THE POST.

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# The Post.

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## SPEECH

### of

## HON. JOHN B. PACKER,

In the House of Representatives.

The House having under consideration the bill for the free exchange of newspapers between publishers, and for the free transmission of weekly newspapers by mail and within the county where published.

Mr. Speaker: In reporting this bill for the action of the House, it certainly cannot be regarded as necessary that we should enter upon a general discussion of the franking privilege as it existed prior to the 1st of July, 1873, for that has been disposed of by Congressional enactment, and, with its advantages and disadvantages, its uses and abuses, whatever they may have been is now a thing of the past.

Equally foreign and irrelevant to the question now presented for the consideration of the House is the subject to which reference is sometimes made in this connection, of the additional cost of printing, and of increased expenditures in the preparation and publication of the public documents for distribution among the people.

This bill does not provide for either, but is expressly limited in its operation, by its own terms, to providing means for the distribution, without charge, to citizens of the United States or persons residing therein, of the public documents, books or publications, and printed matter published and issued by authority of Congress, and of such packages of seeds cuttings, roots, and scions as may be furnished by the Agricultural Department under authority of law. It makes no provisions for printing a single document or book not already published, and does not contemplate or require that any more shall be ordered for publication; leaving that question for the decision of Congress when it shall properly arise.

But we have now, sir, in the folding-rooms of this House, bound, folded, and ready for distribution, about one hundred and thirty-three thousand volumes of the most valuable books printed by the direction and under the authority of Congress. In the public document room of the Senate they have about the same number, making in all about two hundred and sixty-six thousand volumes; besides many pamphlets containing much useful information upon questions of national importance and of great interest to the public.

That these books belong to the people there can be no question. Their money has paid for them, and their right to have them cannot be doubted; while the letters, almost without number, coming to us from our constituents by every mail attest their anxious desire to have them.

Heretofore, as their representatives, members of Congress have been charged with the duty, somewhat laborious, it is true, but still a pleasant duty withal, of making a judicious distribution of the quota of these documents apportioned to each congressional district among those for whose use, information, and benefit they were printed. Then, however, the law provided the means for making this distribution, and of giving the information so highly prized by many of our citizens, and which is collated, prepared, and printed at considerable cost to the public, free of expense and without charge to the people for transportation in their own mails.

Charged simply with the duty of distribution, certainly the representative could not be expected to pay the cost of sending these publications either by mail or by express, or other means of transportation, to the constituents to whom they belong. As well, and just as reasonably, might he be asked to furnish the paper upon which they are printed, and to pay the cost of printing and binding the books, or to contribute a portion of the expenses incurred in the preparation of the different works for publication. It is true, the distribution of a limited number of documents, even at our own expense, might not be oppressively onerous, but the principle is the same whether the amount is small or large, and the people would not fail to recognize the injustice of the burden to which every member of Congress would be subjected by a repetition of similar favors to any considerable number of his constituents.

From a statement I have before me of the weight of each of the documents in the folding-room it appears that the postage, at the rates now fixed by law, would range from about twenty-five cents on the smaller books to about $1.76 upon the largest and reaching, for a set of the Globe of the Forty-second Congress, the respectable figure of $7.82. These rates of postage, charged upon the whole number of documents each member of the House sent to his constituents and actually distributed among the people during the sessions of the Forty-second Congress, would have amounted to $1,-[illegible]3.06, or the sum of $976.55 per [illegible] Each Senator's postage would have been, during the same Congress, upon his quoto of documents, if charged at the present rates, $921.87 per annum. This calculation is based, however, upon the whole number of documents actually sent; and as they include some lying over from former years, I have procured from the folding-room a statement of the number properly allotted to each congressional district during the three sessions of the late Congress, and distributed by the members of the House, from which it appears, by a careful computation of the rates of postage upon each book sent, that the aggregate of each member's postage would have been, upon these documents alone, $1,-785.14; the average rate of postage being forty-six cents per document. Upon the one hundred and thirty-three thousand volumes now on hand in the House folding room, which were authorized before but not furnished until after June 30, 1873, the postage, at present rates, would be in excess of $61,000, while the charges upon the books in the Senate document room would be about the same.

