

The Southern Postage Act.

The most important action of the Southern Congress, on the 24th inst., was the removal of secrecy from the following report:

Mr. Chilton, from the Committee on Postal Affairs, made the following report: The Committee on Postal Affairs having considered the duties assigned them, have instructed me to submit the following report, and the bill accompanying the same.

The Committee have mainly directed their inquiries to the question whether, without material inconvenience to the public, the Post Office Department of this Confederacy can be made self-sustaining.

The Committee find, from the latest and most reliable means of information of which they have been able to avail themselves, that the excess of expenditure over the receipts in this Department in the six States comprising this Confederacy, for the fiscal year ending 30th June, 1859, was \$1,669,595.83.

To provide for this deficit, your Committee would suggest that the rates of postage may be increased, as proposed by the accompanying bill. By this bill they estimate an increase of receipts approximating \$578,874.83.

They believe that a saving can be effected by a change in the mode of letting out mail contracts, adopting what is usually called "the star-bid system." Providing all due safeguards for the celerity, certainty, and security of the mails, but without other restrictions as to the mode of transportation. In this way your Committee are satisfied that the expense of mail transportation may be reduced, say 33 1/2 per cent. upon the present cost, say \$619,033.

They are further of opinion that there should be a discontinuance of numerous routes, the cost of which is greatly disproportioned to their convenience, and the receipts of the post offices supplied by them. In this way they believe a saving of 1-10 of the present cost of transportation may be attained, say \$256,344.

The service upon many of the routes may, without material detriment, be changed, daily routes reduced to tri-weekly, &c., at an estimated reduction of, say \$206,344.

They would also recommend the abolishing a number of minor post offices, which occasion considerable expense without corresponding profit or convenience. In this way a saving to the Department might be readily secured to the amount of, say \$50,000.

These sums added, say by increased receipts by raising postage rates \$578,874 83 By saving, as above indicated, total 1,081,721 00

Total \$1,669,595 83 Present excess of expenditures over receipts 1,669,595 83

Your Committee are of opinion that steps should be immediately taken to procure postage stamps of the denomination of two, five and twenty cents; that these stamps will be sufficient to meet the wants of the Department for the present.

They would further suggest that immediate steps should be taken for procuring a supply of locks and keys for the mail service; and for post office blanks, such as are now in use.

They would further recommend that all the mail contracts within this Confederacy be re-let as early a day as practicable, and until they are re-let the existing contracts remain of force, this government becoming responsible to such contractors from the 8th day of February, 1861.

Your Committee are unable to suggest any plan until further arrangements shall have been made for the transmission of mail matter to and from other governments. They believe, however, that until postal treaties can be made, expedients arising from the necessities of the public will, readily suggest themselves, which will in a great measure, remedy the inconvenience. The wide-spread ramifications of the Express companies would furnish valuable auxiliaries for communication beyond the Confederacy, the mail matter bearing the stamps of each government through which it may pass by said Express.

All of which is respectfully submitted. W. P. CHILTON, Chairman.

AN ACT TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT TO PRESCRIBE RATES OF POSTAGE IN THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

SEC. 1. The Congress of the Confederate States of America do enact that from and after such period as the Postmaster General may by proclamation announce, there shall be charged the following rules of postage, to wit: for every single letter sealed, and for every letter in manuscript or paper of any kind, upon which information shall be asked for, or communicate in writing, or by marks or signs, conveyed in the mail for any distance between places within the Confederate States of America, not exceeding 500 miles, 5 cents; and for any distance exceeding 500 miles double that rate; and every letter or parcel not exceeding 1/2 an ounce in weight, shall be deemed a single letter, and every additional weight of 1/2 an ounce or additional weight of less than half an ounce, shall be charged with an additional single

postage; and all packages containing other than written or printed matter—and money packages are included in this class—shall be rated by weight as letters are rated, and shall be charged double the rates of postage on letters; and all drop letters or letters placed in any Post Office not for transmission but for delivery only, shall be charged with postage at the rate of two cents each; and in all the foregoing cases the postage must be pre-paid by stamps; and all letters which shall hereafter be advertised as remaining over or uncalled for in any Post Office, shall be charged with two cents each in addition to the regular postage; both to be accounted for as other postages of this Confederacy.

