

committee have not been apprized of any abuses which may have led to the resolution under consideration; they are consequently ignorant of any facts which would go to show that a division of the Post Office establishment would in any degree remedy the evil; and without knowing of the existence of such an abuse if it exists, or of any circumstances attending it, they think it would be premature to attempt a remedy which might not have the remotest application to the case, while it would probably produce other evils of much greater magnitude than any that may have been complained of. They therefore submit the following resolution, viz:

*Resolved,* That it is inexpedient to establish a branch of the General Post Office in any part of the United States.

15th CONGRESS.]

No. 37.

[2d SESSION.]

## COMPENSATION OF POSTMASTERS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 15, 1819, BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE POST OFFICE AND POST ROADS.

GENERAL POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *February 15, 1819.*

SIR:

You will observe by the enclosures, which I have the honor to transmit to you, as chairman of the Committee on the Post Office Establishment, that I am desired by the Postmasters of several of the larger cities to invite the attention of Congress to the inadequacy of their compensation, as fixed in the year 1810, and also to the disparity between that compensation, restricted to \$2,000 per annum, and those of certain officers of the customs, and others of subordinate grade, receiving \$3,000, whose duties and responsibility would not, it is conceived, be found, on comparison, greater than those of the Postmasters of the principal cities of the United States. They also represent, and, I admit, truly, that the labors of their offices have considerably increased, and that much duty is necessarily required of them late at night, and before daylight in the morning, as well as on the Sabbath, when most other men are at rest. On these grounds, superadded to that of the well-known increase of the expenses of living, in large cities particularly, since the year 1810, they solicit a suitable increase of compensation; or, if it shall not be the pleasure of Congress to grant that, specifically, they pray the repeal or modification of the restriction before stated, in consideration of the change of circumstances since that restriction was imposed, and of the inconsiderable amount that would be relinquished by the Government under such repeal.

However worthy of favorable consideration the case of these Postmasters may be considered by Congress, it is neither my province nor intention to propose the allowance of any specific annual salary. The mode of compensating this description of officers, by way of commission, proportioned to their actual duties and responsibility, and by making special allowances adapted to circumstances, (the only mode which the Post Office committees, or the head of this Department, have ever recommended,) is perhaps better and more just in principle than any other, provided a fair and reasonable compensation, and such only, be thereby afforded; but whether the restriction to \$2,000 in the year 1810 ought now to be continued, under the change of times and circumstances, is for Congress to decide; and, in relation to that decision, it is deemed proper that I should state that a few of the larger offices only have yet been affected by the restriction in question, or reached the limit, after deducting their expenses, and these only to the amount of a few hundred dollars a year; nor does it seem probable that there will be any such future surplus as to require the control of Congress, which can at any time, when necessary, be exercised on the subject. But this inconsiderable amount of excess, which has hitherto been refunded, though unimportant to the Government, it might be desirable to the officers refunding it to retain, and I must confess that I think it would be well deserved for the increased duties, and the unseasonable hours of their performance, which, with the view of effecting improvements in the Department, by accelerating the transportation of the mails, and otherwise promoting the public interest and convenience, have been enjoined on the principal officers since their compensation was restricted by the act of 1810. I do, therefore, with entire deference, however, to the will of Congress, recommend the repeal or modification of the 40th section of that act, as prayed by the petitioners, with a limitation to such sum as Congress may think proper, not exceeding \$3,000 per annum; to which effect I have the honor to submit a section, to be added, if approved, to the Post Office or other suitable bill now pending in Congress.

I have the honor to be, with very respectful consideration, sir, your most obedient servant,

R. J. MEIGS, JUN.

The Hon. ARTHUR LIVERMORE, *Chairman of the Post Office Committee.*

15th CONGRESS.]

No. 38.

[2d SESSION.]

## GUARDS FOR THE MAILS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, FEBRUARY 16, 1819.

Mr. STOKES made the following report:

The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, to whom was referred a resolution of the Senate of the 4th instant, instructing them to "inquire into the expediency of authorizing the Postmaster General to employ an armed guard for the protection of the mails of the United States, on such mail routes as he may deem necessary," have attended to the duty assigned them; and, upon consulting the Postmaster General, and weighing the reasons contained in his letter to the committee on the subject, they are of opinion that so many difficulties exist in the case as to render any additional provisions unnecessary; they therefore report the following resolution:

*Resolved,* That it is not expedient to authorize the Postmaster General to employ an armed guard for the protection of the mails of the United States.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, *February 10, 1819.*

SIR: I had the honor to receive yours, enclosing a resolution of the Senate, instructing the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads "to inquire into the expediency of authorizing the Postmaster General to employ an armed guard for the protection of the mails of the United States, on such mail routes as he may deem necessary."