Since the expiration of the franking privilege on the 1st day of July last, but few, if any, of these documents have been sent by mail, those that have been distributed having been sent by express; and it is therefore very obvious that comparatively few will reach their proper owners especially if they reside at great distances from the capital, and off the line of the express companies' routes.

In nearly all the States in which the policy of publishing and distributing official documents for the information of the people has been adopted, the State it is believed, pays for the stamp put upon the package by the officer or person sending it by the mail, and practically that plan has been adopted and is now employed, under the act of Congress, by the Executive Departments of the Government at Washington. The principle of the payment of postage upon official papers, documents, books, &c., by the Government, is, therefore, fully recognized and acted upon now by all the Executive Departments, in sending under official stamps provided by the Government the very large proportion of these documents authorized by Congress to be printed for their use and furnished by the Government Printer to them, although charged to the account of Congress. And this bill only proposes to carry that principle into effect, for the benefit and advantage of the people themselves, and for the purpose of securing the distribution of a portion, at least, of these publications to those whom we represent, by a method which will, it is believed, stand the test of a comparison with that now in use by the Departments to which I have referred.

Let us examine for a moment, sir, the practical operation of this departmental, or official-stamp system. Upon the abolition of the franking privilege of course it became necessary to make some provision to enable the several Departments to transmit their official mail matter through the mails, and therefore it was enacted by the fourth section of the act making appropriations to supply deficiencies, &c., approved Mar. 3, 1873.—

That the following amounts, or so much thereof as may be necessary, are hereby appropriated for the following named officers and Departments for purchase of postage-stamps for use during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1874:

For Executive office, $600; for Department of State, $83,000; for Post-Office Department, $800,000; for Treasury Department, $504,000; for Navy Department, $38,000; for Interior Department, $230,000; for Agricultural Department, $52,000; for Department of Justice, $15,-000; for War Department, $153,000; for offices of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, $100 each; making in all $1,-865,900: Provided, That the Postmaster-General shall cause to be prepared a special stamp or stamped envelopes, to be used only for official mail matter, for each of the Executive Departments; and said stamps and stamped envelopes shall be supplied by the proper officer of said Department to all persons under its direction requiring the same for official use.

Under this act there were furnished to the Executive Departments, from the 30th of June to the 8th of December, 1873, a period of five months and eight days, official postage-stamps and stamped envelopes of the nominal value of $1,190,478.-02.

By turning to the reports of these officers we learn how these stamps and stamped envelopes, supplied in such large numbers, are disposed of by them.

The Secretary of the Treasury, in his circular to officers and clerks of the Treasury Department and others, instructs them that—

These stamps are to be used on all official correspondence of whatever nature, and other official mail matter, whether addressed to officers lately entitled to the franking privilege, to other officers of the Government who had not the privilege, or to private persons on official business; thus entirely doing away with the use of the ordinary postage stamp for official purposes.

And then he informs us that his Department furnishes such stamps to the following: 42 officers of the Department in Washington, 10 assistant treasurers, 5 designated depositaries, 7 mint and assay officers, 21 light house inspectors and engineers, 48 supervising and local inspectors of steam vessels, 42 revenue marine and life saving service, 11 surgeons in charge of marine hospitals, 33 superintendents construction and repairs public buildings, 22 special agents, 1 commissioner of fish and fisheries, 171 customs officers, 225 collectors of internal revenue, 26 revenue agents, 10 supervisors of internal revenue; a total of 678 officers receiving them directly from the Department; but of the number of clerks and assistants of these officers to whom they are thus intrusted we are not advised.

The State Department furnishes them to the Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of State, the Second Assistant Secretary, the chief clerk of the Department, the examiner of claims, the dispatch agent at New York, and the dispatch agent at Boston.