SEC. 2. And be it further enacted, That all newspapers not exceeding three ounces in weight, sent from the office of publication to actual and bona fide subscribers, shall be charged with postage as follows, to wit: the postage on the regular numbers of a newspaper published weekly within the State where published, shall be 6 1/2 cents per quarter, and papers published semi-weekly double that rate; and papers published thrice a week treble that rate; and papers published daily six times that rate; and the postage on all newspapers to actual subscribers without the State where published shall be charged double the foregoing rates; and periodicals sent from the office of publication to actual and bona fide subscribers, shall be charged with postage as follows, to wit: the postage on the regular numbers of a periodical, not exceeding 1 1/2 ounces in weight, and published monthly within the State where published, shall be 3 cents per quarter; if published semi-monthly, double that rate; and for every additional ounce, or fraction of an ounce, double the foregoing rates shall be charged; and periodicals published quarterly or bi-monthly, shall be charged one cent an ounce; and periodicals without the State where published shall be double the above specified rates; and regular subscribers to newspapers and periodicals shall be required to pay one quarter's postage in advance. And there shall be charged upon every other newspaper, on each circular not sealed, handbill, engraving, pamphlet, periodical and magazine, which shall be unconnected with any manuscript or written matter, not exceeding three ounces in weight, two cents; and for each additional ounce, or fractional of an ounce, two cents additional; and in all cases the postage shall be prepaid by stamps. And books bound or unbound not weighing over four pounds shall be deemed mailable matter, and shall be charged with postage to be prepaid by stamps, at two cents per ounce for any distance. The publishers of newspapers or periodicals may send to each other from their respective offices of publication, free of postage, one copy of each publication.

SEC. 3. And be it further enacted, That the third section of an act entitled an act further to amend an act entitled an act to reduce and modify the rates of postage in the United States, and for other purposes, passed March 3, 1851, approved March 3, 1855, whereby the letter registration system was established, be and is hereby repealed from and after the day when this act goes into effect.

SEC. 4. And be it further enacted, &c., That no letters shall be carried by the Express or other chartered companies, unless the same shall be pre-paid by being endorsed in a stamped envelope of this Confederacy, and any company violating the provisions of this act shall forfeit and pay the sum of five hundred dollars for each offence, to be recovered by action of debt in any court of this Confederacy having cognizance thereof in the name and for the use of this Confederacy.

SEC. 5. And be it further enacted, That the Postmaster General of this Confederate States be, and is hereby authorized to make all necessary arrangements for the transmission of mails between the Territories of this and other governments, subject to the approval of the President, until postal treaties can be effected.

SEC. 6. And be it further enacted, That the Postmaster General of this Confederacy shall be the duty of the Postmaster General to provide and furnish to all Deputy Postmasters, and to all other persons applying and paying therefor, suitable postage stamps and stamped envelopes of the denomination of two cents, five cents, and twenty cents, to facilitate the pre-payment of postages provided for in this act; and any person who shall forge or counterfeit any postage stamp provided or furnished under the provisions of this or any former act, whether the same are impressed or printed on or attached to envelopes or not, or any die, plate, or engraving therefor, or shall make or print or knowingly use or sell, or have in his possession, with intent to use or sell, any such false, forged, or counterfeited dies, plate, engraving, or postage stamp, or who shall make or print, or authorize, or procure to be made or printed, any postage stamps of the kind provided and furnished by the Postmaster General as aforesaid, without the special authority and direction of the Post Office Department, or who, after such postage stamps have been printed, shall, with intent to defraud the revenues of the Post Office Department, deliver any postage stamps to any person or persons other than such as shall be authorized to receive the same by an instrument of writing, duly executed under the hand of the Postmaster General, and the seal of the Post Office Department, shall, on conviction thereof, be deemed guilty of felony, and be punished by a fine not exceeding \$500 or by imprisonment not exceeding five years, or by both such fine and imprisonment; and the expenses of procuring and providing all such postage stamps and letter envelopes as are provided for or authorized by this act, shall be paid, after being adjusted by the Auditor of the Post Office Department on the certificate of the Postmaster General out of any money in the Treasury arising from the revenues of the Post Office Department.

