

2d CONGRESS.]

No. 5.

[2d SESSION.]

TAX ON MAIL STAGES IN NEW JERSEY.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON THE 11TH OF FEBRUARY, 1793.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, *February 9, 1793.*

SIR:

The present contractor for carrying the mail between Philadelphia and New York has handed to me a law of the State of New Jersey, passed the 24th of November, 1786, entitled "An act for raising a revenue from certain stages, ferries, and taverns," by which the proprietors of each line of stages are subjected to an annual tax of *four hundred dollars*. There are now three lines, which together pay the State of New Jersey twelve hundred dollars a year for licence to run a stage wagon from Trenton ferry to Paulus Hook. The present contractor contemplates the setting up another line of light stages, in which he would carry the mail, with only four passengers, for which he will be liable to the like exaction of four hundred dollars, annually, for a licence, though the despatch requisite for the mail will only oblige him to carry it on horseback for about seven months out of seventeen during which his contract will continue. But, as his stages will run parts of two years, he will be obliged to pay eight hundred dollars, during the term of his contract, unless the Government of the United States can give him relief.

If the sums exacted from the proprietors of the stages were expended in extraordinary reparations of the road, no passengers would complain of paying enhanced prices for safer and easier seats in the stages; but such an appropriation is not even thought of; the avowed design is to increase the revenues of that State. And thus, the citizens of the United States have to purchase permission to travel on the highways of New Jersey. At the same time, it is remarkable that the express object of one section of the act is, "to prevent imposition on travellers." By a reasonable computation, the annual expense of transporting the mail six times a week between Philadelphia and New York, on horseback, would be two thousand four hundred dollars. But the contractor has engaged for that sum to carry it for one year and five months, being the period from the first of January, to the expiration of the present Post Office law. He was induced to propose such moderate terms, because he intended to erect a line of stages, and hoped to be relieved from the imposition before mentioned. The terms offered by some other proprietors of stages were as high as four thousand, and four thousand eight hundred dollars.

As the annual expense of carrying this mail on horseback would be two thousand four hundred dollars, and the present contractor will carry it one year and five months for the same sum, there will arise on this single contract, a saving to the United States of one thousand dollars from the partial carriage of it in stages: for the contractor must have added this sum to his terms to defray the actual expense of carrying this mail entirely on horseback. But, if no relief can be given in the premises, the United States must henceforward pay to New Jersey an annual tribute of four hundred dollars, or any higher sum, if pleased to impose it, for permission to transport the mail through that State in stage wagons. And, from the example of New Jersey, they may ere long become tributary to all the States, from Virginia to New Hampshire inclusively: for so far the mail is carried in stage wagons. Having represented this tax, what I conceive it to be, an unwarrantable imposition, it is proper to add, that, from the information I have received, it originated in the voluntary offer of the proprietors of the two lines of stages then running, who designed thereby to make a monopoly of the business.

The exclusive privilege of running stages in Maryland and Virginia yet continues in the persons to whom it was formerly granted, and the expense of carrying the mail is thereby enhanced. A person well acquainted with the business and the profits, assured me that, for the exclusive privilege of running stages on the main post road between the Susquehanna and the Potomac, he would undertake to carry the public mail gratis.

The subject of this letter appeared to me of such importance to the public as to merit the attention of the General Legislature, to whom I wish to introduce it, by presenting it, in the first instance, to the House of Representatives, before whom I pray you to lay it.

TIMOTHY PICKERING.

The SPEAKER of the House of Representatives of the United States.

3d CONGRESS.]

No. 6.

[2d SESSION.]

EXECUTION OF THE POST OFFICE LAW.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON THE 23D OF DECEMBER, 1794.

Mr. GREENUP made the following report:

The committee appointed to inquire how far the Post Office law has been carried into effect have received from the office of the Postmaster General satisfactory information on the subject referred to, which they beg leave to report to the House, accompanying this report.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, *December 20, 1794.*

SIR:

In the absence of the Postmaster General, I have received your letter of the 16th instant, enclosing a resolution of the House of Representatives appointing a committee to inquire how far the Post Office law has been carried into execution, and requesting such information as may enable the committee to report to the House on the subject.

Agreeably to your request, I inform you that, as soon after the Post Office law was passed as the information necessary to enable the Postmaster General to advertise for proposals could possibly be obtained, he published his advertisements, and that, on or before the 1st of October last, proposals were received, and contracts made for the carriage of the mails, on most of the post roads designated in the law.

In some cases, proposals that were received were so high that the Postmaster General deemed it his duty not to accept them until he had endeavored to obtain lower ones, and, in other cases, no proposals were received within the time limited by the advertisements, which necessarily protracted the business; but contracts are now obtained for all the roads, except from Baltimore to Yorktown, from Smithfield to Hicks Ford, and from Cheraw Court House to Georgetown.