The Attorney General reports that the Department of Justice—

Has furnished official postage stamps to 54 United States district attorneys, 56 United States marshals, and 62 courts of the United States, making in all 172 persons who have been supplied with these stamps for the purpose of paying postage on official correspondence. Stamps are also used upon the official correspondence of this office and the office of the Solicitor of the Treasury. In a few instances where letters have been written to persons not officers or employes of the Department, asking for information postage stamps have been inclosed to pay the return postage. This, however, has only been done in that branch of the Department relating to the Court of Claims, where the return papers were voluminous.

He also states that—

About one-half the time of a first-class clerk is employed in keeping an account of the postage samps, and transmitting them to the officers entitled to them, and a considerable portion of the time of one messenger is now occupied in delivering mail matter in the city.

The Navy Department furnishes them to the eight bureaus of the Navy department, including the Naval Observatory, Hydographic Office, Nautical Almanac Office, Signal Office, naval hospitals; the commandants of the several navy-yards and rendezvous, receiving-ships, and offices connected therewith; the Superintendent of the naval Academy; the Admiral of the Navy; the governor of the Naval Asylum; the purchasing paymasters at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Norfolk, and San Francisco; naval stations at League Island, New London, Mound City, and New Orleans; naval examining and retiring board; and such of the vessels of the United States Navy as may be in our ports.

In the War Department the stamps are furnished to the Adjutant-General, the chief clerk of the office, and, in his absence, another clerk, designated by the Adjutant-General, and a clerk who affixes the stamps to the letters and packages to be mailed; Inspector-General R. B. Marcy; Inspector-General E. Schriver; employes Inspector-General's office; clerk Inspector-General's office; to the chief clerk of the Bureau of Military Justice.

In the Quartermaster-General's office a clerk is designated to take charge of and account for the official stamps, &c., and eight clerks are supplied with them.

In the office of Commissary-General of Subsistence the stamps required for the use of the office are placed in charge of one clerk of class two.

In the Surgeon General's Office the Bureau of Medical Statistics, the Paymaster General's Office, and the office of the Chief of Engineers, the stamps are placed in the hands of clerks, while the number of officers and employes, in or connected with the Signal Office, at the various stations of observation throughout the country who are furnished with official postage stamps, for the purpose of paying postage on official correspondence, is 112.

In the Post Office Department they are issued to the following officers and employees: 1 Postmaster-General, 3 assistant postmasters-general, 1 Assistant Attorney-General for the Post-Office Department, 1 superintendent of foreign mails, 1 Superintendent of Money-Order System, 1 chief clerk of Department, 1 chief of division of mail depredations, 1 postage stamp agent at New York, 1 postal-card agent at Springfield, Massachusetts, 73 special agents, 343 railway post-office head clerks, 917 route agents, 193 mail route messengers, and 33,780 postmasters; a total of 35,317.

In the Department of the Interior, in the Secretary's office the official postage-stamps are in the custody of the superintendent of documents, who issues them, on the requisition of the chief clerk of the Department, to the chief messenger and to the clerk in immediate charge of the document-room, who stamp all official mail matter leaving the Department.

Official stamps are also issued by the superintendent of documents to the following bureaus, on requisition of their respective heads: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Education, the Patent Office, the General Land Office, the Pension Office, the Census Office, and the National Museum.

In the Bureau of Indian Affairs the official stamps are in the keeping of a clerk of the first class, whose duty it is to stamp all official mail. Stamps are also furnished by this Bureau to the following officers: To 5 Indian inspectors, 4 superintendents of Indian affairs, and 77 Indian agents.

In letters written to persons not connected with the Bureau, asking for information, it is customary to inclose official stamps for return postage.

In the Bureau of Education the chief clerk has charge of all matters pertaining to postage and the sending out of official mail. In this Bureau it is customary, when the correspondence renders a reply important for the information of the office, to inclose official stamps for return postage.

In the Patent Office the financial clerk has custody of the official stamps, but is not allowed to use them himself. A lady clerk has charge of stamping all the official mail, with the exception of letters written and mailed after office hours, which are stamped by either the Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, or chief clerk.