SEC. 7. And be it further enacted, That it shall be the duty of every Postmaster to cause to be defaced, in such manner as the Postmaster General shall direct, all postage stamps of this Confederacy, attached to letters deposited in his office for delivery or to be sent by mail; and if any Postmaster sending letters in the mail with such postage stamps attached, shall omit to deface the same, it shall be the duty of the Postmaster to whose office such letters shall be sent for delivery to deface the stamps and report the delinquent Postmaster to the Postmaster General, and if any person shall use or attempt to use, in the pre-payment of postage, any postage stamps which shall have been before used for like purposes, such person shall be subject to a penalty of fifty dollars for every such offence, to be recovered in the name of the Confederate States of America, in any court of competent jurisdiction.

SEC. 8. And be it further enacted, That from and after the day when this act goes into effect, the franking privilege shall be abolished, provided that the Postmaster General and his chief clerk, and the auditor of the Treasury for the Post Office Department, shall be and they are hereby authorized to transmit through the mail free of postage any letters, packages, or other matters, relating exclusively to their official duties, or to the business of the Post Office Department; but they shall, in every such case, indorse on the back of the letter or package to be sent free of postage, over their own signatures, the words "Official Business," and for any such indorsement falsely made the person so offending shall forfeit and pay \$300; and provided further, the several Deputy Postmasters throughout the Confederate States shall be and hereby are authorized to send through the mail free of postage all letters and packages which it may be their duty, or they may have occasion to transmit to any person or place, and which shall relate exclusively to the business of their respective offices, to the business of the Post Office Department—but in every such case the deputy postmaster sending in such letter or package shall indorse thereon, over his own signature, the words "Post Office Business," and for any and every such indorsement falsely made the person making the same shall forfeit and pay \$300.

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The Postal System at the South.

This subject is beginning to engage much of the attention of the public, as well as the time of the Congress, and we may add that, so far as the public convenience and the interests of commerce are concerned, there is none more worthy of their consideration. It is one of the most difficult and most complicated in its practical operation, and has from the beginning of the old Union puzzled the brains of our wisest men.

The new Confederacy is now called upon to deal with the question, and originate a plan from the lights of experience which shall answer the ends in view, by subserving effectively the public wants. It will be found a difficult, if not an impracticable, task, provided the people of the Confederate States are expecting no abridgement of the facilities heretofore enjoyed. We think they should prepare themselves for a reduced service, for a time at least, and until the new government shall have recovered from the financial pressure that must necessarily attend the changes through which we are passing. We cannot accomplish everything in a day, and must be reconciled to the inconveniences incident to our condition. We think the people are prepared to forego much, and to sacrifice much. For a time, at least, we do not see how the country post offices can be maintained. Except on main lines, where the large mails have necessarily to be carried, one post office to a county, and that at the capital, will probably be the extent of our mail facilities. The deficiency will have to be supplied by neighborhoods clubbing together and establishing a regular communication with these central points by means of a private mail, to be brought to some convenient point for distribution.

Another probable change is in the matter of postages. It seems to be generally understood that the rate on single letters will be raised from three to, at least, five cents, and in like proportion for heavier matters. We are not prepared to advocate this increase as the true policy of the new Confederacy. While all other public burthens are to be increased, it is questionable whether or not an increase in the amount of postage would result in a corresponding augmentation of the revenue from that source, or even in any increase at all. This is a day of cheap things, and most people would rather write two letters at six cents than one at five cents. On the other hand habits are not readily changed even when they are not necessary, and habits of business, prompted by interest, are apt to continue even in the face of an additional expense. Many wise heads are inclined to the opinion that the revenue would be materially increased by fixing the rate at five cents.

These things may be regarded as hardships, and will undoubtedly be the subject of numberless complaints, but they will be borne cheerfully by the great body of the community, under the reflection that they are necessary to maintain the South in the independent position she has assumed among the powers of the earth.

It is stated, we presume upon authority, that under the late Government, the cost of the postal service in Georgia amounted to, in round numbers, \$358,000, and that the receipts into the Treasury from the same source were \$163,000, leaving a deficit to be met by the appropriations of \$195,000. Should these figures be anywhere near the truth, it is evident we must, for the present at least, forego many advantages we have heretofore enjoyed, or retain them at a cost which we are wholly unable to bear.

