

for the transportation of the mail, upon every day of the week, along the great and important routes through and across the country. If, in the early period of our political existence, such an arrangement was found necessary, the great increase of wealth, population, and territory, which has since taken place, in the opinion of the committee, demands its continuance.

In a country so extensive, and whose citizens are united by so many ties of friendship and consanguinity, as well as of business and policy, the convenience of the people and the exigencies of Government alike require that every reasonable facility should be furnished for the intercourse and communication of its different parts.

Under some circumstances, the petitioners themselves must admit that travelling upon the Sabbath is not only excusable, but an act of duty; and the committee cannot doubt that, along the chain of communication from one extremity of the Union to the other, through places of great wealth and business, and a dense population, the facility of communication furnished by the mail prevents, in numerous instances, the doing of that which, without such facility, would be a "work of necessity or charity."

Many of the evils stated by the petitioners are not necessarily incident to the practice of which they complain. The transportation of the mail upon the Sabbath, by the agent of the Government, furnishes no justification to the traveller who unnecessarily fixes upon that day to perform his journey in the public stage; nor does the delivery of letters at the respective post offices justify the assemblage of a concourse of people at such offices on that day. These evils, if they exist, it is perfectly within the power of the several State Governments to correct. But, as the practice of travelling on the Sabbath is tolerated by the State Governments, in at least three-fourths of the Union, the prohibition of the transportation of the mail on that day would have no other effect than to transfer to private hands that communication from place to place which is now performed by the Government. Stage coaches and expresses would supply the place of the mail. If, for example, the mail should not pass on the Sabbath between New York and Philadelphia, or between Philadelphia and Baltimore, there being no law to prohibit any other communication between those places on that day, the citizens of those large commercial cities would still maintain their daily intercourse with each other, by such private conveyance as they could employ. This would put upon the road, as agents, expresses, and private contractors, many more persons and carriages than are now employed in the transportation of the mail. Until, therefore, the prohibition of travelling on the Sabbath, by the several State Governments, shall have become, in some degree, general, a law to stop the mail on that day would rather increase than diminish the evil of which the petitioners complain.

In the opinion which the committee have formed upon this subject, they have not been influenced by any considerations of economy in the transportation of the mail, though that is alluded to in the letter of the Postmaster General; but by a sincere belief that, in the present situation of the State laws, and under proper regulations, the practice is as consistent with the requirements of the moral law as it is with a sound and enlightened policy.

But, although the committee believe it necessary to continue the transportation of the mail, they do not perceive that the same necessity exists for the delivery of letters at the respective post offices on the Sabbath. They, therefore, report the following resolutions:

*Resolved*, That it is inexpedient, at this time, to pass any law respecting the transportation of the mail.

*Resolved*, That provision be made, by law, to prohibit the delivery of letters at the respective post offices of the United States on the Sabbath.

CONDITION OF THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, DECEMBER 2, 1823.

SIR:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *November 17, 1823.*

In obedience to your request, I have the honor to submit the following statement respecting the affairs of this Department.

There are established by law 88,600 miles of post roads in the United States; and, at this time, the mail is transported 85,700 miles on these roads, leaving 2,900 miles not yet carried into operation. The mail is transported in stages on 20,943 miles of post roads.

At the commencement of the next year the mail will be conveyed on all the routes established, with perhaps one or two exceptions, for which contracts have not yet been made.

The following statement will show the increase of post roads in the years specified:

In the year 1819	there were established of post roads,	-	-	-	9,113 miles.
In the year 1820	do. do.	-	-	-	4,906
In the year 1821	do. do.	-	-	-	6,562
In the year 1822	do. do.	-	-	-	5,746
In the year 1823	do. do.	-	-	-	2,800

29,127

Making a total increase, in the five years stated, of twenty-nine thousand one hundred and twenty-seven miles.

As near as can be known from the records of this Department, there are about 5,243 post offices established: means have been taken to ascertain the exact number.

The following will show the increase and diminution of the amount due to the Department by postmasters, late postmasters, and contractors:

On the 31st December, 1799,	there was due	-	-	-	-	\$84,544 74
On the 31st December, 1804,	do.	-	-	-	-	144,457 57
On the 31st December, 1809,	do.	-	-	-	-	215,347 63
On the 31st December, 1814,	do.	-	-	-	-	232,652 19
On the 1st April, 1820,	do.	-	-	-	-	668,472 72
On the 1st April, 1821,	do.	-	-	-	-	613,007 96
On the 1st April, 1822,	do.	-	-	-	-	486,358 25
On the 1st April, 1823,	do.	-	-	-	-	435,651 46