In the General Land Office one clerk has the entire charge of the official stamps, and for the stamping of the official mail, they are issued by him daily to the chief of the Bureau, who affixes them to said mail. The clerk referred to also furnishes stamps quarterly to the following officers, upon their requisition: To 17 surveyors-general; 19 registers of the local land offices, and 90 receivers of the local land offices.

The deputy commissioner of pensions in the Pension office is the custodian of the official stamps. They are issued by him to one clerk in the office, whose duty it is to stamp all official mail. The deputy commissioner of pensions also issues official stamps to 1,400 examining surgeons for the payment of postage of certificates of examination of pensioners. It is the custom of this Bureau when official letters are addressed to persons not interested in the contents thereof, to inclose official stamps for return postage.

The franking privilege was limited to the President, the Vice-President, Senators, Representatives, and Delegates in Congress, and the Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House of Representatives, to cover their correspondence, all printed matter issued by the authority of Congress, and all speeches, proceedings, and debates in Congress; such principal officers of the Executive Departments, being heads of Bureaus or chief clerks, as the Postmaster-General might by regulation prescribe, to cover official communications only; postmasters, to cover official communications to other postmasters only, and assessors and collectors and their assistants and deputies, for the interchange of official communications only.

And then it was expressly provided, by the revised act of 1872, as a protection against fraud, and a guarantee of the official character of the paper or correspondence sent, that—

No person entitled by law to the franking privilege shall exercise said privilege otherwise than by his written autograph signature on the matter franked.

Thus, Mr Speaker, it will be seen that under the present system it has been found necessary, in the operation of the extensive and complicated machinery of the Government, to scatter these official stamps almost broadcast, in every quarter, and I submit, sir, if all these thousands of officers, and tens of thousands of clerks and subordinates all over the country, can be and are intrusted with the custody and use of these stamps, (and I do for a moment believe they make an improper or unauthorized use of them,) why may we not trust the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House with the care and use of the stamp or stamped envelope for public documents as provided for and authorized by this bill?

I will tell why I would not have them furnished directly to the Senators and members themselves. Every member receiving them would expose himself to the charge of making an improper use of them, just as we hear it stated now, that the official postage-stamps of the Departments are applied to private or unofficial mail matter, and just as members of Congress were charged, over and over again, without the slightest evidence of making an illegal use of their frank under the old system. The old charges of irregularities and abuses would be revived, and as it would be difficult to prove a negative it might be impossible to meet the charge. These stamps or wrappers are intended for the benefit of our constituents and not of ourselves; and our best and surest protection against all accusations and assaults will be, not to take them into our custody or possession, but leave them in the hands of the officers designated, whose duty it will be to attach them only to such public documents, or printed matter, or seeds, as may be authorized to be distributed by congressional enactment.

In view also of the objection frequently urged against the former system of franking, whether well-founded or not, that other parties could counterfeit or fraudulently use the frank of a member of Congress, more especially in former years when the use of engraved *fac-simile* stamps or dies was permitted, the committee have placed around the plan submitted by them such checks and guards as must, it is believed, effectually and certainly prevent every attempt to abuse it. And it may be remarked, in passing, sir, that a great, if not the major, part of the opposition to the franking privilege, grew out of its supposed or alleged abuse; for the privilege, when properly and honestly and legally exercised, was undoubtedly the privilege of the people themselves, intended for their benefit, in facilitating their communications with their agents or representatives upon the questions coming before Congress affecting their rights and their interests, or the welfare and prosperity of the country.

By the second section of this bill it is provided—

That the Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House of Representatives of the United States shall cause to be prepared, for their respective Houses, a special stamp, or stamped envelope or wrapper, of such form and design as shall be directed and approved by the Postmaster General, to be used by the said Secretary and Clerk, or by such assistants as may be appointed by either of them, for their respective Houses, only upon such printed matter or documents or packages of seeds, cuttings, roots and scions as aforesaid, as the Vice-President, the Senators, Representatives, and Delegates in Congress, the Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House of Representatives may, by their respective written autographic signatures, indorsed upon the wrappers or envelopes thereof, direct to be sent by mail, as is provided in the 1st going section of this act.