The abolition of the franking privilege, among public officers, which seems generally to have been agreed upon, is a good measure, and will save the postal service of the new Government from one great embarrassment. It should be done by all means; nor is it a necessary consequence that the burthen of postage on a heavy correspondence on other people's affairs should fall upon the representative. In conversing with an intelligent friend on this point some days ago, he suggested a plan by which this whole difficulty, so formidable in all past movements against the franking privilege, may be effectually removed. It is simply to let the constituents pre-pay the postage on letters addressed to his representative or other public official, and allow letters in reply from the latter, by a simple endorsement of his name, as now practiced, to go forward to their destination without pre-payment; the postage to be collected at the time of delivery. The plan is a simple one, and to our mind perfectly effective.

Before closing these hurried suggestions, there is one point in connection with the postal system to which we would refer. While economy is essential in every department of government, it appears to us that we have proceeded on a wrong theory in all our past legislation on the subject. The idea for making the post office a self-supporting system, has no good reason to support it, and when we compare it with other departments, analogy repudiates the principle at once. There is certainly no service performed by the government that is more essential to the great interests of the people; and yet, while all others are a dead expense, and the money cheerfully paid out to sustain them, from some cause or other, which we could never fully comprehend, the post office is singled out as a revenue establishment and looked to to pay its own way.

Our courts, for instance, with all the paraphernalia of justice, are a public burthen, in which every citizen contributes a share, and still, perhaps, not one citizen in ten avails himself of their benefit. Many men pass through a long lifetime without once resorting to them for protection; while there are none who are independent of the mails. It is very well, wherever it is found to be practicable, to make every department do what it can for its own support, and we do not object to a moderate tax on those who use the mails; but all past experience shows that to make the post office self-supporting must cut off a very large portion of the people, in the more sparsely settled sections of the country, from this important advantage of government. We will never have an effective postal system except by direct appropriations from the public treasury to support it.—Savannah Republican.

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THE SOUTHERN GUARDIAN, A Political and News Journal, PUBLISHED AT COLUMBIA, S. C., Daily, Tri-Weekly and Weekly. BY CHARLES P. PELHAM.

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Dec. 6, 1860

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Blue Ridge Railroad.

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LAW PARTNERSHIP.

WILLIAM H. PERRY, having been admitted to the Bar, is associated with his father, BENJAMIN F. PERRY, in the practice of Law on the Western Circuit, under the firm of PERRY & PERRY.

PUBLISH now my annual Prospectus of THE DAILY GLOBE, and the CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE, to remain subscribers, and inform those who may desire to subscribe, that Congress will meet on the first Monday of next December, when I shall resume publishing the above-named papers.

THE DAILY GLOBE will contain a report of the Debates in both branches of Congress as taken down by reporters, equal, at least, to any corps of shorthand writers in this, or in any other country.

THE CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE AND APPENDIX will contain a report of all the Debates in Congress, revised by the speakers, the Messages of the President of the United States, the Annual Report of the Heads of the Executive Departments, the Laws passed during the sessions, and copious indexes to all.

THE CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE AND APPENDIX pass through the mails of the United States, as will be seen by reading the following Joint Resolution passed by Congress the 6th of August, 1852:

With a view to the cheap circulation of the laws of Congress and the debates contributing to the true interpretation thereof, and to make free the communication between the representative and constituent bodies:

Be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That from and after the present session of Congress, THE CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE AND APPENDIX, which contain the laws and the debates thereon, shall pass free through the mails so long as the same shall be published by order of Congress: Provided, That nothing herein shall be construed to authorize the circulation of the DAILY GLOBE free of postage.

APPROVED, AUGUST 6, 1852. TERMS: For a copy of THE DAILY GLOBE, for four months \$3.00 For 1 copy of THE CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE AND APPENDIX, during the session 3.00 For 2 copies ditto, when ordered at the same time 5.00

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WASHINGTON, October 18, 1860.

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THE "Mercury" represents the State rights sentiment of the South. Its political character consists in the principles of the Democratic Party as laid down in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798 and 1799—the Sovereignty of the States and Strict Construction of the Federal Constitution by the General Government, the Agent of the States; Free Trade, and an Economical Administration of the General Government. Its policy is the union of the Southern States in maintaining their rights and establishing their security.

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