

19th CONGRESS.]

No. 63.

[2d Session.]

## CONDITION OF THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

COMMUNICATED TO CONGRESS, BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, DECEMBER 5, 1826.

Sir:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *November 18, 1826.*

I have the honor to submit to you a statement of the operations of this Department for the year ending the 1st July last.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN McLEAN.

The PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *November 18, 1826.*

Within the year ending on the 1st July, 1825, there was received for postage the sum of	-	\$1,252,061	32
The expenditures during that year were	-	1,206,584	42
			<u>\$45,476 90</u>

Leaving a surplus of receipts of forty-five thousand four hundred and seventy-six dollars and ninety cents.

The receipts for the year ending on the 1st July last were	-	\$1,388,416	82
For the same period, the expenditures amounted to	-	1,309,316	21
			<u>\$79,100 61</u>

Which leaves seventy-nine thousand one hundred dollars and sixty-one cents of receipts above the expenditures.

A comparison of the above receipts shows an increase of revenue, during the last year, above the preceding one, of \$136,355 50.

From my report of last year, it appeared that the means of the Department (including a reduction of expenditure of \$47,821 12) for the year ending 1st July, 1826, exceeded those of the year ending 1st July, 1823,	-	\$185,537	32
To this may be added the receipts of the last year above those of the preceding,	-	136,355	50
			<u>\$321,892 82</u>

Making three hundred and twenty-one thousand eight hundred and ninety-two dollars and eighty-two cents of revenue for the last year above the receipts of the year ending 1st July, 1823.

This amount, it will be observed, includes no part of the old debt.

The increase of the revenue of this Department arises, in no inconsiderable degree, from the facilities which have lately been given on important routes, and the growing confidence of the public in the safety and regularity of the mail.

Since the last annual statement, contracts have been made for an additional transportation of the mail in stages 259,364 miles, and on horseback 69,160 miles, annually.

This transportation, when added to the increase of the two preceding years, will show an augmented conveyance of the mail, in comparison with the year 1823, of 1,857,345 miles.

Seven hundred and fourteen post offices have been established within the past year; these, when added to those established in the two preceding years, make 1,754.

A comparison of the above augmentation of revenue, transportation, and post offices, with former years, will show the rapid extension of the operations of this Department.

In 1801, the receipts for postage were	-	\$320,443	00
The increased revenue of last year over the year ending 1st July, 1823, as above stated,	-	321,892	82
			<u>\$1,449 82</u>

Leaving fourteen hundred and forty-nine dollars and eighty-two cents more than the total revenue of 1801.

The augmented transportation of the mail since 1st July, 1823, is equal to its conveyance throughout the Union in 1800.

In 1806 there were but 1,710 post offices; there are now 6,218; 1,754 of which have been established since 1st July, 1823.

On the contracts which have been lately made for the south and southwest, some reduction of expense has been effected, though great additional facilities have been given.

On the route by the way of Huntsville, Columbus, Jackson, and Natchez, to New Orleans, under the new contracts, the mail will be carried in covered carriages. Stages have been established to run three trips weekly between Milledgeville, in Georgia, and Montgomery, in Alabama, and thence to Blakely, when steamboats cannot ply to Montgomery.

From Blakely and Mobile to New Orleans, the mail will be conveyed three trips weekly in steamboats. On this route the great mail to New Orleans will be transported in four days less time from Washington City and all places north of it, than on the route by way of Natchez.

A new principle has been incorporated into the late contracts, which, it is believed, will produce great regularity in the conveyance of the mail.

Excuses for delays and total failures have always been heard, and, when it appeared that the obstructions were such as could not be overcome, no penalties have been imposed. Under this practice, it has been found that carriers often endeavor to avoid the effects of their own negligence by statements which exempt their employers from fines. This presents a strong inducement for them to magnify difficulties and procure certificates from persons with whom they may have influence, corroborative of their own allegations. To remove this motive, and induce the utmost exertion, by the late contracts a penalty follows every failure, without regard to the cause producing it. As this penalty is increased by the addition of every seven minutes' delay, and as a failure to connect with a depending line, through any want of exertion, may forfeit the contract, no greater inducement can be offered to insure a punctual delivery of the mail.