Thus the matter that may be sent free of charge is, in the first place, limited to public documents published by direction of Congress, and to the seeds, &c., furnished by the Agricultural Department, under authority of law, as before stated, and does not include the official, much less the private, correspondence of members. In the next place, it can only be sent under a special stamp, or stamped envelope or wrapper, of such form and design as shall be directed and approved by the Postmaster-General, to be attached, or used, only by the proper officer of the House. And then, as an additional measure of protection, and to prevent the officers designated, or any one else, from making an improper or unauthorized use of the stamp, it is required that the person authorized to send the package, the Vice-President, Senator, Representative, or Delegate in Congress, or the Secretary of the Senate, or the Clerk of the House, shall also indorse his signature upon the wrapper or envelope, in his own handwriting.

Again, as a further security against improper practices, the committee have provided in the fourth section of the bill—

That any person who shall knowingly, and with intent to defraud the government of the United States, or cause to be used, any of the said stamps, stamped envelopes, or wrappers, herein authorized to be prepared and used, for any other purpose or in any other manner than as herein before authorized, or who shall counterfeit the name or signature of any person herein authorized to indorse his autograph signature upon the wrappers or envelopes aforesaid, or who shall wrongfully offer or use any such counterfeit indorsement, with the intent to avoid the payment of postage, shall, on conviction thereof, be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and be punished by a fine of not less than $100 nor more than $1,000, or by imprisonment not less than three months nor more than twelve months, or by both fine and imprisonment, in the discretion of the court.

To meet also the apprehension of the very able, energetic, and vigilant head of the Post Office Department who has inaugurated so many acknowledged improvements, and, with the aid of his faithful and intelligent assistants, has succeeded in establishing and maintaining the most complete, efficient, and admirable postal system in the world, and recognizing the force of his objection that there might, at times, be difficulty in providing immediate means for the expeditious transmission of these official documents, along with the other mail matter, upon a few of the trunk lines, and particularly those leading from the city of Washington, the committee have inserted in the bill a provision authorizing the Postmaster General, if the welfare or exigencies of the service shall require, to make rules and regulations delaying in whole or in part the transmission of these documents and packages for any period not exceeding thirty days from the time of delivery for mailing.

Without troubling the House with a reference, at this moment, to the gross amount of all the receipts and expenditures of the Department, I prefer to call attention to what seems to me a more legitimate subject of inquiry in this connection—the cost of the inland transportation of the mails.

It amounted in the fiscal year ending 1873 to $15,340,020 00.

In the estimates for 1875 the Department sets down the estimated cost of this service at $15,-878,821, 00.

And the increase of compensation on railroad routes, under act of March 3, 1873, at $535,000 00.

The whole cost, then, it will be seen, of inland transportation of the mails for the year ended June 30, 1873—the last year of the franking privilege, and including the unusual amount of free matter thrown upon the mails during the last three months of its existence—was $13,635,341, while the sum appropriated for the current fiscal year ending on the 30th day of June next, upon the estimates of the Department, and including the $500,000 appropriated for readjustment of pay on railroad routes under act of 3d March, 1873, amounted to $15,340,020. And the amount Congress is now asked to appropriate for the next fiscal year for the same purpose is $16,413,821. Of course a very large proportion of this increase is chargeable to the establishment of new post offices, the extension of mail routes, and to the improved mail facilities afforded, and no one will take the trouble to examine the subject with any degree of care can doubt it is entirely legitimate and proper. But it is just as evident that the abolition of the franking privilege has not produced the benefits predicted by the friends of the measure, and that the increased revenue which was expected to result from its repeal has not been sufficient to dispense with or diminish the usual appropriations for the deficiencies in the revenues of the Department. And I am entirely free to admit, sir, that I cannot comprehend the line of argument which, taking the whole number of documents formerly sent to the people of the country under frank of members of Congress, and computing the total amount of the postage that would be chargeable upon them if sent by mail at the present rates, assumes that such sum represents the amount the Post Office Department would gain by the abolition of the privilege. If the same number of books and documents should be sent by the mail, at the same rates, of course the conclusion would be correct, and the revenues would be increased by the amount paid thereon; but if they are not put in the mail, and are forwarded by express, it is difficult to understand how the receipts of the Department will be augmented, or how any person will be benefited, but the stockholders of the express companies.

