

Postmaster General Remarks on 1790 Bill

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Remarks

Sect. 1. If the Post goes from Petersburg through Halifax, Tarborough, etc. to Savannah, it will be carried away from the Sea Coast: —the ~~main~~ road will be shortened by it, but expences will be very much increased from the necessity of establishing cross Posts to the seaports, which will not support themselves. On the Route proposed, Letters from the northward for George Town will first go to Charlestown, which is 60 miles beyond it, & and then be brought back to George Town, & the same inconvenience will attend Letters to come from George Town northward.

Hartford (between Havre de Grace & Baltimore) should be Harford, & George Town, Cross Roads, should be George Town Cross Roads.

Sect. 3 “Who shall have authority to appoint an Assistant & Deputy Postmasters at all Places,” etc. would be better expressed—who shall have an Assistant, to be appointed by himself, & authority to appoint Deputy Postmasters at all Places, etc.

Sect. 4. The oath taken in connection with the preceding Clause (beginning at “and the P.M.G) authorizes Persons employed ~~by~~ in the offices of Deputy Post {Masters}—the Contractors for carrying the mail, & even Post Riders or Stage Drivers, to open Letters in certain Cases. —This has a great Tendency to render Correspondence insecure, & lodged an improper power in unworthy hands. No Person lower in the Department than a Deputy Post{master} should be allowed to open Letters on any Pretence.

In the 2nd Line of the Oath, say, or cause, procure, permit, or suffer to be opened.

Sect. 8. The Rate of Postage is too high: —it used to be

To 60 miles 4d ~~[[Sterling?]]~~

80 @ 100—6d

100 @ 200—8d

200 @ 300—10d

300 @ 400 which is about 22 Cents: —& so on, adding 2d for every 100 miles.

Sect. 9. Foreign Packets should be obliged to send their mails in the first Instance, without having been opened, & immediately after Arrival, to the Post Office. If they are sent to the Agents, & opened by him, & then sent to the Office, & a Letter should be missing, or lost, how can it be known who is in fault? —It is Insult to the Sovereignty of the Union that foreign agents should received & open the mails, & take out Letters, & send only the Gleanings to the Post. Office.

Where is the Propriety of Justice of charging Postage on Letters brought by foreign Packets or by Merchantile ~~[[?]]~~ & ~~[[?]]~~ directed to Persons at the Post where they arrive?

Sect. 11. "Which under his Care shall be brought." Is not the vessel & every thing in it under his care? & consequently the Letters brough by Passengers? How can he deliver them? & yet he must swear that he has done it. —Cannot the Captain evade the Law by delivering the Letters to the Care of his Mate, or Steward?

Sect. 20. Instead of "a list of all the Letters that have been & remained in their respective Offices three months," I would say a list of all the Letters then remaining in the respective Offices. The Postmasters will not be able to ascertain what Letters have three months in their Offices unless they note the time of receiving each, when they receive it, which they will not have Leisure for in large Offices; & it is, in fact unnecessary. —A man can suffer no inconvenience, but may desire advantage, from being informed that there is a Letter for him the Post Office, before it has lain there three months.

Sect. 21. May the Senate & {Representatives} send as many Packets as they please, by Post, free, provided no one of them weighs more than 2 Oz.? —then they are under no more restraint than the President, except that he may put his dispatches in one Packet, & they must make a greater number of theirs. The whole weight which any Member should send by one Post, free, should not exceed 2 oz.

May not the Secretary of the Treasury etc send Packets free, as well as Letters?

Sect. 23. "One Paper." When a Printer has once sent a Paper to another Printer, may he ever send any more? —Or is one Copy of each News Paper published or to be published by him intended? If so, it may well be to enquire into their number, which will probably be found to be greater than is supposed. [The Clerk in the N. York Office can give information on this subject] & perhaps their weight may be such as to retard the mail, if carried on Horseback

Sect. 24. News Papers ought not to be suffered to be carried in the mail at all: they are always damp, & there have been Instances of the dampness of News Papers softening the wafers with which Letters have been sealed, & inducing a Suspicion that the Postmasters have opened the Letters, for which they have been much abused. Such a suspicion might lead to serious Consequences. See Sect. 17.

The News Papers should be carried in Saddle Bags (as formerly) to be provided by the Printers, or the Riders, who will derive all the Benefit from the Carriage of News Papers by Post.

Sect. 26. "Twenty per Cent." Is that 20 {percent} to any Deputy upon the Money he receive, or, upon the whole Receipts of the Department. Suppose 20 {percent} upon the Receipts at the N. York Office should be thought by the Post {Master} {General} to great an allowance for the Post {Master} at New York, & he should allow him but 15 {percent}:—may the P.M.G distribute the remaining 5 {percent} among such Postmasters as he may think have not an adequate Compensation from the 20 {percent} on the monies received in their Offices?

Sect. 28. Considered the Distance of some of the Offices, & other Circumstances, “three months” after the expiration of a Quarter is too short a time to limit the Postmaster {General} to for the Commencement of Suits against his delinquent Deputies: —six months should be allowed.

Sect. 31. I do not think C. Colles can make the Survey for 1/8 of a Dollar {per} Mile. Suppose he travels 1000 miles; the {Amount} will be 125 Dollars: — he must purchase an horse, & support himself & the Horse during the Time it will take to make the Survey; which can not be done for that Sum. Either he must lose by it or the work will not be done.

Sect. 32. They should be exempt from serving on Juries too.

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{Legislation}: 1. {Congress}: 2. {Session}

Report of the Postmaster {General} relative to post-roads.

April 24.

1790.

No. 7

2d {Session} 1st {Congress}

Post Office

Papers 1790