On the 1st July, 1823, balances were due from contractors, postmasters, and late postmasters, amounting to	-	-	-	-	\$391,994 59
There was due to contractors, for services rendered prior to that time, which should be deducted, the sum of	-	-	-	\$26,548 64	
Amount of debts since ascertained to be bad,	-	-	-	27,814 24	
Suits pending, and judgments, amounting to	-	-	-	149,500 00	
Estimated amount of balances, composing a part of the debt above stated, which have been adjusted by credits, -	-	-	-	30,000 00	
					<u>233,862 88</u>
					\$158,131 71
From this sum deduct the amount of expenditures over the receipts for the year ending 1st July, 1824,					<u>12,387 35</u>
					\$145,744 36
Amount of receipts above the expenditures for the year ending 1st July, 1825,	-	-	-	45,476 90	
Excess of receipts over expenditures for last year, -	-	-	-	79,100 61	
					<u>\$270,321 87</u>

This sum is subject to the order of the Department.

As the means of the Department are ample to meet all its engagements, and any reasonable amount of additional expenditure which Congress may think proper to authorize, by the establishment of new routes, it is desirable that its contingent expenses and the salaries of its officers should be paid out of its own funds, and the Treasury be released from the usual appropriations for that purpose.

Fifty thousand dollars might be saved annually by the discontinuance of unproductive post routes.

Under the law passed at the last session of Congress, requiring the mail routes from Columbus, in Mississippi, to Doake's, and from Chatahoochie, in Georgia, to Line creek, in Alabama, to be repaired, contracts have been made, and the work commenced.

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No. 64.

[2d SESSION.]

## SALARY OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, JANUARY 11, 1827.

Mr. JOHNSON, of Kentucky, made the following report:

The Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, to whom was referred the resolution of the Senate instructing them to examine into the expediency of increasing the salary of the Postmaster General, have maturely examined the subject, and submit, as the result of their reflections, the following report:

No argument is presumed to be necessary to establish the position, that, in a Government constituted like ours, for the benefit of the people, compensation should be given with a reference to the labor and responsibility of the office, and the requisite capacity to fill it.

It may be assumed as a principle of sound policy, that, where the duties of an office are important, and require talents and industry to discharge them, such a compensation should be paid as to command the services of the person who possesses the best qualifications.

And when the whole time of an individual is devoted to the public, in the performance of most responsible duties, he should be relieved from pecuniary sacrifices, by a provision which, economically expended, would afford him a competency. A compensation less than this will fail to secure, for any considerable length of time, the services of an efficient officer. He may have other calls, of a character too imperious to be disregarded, and to which all the motives of a laudable ambition must yield.

The best talents can only be engaged in the public service by extending competition for employment to the poor as well as to the rich. An inadequate salary is a proscription of the former, and throws political power into the hands of the latter.

In examining this subject, the committee have referred to the labor required of the Postmaster General, to the responsibilities which belong to his office, and the talents which its duties require. They have compared these with the duties performed and compensation received by other officers of the Government, and have been brought to the conclusion that to increase the salary of the Postmaster General would be an act of justice to him and to the public.

In the operations of the Post Office Department, about twenty thousand agents are employed. All the other branches of the Executive Government, including the army and navy, fall short of this number. The dispersion of this force into every neighborhood of the Union must add to the labor of controlling it; and as all its acts come under the public inspection, and are immediately connected with their interests, the most unceasing diligence is necessary to give public satisfaction.

The responsibility of the Postmaster General is great. He disburses, at his discretion, about \$1,000,000 annually, for the conveyance of the mail; and to postmasters, who are appointed by him, near \$500,000.

The correspondence of the General Post Office, it is ascertained, amounts to about six hundred communications daily, including all received and sent. Between six and seven thousand postmasters make quarterly returns, which are all examined; and payment is made quarterly to between two and three thousand contractors.

The Postmaster General makes from five to ten appointments daily, besides investigating numerous charges against postmasters and contractors, and deciding many legal questions which arise under the post office law. He is required daily to judge of the expediency of giving additional accommodations applied for, and to correspond on almost numberless topics connected with his Department. Whether the committee consider the labor required of him, the great responsibility of the office, or the talents he should possess, they are brought to the decision that his compensation should be equal to that of any other head of a Department.

There is no officer of the Government in whose labors the people have a deeper interest. On the regularity and safety of the mail, all branches of business, in a greater or less degree, depend. To its custody is annually committed no small share of the active capital of the country. When to this view is added the dissemination of intelligence into every village and thickly populated neighborhood of the Union, an accurate opinion may be formed of the vital interest which the people have in an energetic administration of this Department.

The Postmaster General now receives less compensation, it is believed, in proportion to his arduous duties, than is paid to any other officer of the Government.

In recommending the above increase of salary, the committee consider only what is due to the office. If they were to refer to the present incumbent, and review his administration, the justice of the proposed measure would not