It was not, sir, because I believed the Government would derive any very substantial pecuniary advantage from the abolition of the franking privilege that I uniformly voted as I did in the last Congress in favor of its repeal, but because many persons had come to regard it as a personal privilege of members of Congress, and belived, whether properly or not, that it was not only liable to abuse, but that it was abused by those entitled to its exercise as well as by others. For the same reason I should now vote against its re-enactment, in its original objectional form, and would oppose its restoration with any features that could be regarded as conferring a privilege personal to the member himself, in any sense or degree, or as granting privileges which could in any manner be abused or perverted to improper or unauthorized purposes.

It may be proper for me to explain in this connection, however, that although the Post Office Department does not send by express, it does send free in the mails, without the use of the official postage stamp, such articles as are regarded in the nature of "supplies" for the Department itself; such as wrapping-paper, twine, mail-bags, locks and keys, marking stamps, blanks, stamped envelopes, &c., the daily average of which is, I understand, in the neighborhood of half a ton in weight. If postal stamps, paid for by the Government, were put upon these the apparent revenues of the Department would be increased by that amount, but whether the country would be any richer by the operation is a problem I leave to others more skilled in such mysteries to explain.

Now, sir, having referred to the "deficiency" in the Post Office Department, permit me to say that I do not think it will be difficult to show whence it comes, nor to demonstrate to the House and the country why the expenditures in this Department are in excess of the receipts.

In the forty-eight States and Territories, including Alaska and the District of Columbia, the expenditures for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1873, exclusive of the amount paid for foreign mails, mail-bags, postage-stamps, and items of a general nature, and including a small amount of miscellaneous items, were $26,969,561.03. And the receipts, exclusive of money-order business, fines, dead letters, &c., were, $22,968,638.18—leaving a total deficit on this account of $4,704,-903.85.

In only seven of the States did the receipts exceed the expenditures, while, in all the other States and in the Territories, the expenditures were in excess of the receipts, and some of them very largely.

In the eleven States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas, there was an excess of expenditures over receipts of $2,-029,084.29, and in Utah and New Mexico the excess was $659,529.87. It is manifest, therefore, even from the hurried reference I have made to the official records, that these deficiencies are occasioned principally by the extended lines and additional service upon our mail routes, and not by an increased volume or bulk of mail matter transported. In the older and more thickly settled States with their larger population, greater commercial activity, and more fully developed resources, and where the mails are heavier, the receipts, it will be observed, are much in excess of the expenses, while in the more sparsely populated districts, where the mails are lighter, and the distances greater, the expenses not only exceed the receipts in their own sections of the country, but absorb the balances in favor of the service in the other States, and swell the deficiencies to the proportions I have already stated.

It is possible, I believe, sir, that some of these expenditures, especially in the Territories, may be reduced without detriment to the service or serious inconvenience to the inhabitants, by limiting the amount of service upon some of the routes; and at the proper time I shall, in the interest of economy and retrenchment call the attention of the House to that subject. But while I hold it to be the duty of Congress to economize and reduce the expenditures in every form and in every direction in which the burdens of the people may be lightened, and while I shall continue to give in the future, as I have in the past, my earnest support to every just measure of economy, yet I do not wish to be understood as advocating the policy of abridging the proper mail facilities of the public, or of crippling the postal service and depriving the people of the incalculable benefits and advantages enjoyed by them, merely because the Post-Office Department is not, in this age of improvement and development to which it contributes so largely, a paying or self-sustaining institution. The War and Navy Departments do not exhibit a cash balance in their favor upon the ledger of the Government, and yet, useful and necessary as they are justly admitted to be, it is doubtful whether both of them combined can be regarded as so potent an agent of civilization as this.

