present contracts, to provide stages or covered wagons, for the carriage of the mail, at their own expense, on the route pointed out in the said act, and will the intercourse support it?

4th. Is it expedient to extend, on other roads than those pointed out by the said act, the carriage of the mail in stage or covered wagons? And what mode will be most advantageous, by private contract, or otherwise?

I am, sir, by order of the committee, yours, with respect,

JAS. JACKSON, *Chairman.*

HON. GIDEON GRANGER, *Postmaster General United States.*

SIR: GENERAL POST OFFICE, *November 22, 1863.*

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 15th, and, in compliance with the request of the committee, return the following answer to the queries proposed:

1st. The act of Congress referred to, authorized the Postmaster General to extend his contracts for carrying the mail to five years, and to add one-third to the amount then paid to induce contractors to convey the mails of the United States on the post road from Petersburg, in Virginia, to Louisville, in Georgia, in public stages calculated for the conveyance of persons. Passing from Petersburg towards Louisville, the post road branches out, at Fayetteville, into two distinct roads, one by Georgetown, Charleston, and Savannah; the other by Camden, Columbia, and Augusta, to Louisville. A line of stages has been established from Petersburg to Fayetteville.

Fully sensible of the necessity of establishing a line of stages from Fayetteville to Louisville, by Camden, Columbia, and Augusta, an agent was sent through that country to buy in the then existing contracts, which have yet some time to run, and to form contracts for the establishment of stages. But the agent was not enabled to procure a single offer within the act, or to purchase all the existing contracts upon such terms as rendered the attainment of that object practicable. The only means left to the Postmaster General, of accomplishing the great object of the act, was by establishing a line of stages from Fayetteville, by Georgetown, to Charleston, whereby a connected line of mail stages was completed from Augusta to Petersburg; leaving only the space between Augusta and Louisville without the accommodation. For this part of the road, no admissible propositions have been made. Indeed, so strongly was it believed by the adventurers from Petersburg to Fayetteville, that an extension of the line to Charleston was essential to the support of their proposed establishment, that they reserved the right of rescinding their contract if that extension did not take place. The great difference in the receipts of revenue between the offices on the sea-coast road, and those in the interior, was strongly relied on by the citizens of Charleston, and other places, as not only warranting, but requiring, the present establishment. Notwithstanding which, had it been practicable, the direct road by Camden, &c. would have been preferred; and the measures necessary for connecting the lines from Fayetteville, and Georgetown adopted: because it was readily foreseen that, in a little time, cross stages would have been established, connecting the sea-coast with the interior, and producing general accommodation.

2d. The establishment has answered the expectations formed at the time of passing the act. It cannot be doubted that, in relation to the safe and regular transportation of the mails, the convenience of travellers, and the accommodations of the citizens, residing on or near the post roads, the establishment has been of great public utility.

3d. From all the information I have been able to procure, and particularly from the unwillingness of the people who reside on the road from Fayetteville, by Camden, &c. to Louisville, to adventure, even when aided by a liberal compensation for the carriage of the mails, I have formed an opinion that the intercourse on that road will not at present support the establishment of a line of stages. It follows, that, with a view of saving the revenues of the Post Office Department, it will not become an object for the United States, at the expiration of the present contracts, to provide a line of stages on that road for the carriage of the mails. At the same time, such has been the success of the experiment made between Petersburg and Fayetteville, as, when we take into consideration the rising importance of that part of the country, to warrant the belief that the opinions given in the Postmaster General's report of the 23d of March, 1862, may be relied upon as correct.

4th. The increase of our population, agriculture, and commerce, and the consequent increase of intercourse between our citizens, and of travel to and from different States, and distant parts of the same State; the superior security and regularity with which the mails are carried when under cover, and guarded by the traveller; the constantly increasing and enormous size of many of the mails on the great post roads, owing principally to an extended and extending circulation of newspapers; the vast convenience furnished to the traveller, and to the country through which the public carriages pass; and the immense saving effected by them, in greatly diminishing the number of horses wanted and the expense of feeding them, as well as in lessening the current expenditures of the traveller, all evince the propriety of giving every reasonable encouragement to those who will adventure in establishing and supporting regular lines of public carriages.

The establishment of lines of stages from Fayetteville, by Columbia, Camden, and Augusta, to Louisville; from Chambersburg, in Pennsylvania, to Pittsburg, and from thence, by Chillicothe in Ohio, to Lexington, in Kentucky, and from that place to Knoxville, in Tennessee, and from thence by Staunton, to Richmond, in Virginia, would be of great public utility. They would extend to these sections of the Union the same conveniences and accommodations as are enjoyed by others, and complete a regular, safe, and convenient mode of conveyance, to and from all the important points in the United States—an event highly to be desired. Many embarrassments and difficulties will present themselves in passing the mountains, and completing the establishments in the Western States. But it is believed that, with a reasonable encouragement, the necessary arrangements might be effected in a short time.

Authorizing an extension of the mail contracts on these roads to seven years, and an increased expenditure for the conveyance of the mails, not exceeding fifty per cent. appear to be the best, though not certain methods of accomplishing these important objects.

I am, sir, with great esteem and respect, your most obedient servant,

GIDEON GRANGER.

HON. JAMES JACKSON, *Chairman of the Committee of the Senate, &c.*