From the 1st April, 1820, to 1st April, 1821, it appears there was a charge upon the balances due to the Department of - - - - -	\$55,464 76
From the 1st April, 1821, to the 1st April, 1822, - - - - -	126,649 91
From the 1st April, 1822, to the 1st April, 1823, - - - - -	50,706 79
	<u>232,821 46</u>

To this sum of two hundred and thirty-two thousand eight hundred and twenty-one dollars and forty-six cents must be added, for expenses incurred in transporting the mail, under bids accepted, in cases where contracts had not been executed, or, if executed, had not been returned to the Department, about - - - - -	30,000 00
	<u>\$262,821 46</u>

The amount of postage which accrued for the three years above stated was less than the actual expenditures of the Department by the above sum of two hundred and sixty-two thousand eight hundred and twenty-one dollars and forty-six cents. But the real deficiency will be found much greater than this sum, for there should be added the losses that will inevitably take place in collecting more than a million of dollars in each year from between five and six thousand postmasters. The real excess of expenditure above the receipts for postage, which accrued in the three years stated, cannot be much below three hundred thousand dollars. The whole of this deficiency must have been collected out of the balances due to the Department, except the amount that may yet remain unpaid.

The gross amount of postage which accrued from the 1st July, 1822, to the 1st July, 1823, was \$1,114,345 12

The expenditures of the Department during the same period are as follows:

Compensation to postmasters, including their incidental expenses, &c. - - - - -	353,995 98
Incidental expenses of the Department, - - - - -	30,866 37
Transportation of the mail, - - - - -	784,600 08
Payments into the treasury, - - - - -	423 08
	<u>1,169,885 51</u>

Amount of postage, as above stated, - - - - -	1,114,345 12
	<u>\$55,540 39</u>

This balance of fifty-five thousand five hundred and forty dollars and thirty-nine cents remains against the Department, if every dollar of postage which accrued within the year should be collected. This cannot be expected; and the deficiency will be increased in proportion to the losses sustained in making collections for the year.

On the 1st of July last there was due by the Department to contractors, for services rendered prior to that time, twenty-six thousand five hundred and forty-eight dollars and sixty-four cents. This sum must be discharged out of the current receipts for postage, or from collections made out of the balances due to the Department. These balances on the 1st of July last amounted to three hundred and ninety-one thousand nine hundred and ninety-four dollars and fifty-nine cents; one hundred and thirty-five thousand two hundred and forty-five dollars and twenty-eight cents of which was due from postmasters, the balance from late postmasters and contractors. As this sum includes delinquencies which have been accumulating since the organization of the Department, and as large sums have been collected from these balances within the last three years, a large proportion of the amount, which for some years has been due from late postmasters and contractors, may safely be assumed as lost. There is now about one hundred and sixty thousand dollars in suit against late postmasters, and in a very short time suits will be commenced for all balances, except those which are due by postmasters in office.

Not more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars will probably be collected from the total amount of balances due to the Department; and, to realize this amount, some years of unremitting exertions will be necessary. A great majority of the accounts are for less than one hundred dollars each, and some hundreds of suits must be brought, in addition to those now pending.

It was the constant endeavor of my predecessor, for some years past, to reduce the expenditures of the Department within its receipts; and the reduction of the balances due to the Department shows that within the last three years large sums have been realized from that source.

In making the late contracts, the expenditure has been reduced on routes in operation forty-seven thousand eight hundred and twenty-one dollars and twelve cents. And it is believed that the public convenience has been promoted by contracts to have the mail conveyed in stages on several important routes.

There will be in operation the next year stages for the conveyance of the mail from the city of Washington to St. Louis, and probably to Franklin, in Missouri, as a proposition has been made by the Department for an extension of the line from St. Louis to Franklin. The weight of the mail and its security require stages on this route.

The routes established at the last session of Congress, which will go into operation at the commencement of the ensuing year, amount to fourteen thousand and twenty-one dollars. New routes are always found unproductive; and it may be safely estimated that two-thirds of this sum will be a charge on the revenue of the Department, from other sources, for some years to come.

A contract has not yet been made for the transportation of the mail on the route from St. Augustine, in East Florida, to Pensacola, which was established by act of Congress, in the session of 1822.

Diligent inquiry has been made, and it does not appear that there is a road between these places, on the route designated, on which the mail can be conveyed. There are Indian paths which pass through different Indian settlements, but none, it is understood, that extend for any considerable distance on the proper direction. The want of a road is not the only obstacle on this route; almost the whole distance is an uninhabited wilderness, except a few Indian villages; and it is represented that very large and impassable swamps and lakes will render the passage of the mail in some places impracticable.

The lowest responsible bid that has been made for the conveyance of the mail on this route is four thousand dollars; and it is confidently believed that the route will not add two hundred dollars to the receipts of the Department. As this is an established route, I shall deem it my duty to accept the best bid which has been made, and close the contract, so that an attempt to transport the mail on it may be made, unless Congress shall think proper to modify or repeal the law.