Let but half dozen of our enterprising citizens plunge into the wilderness and commence to day a settlement far beyond the boundaries of civilized life, and before the smoke shall have curled a fortnight above their humble dwellings, they will be asking for the establishment of a post-office and a post-route to reach it. And it is right and proper that it should be so. The millions of acres of our public lands awaiting development will remain unoccupied and unimproved, and will pay no taxes and furnish no revenues to aid in the support of the Government, unless the hardy pioneer, braving the perils and enduring the privations of frontier life, is advised that the Government will treat him like all the rest of his fellow-citizens, and will not regard him as an exile from the old home and friends he left behind.

I have referred to these statements, Mr. Speaker, to show why it is we are having these "deficiencies" and why we have had them, from year to year, every year, I believe, with the exception of one, since 1851; but I do not believe, sir, that the most searching examination of the details of these expenditures will furnish any, even the slightest, ground for adverse criticism of the Department whose officers have honestly, economically, and faithfully performed their whole duty to the Government, and have so successfully met the highest expectations of the people.

The attention of the House was called, a few days scince, by the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. Dawes,] to the increase in the gross expenditures of the post-office from 1837 to the present time, but he omitted to give us along with his general statement of the expenses, any information in relation to the increased receipts of the Department during the same period, and, what was far more important, in my opinion, he failed to make any reference to the wonderful development of the country which has so largely and imperatively demanded a corresponding increase in our postal accommodations and facilities.

At the commencement of the period he has seen proper to select, we had a population of less than 15,000,000, who were accommodated with about 11,000 post-offices, supplied to 123,000 miles of post-routes, but one-third of which was recognized as national service. At the end of the second period (1860) our population did not exceed 23,000,000, and we had but 28,419 post-offices, employing about 228,000 miles of post-roads; while at the termination of the next period included by him, (1873,) with a population of about 35,000,000, we had 32,828 post-offices, using 189,231 miles of post-roads; and at the close of the last fiscal year, (1873,) with a population of at least 40,000,000 we had 32,241 post-offices, with 236,219 miles of post-routes, 67,157 miles of which were upon the railroads of the country.

With post-offices more than treble in number, with a population much more than double, with postal service twice and thrice a day in place of weekly mails, and with post-routes more than twice as long as they were thirty years ago it is not surprising that there should be the increase spoken of in the amount of the expenditures of the Department.

A comparison with the expenses of the office established by the United Colonies on the 26th of July, 1775, when Benjamin Franklin was chosen the first Postmaster-General, to hold his office at Philadelphia, with a salary of $1,000 per annum for himself, with power to appoint a surveyor, at a salary, if necessary, at an annual salary of $30, and directing "the establishment of a line of posts from Falmouth, in New England, to Savannah, in Georgia, with as many cross posts as the Postmaster-General should think fit," would show a more astonishing increase, and yet it would but serve to prove the still more astonishing progress and advancement of the country.

That the question of the postal revenues and expenditures may be more fully understood, I also ask attention to a statement made from the records of the Department, showing the number of post-offices and length of post-roads in the United States, the annual amount paid for mail transportation, and the amounts of postal revenues and expenditures, at periods of five years from 1830 to 1840, inclusive, and in each year from 1840 to 1873, inclusive, with the length of the railroad portion of the post-roads, the length of railway post-office lines, and the cost of the railroad portion of the transportation, from the date of the commencement thereof:

* * *

See Tabular statements.

The third section of the bill, if passed, be substantially but a re-enactment of the law authorizing the free exchange of newspapers, periodicals, and magazines between publishers, and the free circulation of newspapers to actual subscribers residing or receiving the same within the county of publication, as it stood prior to the 1st day of July last.

In tracing the origin of this provision it is remarkable how early a date the fathers of the Republic recognized the value and importance of this means for the dissemination of intelligence and information among the people.

The men who believed that governments derived their just powers from the consent of the governed, and who were seeking to establish justice, to insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and to secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity, could not long remain indifferent to this most powerful agency for the education and enlightment of those in whose keeping the new government was to be intrusted, and therefore we find that the Second Congress under the Constitution, at its first session, made full provision for the free exchange of newspapers through the mails.

*Continued on 4th page.*