I have, in reply, to state the following facts and considerations, which naturally produce two separate views of the subject: one, of augmentation of expense; and the other, an uncertainty of securing the mails by the employment of armed guards. The resolution proposes to leave it discretionary with the Postmaster General on what mail routes to employ such guards.

It may not be easy to decide at what point to commence or to terminate the employment of guards; and it will be impossible for the pecuniary receipts of the Department to defray the expenses on any considerable portion of the stage routes alone, on which stages run more than ten thousand miles per day; even the stage fare of the guards would be very expensive. The qualifications of such guards should be, fidelity, vigilance, and courage; for the use of which they have always demanded, and received, high compensation.

On the complete exercise of those qualities would depend the whole security of the mail, as the guard would possess a complete power over the mail carrier and the mail; and, if unfaithful, might effect the most extensive deprivations on its contents; and, in proportion to the numbers employed, would be the hazard of their unfaithful conspiracy against the safety of the mails. If the system of employing armed guards be once adopted, it could never, with safety, be abandoned; such abandonment would operate as an inducement to attempt, so far as the opinion (of the efficacy of guards) might prevail, with those who might be disposed to seize the mails. If one portion of roads only should be guarded, it would seem that while such were protected, the guardless portions were devoted to the chance of enterprise. It is obvious that if there should be a guard of two, it would require four, as two must sleep at quarters while the others were on duty; and a guard of two might be surprised and overcome by three, which would be numerically a fourth less than the whole guard actually employed. In fine, it may be asked who is to guard the guards?

The cessation of wars in Europe, and other causes, have produced a migration to our shores of numbers of desperate characters, and others necessitous and urged by poverty, which, added to profligates of our own nation, are dispersed in the community; and, being indisposed to self-support by honest means, with a dexterous audacity, depredate on the property of others, public and private. There have been (since the establishment of the Post Office Department,) not more than three different occasions when guards have been employed for a short time; during which the expenses have been very great. Almost every citizen has an interest in the safe transportation of the public mails, is indignant at its robbery, and much more so when committed by violence: hence, the efforts always made by the citizens to apprehend such as rob the mails, to which they are also stimulated by suitable rewards.

Since I have been at the head of this Department, not one instance of a violent robbery of the mail has occurred, where the perpetrators have escaped apprehension, conviction, and punishment.

It may not be desirable in this nation to see the employment of an armed physical force to protect the operations of civil Government, to the distrust of the civic virtues and moral energies of the people, unless in cases of emergency, and unless the efforts of those virtues and energies should fail of their proper consequences, and demonstrate that a reliance on them would be fruitless and deceptive.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. J. MEIGS, JUN.

The CHAIRMAN of the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads.

15th CONGRESS.]

No. 39.

[2d SESSION.

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, FROM ITS ESTABLISHMENT.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 20, 1819.

Mr. HUBBARD, from the committee on so much of the public accounts and expenditures as relates to the Post Office, respectfully reported:

That they have examined into the state of the accounts and expenditures of the General Post Office, as minutely as time and their other relative duties would permit.

The first object to which your committee turned their attention, was to ascertain the actual state of the funds of this Department, by examining into the accounts of moneys received and expended from year to year, since the establishment of the Post Office, and the disposal made of the proceeds thereof.

Second, To ascertain the nature and character of all expenditures, and whether the several claims upon the Department were supported by sufficient vouchers; and the various expenditures and payments justified by law; and

Third, Whether any, and what, retrenchments could probably be made in the Post Office Department, without detriment to the public interest; and whether any, and what, alterations in the organization of the Department would add to the accountability of its officers, and contribute to the security of the public revenue accruing from the postage of letters.

With a view to facilitate the object of these inquiries, your committee addressed the letter, marked A, to the Postmaster General; to which letter an answer was received, marked B. Your committee also directed a letter to the Register of the Treasury; the answers to which are subjoined, and marked D and E.

The table No. 1 shows the produce and expenditures of the present Post Office establishment from its commencement in 1789 to January 1, 1818, (a period of about thirty years,) including a statement of the payments made to the Treasury up to the 1st day of January, 1819. The books of the office show an outstanding balance on the 1st of October, 1818, of \$542,284 83; consequently, this statement is intended only to exhibit the amount of postages due the General Post Office, and the apparent yearly nett revenue during the period aforesaid. Of this outstanding debt near one-half has been paid over to contractors for carrying the mail, who have not yet received credit for the services rendered on the books of the office. Such is the great increase and multiplication of post routes, and the extent of country over which post roads are established, stretching from one extreme of the United States to the other; so great the number of Post Offices, (already amounting to three thousand six hundred,) and those daily increasing, many of which do not afford an average balance of one dollar per quarter, that it has hitherto been deemed advisable, for reasons satisfactory to your committee, to permit the balances in offices remote from the General Post Office to accumulate, and remain in the hands of the Postmaster, until drawn for to meet local expenditures. Considering the hazard of remitting small sums by mail, the difficulty of making those remittances in paper, current at