It is understood that, whilst Congress are willing that all the revenue of this Department shall be appropriated in extending the travel of the mail, they are unwilling to provide for this accommodation, to any considerable extent, by appropriations from the treasury. It is, therefore, an object of great importance to bring the expenditures of the Department at least within its receipts. This may be done by discontinuing the unprofitable routes—the expense of which greatly exceeds the convenience to the public—and by a rigid economy in the administration of the affairs of the Department.

If Congress, at the ensuing session, will discontinue unproductive routes, so as to lessen the expenditure twenty-five thousand dollars, including the expense of the new routes which they may establish, it is believed that the expenditure of the Department may be brought within its receipts for the ensuing year. It will be remarked, that the amount of reduction here proposed is less than the sum due to contractors on the 1st of July last. There has been paid into the treasury of the United States by this Department, since its organization, one million eighty-nine thousand three hundred and thirty-seven dollars and twenty-nine cents.

The receipts of the Department, it is expected, will be greater the ensuing year than the present. An arrangement has been made respecting the postage on newspapers, which will probably increase the receipts nearly thirty thousand dollars.

The average amount received from this source has been about sixty-six thousand eight hundred dollars annually. There are more than five hundred and sixty newspapers printed in the Union. It has been estimated that, on an average, each newspaper office sends three hundred papers weekly in the mail; one-fourth of which are supposed to be sent out of the State or Territory in which they are printed. This would give an increase to the revenue of the Department of nearly forty thousand dollars. Some country papers may not send weekly in the mail more than from fifty to a hundred papers, but some offices are known to send from ten to twenty thousand. From the best data on which a calculation can be made, it is believed that something near the estimated result may be produced. But as fifty per cent. of the postage on newspapers is paid to postmasters for their compensation, only one-half of the increased receipts from this item will be added to the means of the Department. The deficiencies in the receipts from this item, which are believed to exist, do not arise from any want of integrity in postmasters, but rather from indulgencies which they are in the practice of extending for newspaper postage. It is believed that they generally render an account of the amount received, but they fail to collect what might have been required in advance.

An arrangement will soon be made to draw drafts on each postmaster quarterly for the postage received. This will be done by arranging the different post offices under the numbers of the respective routes on which they are situated, and requiring the receipts of the offices on each route to be exhausted by drafts to the contractor for the route, before he is paid from any other source. If there be a deficiency of funds on the route to pay the contractor, he can be paid by drafts on some other convenient offices, or by checks on banks where funds of the Department may be deposited. If there be a surplus of funds on the route, they can be drawn for in favor of some contractor on a convenient route, or deposited in some bank, as convenience may require. The large offices will all be required to deposit in banks.

This arrangement will supersede the practice of remitting by mail, as heretofore; and it will induce a much greater punctuality of payment, as postmasters will always expect quarterly drafts, however small their receipts. This plan will enable the Department to realize quarterly the postage paid more certainly, it is believed, than any other mode which can be adopted.

In making remittances to the Department, about one thousand dollars have been lost annually; and, as the same money is sent by mail to contractors, sometimes into the neighborhood from whence it was remitted, the loss in this transmission must at least be equal to that of remitting by postmasters. By the arrangement proposed, the labor of the Department will be lessened, and the moneys appropriated will always appear by the transactions of the office, without passing through the hands of any one employed in the General Post Office.

No check whatever, except the integrity of the postmaster and of the receiving clerk in the Department, has heretofore existed for all the moneys which have been remitted. If the postmaster states that he has remitted any amount, and will make affidavit of the fact, he obtains a credit, though the money has never been received. Should the clerk who receives the quarterly return, in which the remittance is usually enclosed, take the amount and destroy the return, there is nothing that can lead to a discovery; the return is supposed to have been lost in the conveyance. Without entertaining any illiberal suspicions against either postmasters or clerks, such a system is considered as radically defective, and a change is deemed indispensable. It is believed that no change is preferable to the one contemplated, as it will give certainty, and, at the same time, simplify and lessen the labor of the Department.

Before the commencement of the ensuing session of Congress, copies of all contracts for the conveyance of the mail, made prior to the 1st of July last, will be deposited in the Treasury. After that period a duplicate of all contracts will be filed in the Treasury Department, as the law requires.

Accounts have been rendered to the Treasury up to the 30th September, 1821. This part of the business of the office has not generally been brought up as near the current transactions as at present, but it is contemplated to have the accounts rendered to the Treasury as promptly, in future, as the operations of the Department will admit.

I have the honor to be, most respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN McLEAN.

To the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.