

THE POSTAL DEFICIT

Loss on Second-Class Mail and Rural Service Heavy—Postmaster General's Report.

Washington, D. C., Dec. 14, 1909.
Confronted with a deficit of \$17,479,770, the present administration of the Postoffice Department began its operations. This was the largest deficit in the history of the postal service. So long as the deficit in the department aggregated only a few millions of dollars annually, little attention was paid to it; but when, in the last few years it leaped to upward of \$10,000,000, and finally, in 1909, exceeded \$17,000,000, ordinary business prudence suggested that the causes be definitely located.

These are statements in the annual report of Postmaster General Frank H. Hitchcock, made public today. Concerning the results of inquiries into the deficit, the Postmaster General said:

SOURCES OF LOSS.

"Recent investigations have shown that the two great sources of loss to the postal revenues are second-class mail matter and rural delivery.

"The loss on second-class mail matter has been increasing for many years, until it now amounts to \$64,000,000.

"The loss from rural delivery, a service begun hardly a dozen years ago and of unprecedented growth, reaches as high as \$28,000,000.

"Simultaneously with the growing deficit in the postal service, the nation's income suffered last year a serious depletion incident to the financial depression. Thus it happened that the department's drafts on the Treasury were heaviest at a time when the public funds were lowest. This has accentuated the importance of the postal deficit, making it conspicuous among the losses to be met by the President's plan of reducing expenditures in all executive departments.

"Since the opening of the administration the Postmaster General and his assistants have adopted measures in conformity with the President's policy of retrenchment, and these measures are being put into effect with substantial results, as will be shown in this report.

TOO MUCH ECONOMY BAD.

"It should be stated with emphasis, however, that economy is not to be enforced at the cost of efficiency.

"Only such measures of economy will be adopted, therefore, as can be made a consistent part of a general program having for its chief object form of organization, and the business methods of the postal establishment.

"The most striking fact disclosed by recent investigations is the tremendous loss on account of second-class mail. While this class of mail provides a revenue of little more than 1 cent a pound, the cost to the government for its handling and transportation averages 9.23 cents a pound. The annual loss thus incurred, as already stated, is about \$64,000,000. The growth in the quantity of second-class matter sent through the mails has been extraordinary. Since the passage of the act of 1897 prescribing conditions under which publications may be mailed at second-class rates the weight of such matter has increased more than 1,300 per cent. Last year it amounted to over 700,000,000 pounds. By the weighing of 1907 second-class matter was shown to constitute 63 per cent of all domestic mail, and yet it yielded only about 5 per cent of the postal revenues. The loss on second-class matter was greater than the profits on all classes of mail combined. It exceeded the total amount paid the railways for mail transportation.

SECOND-CLASS MAIL.

"Magazines and other periodical publications exclusive of daily newspapers comprise about 60 per cent of second-class mail. The magazines alone form about 20 per cent. Magazines proper, because of the long average haul, show a cost of more than 5 cents a pound for transportation, while in the case of daily newspapers of distribution is much less, the

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transportation cost is under 2 cents a pound.

"The annual loss on third-class mail is something over three million dollars. The mail matter carried free under congressional franchises costs the government annually about a half-million dollars. A greater loss, about two and a quarter millions annually, results from the free handling of official mail for executive departments other than the Postoffice Department. The annual cost of handling the free official mail of the Postoffice Department is estimated at about \$3,000,000. If the several branches of the Federal government were made to bear their proper share of the expense of transporting and handling official mail, greater care would be taken no doubt in the exercise of the franking privilege and some saving to the government would accordingly result. The wisdom of doing away entirely with the franking privilege of official mail has been suggested, but this is a matter for Congress to determine. Such a plan would relieve the Postoffice Department of a heavy expense it is now obliged to incur in the handling of free mail for other branches of the government establishment.

RURAL MAIL DEVELOPMENT.

"The rural delivery service has developed in twelve years from an experiment, requiring an appropriation of \$40,000, to one of the largest branches of the postal establishment, with an annual expenditure exceeding \$35,000,000. The postage on matter mailed on rural routes is estimated at about \$7,000,000. The importance of this service to a large number of people is fully appreciated. It brings the farms and villages into closer communication with commercial and educational centers. It encourages the improvement of country roads. By making rural life more attractive it stimulates agriculture. No doubt it is partly responsible for the increase in farm values. Owing to the marvelously rapid growth of this service, however, it is but natural that defects have developed. The cost of rural delivery is probably much greater than it should be. Now is an appropriate time for for which the average distance considering carefully the conditions under which it is operated, for perfecting the existing organization, and for introducing

(Continued on page 3.)

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Statement of Condition of THE BANK OF LUMBERTON, At Close of Business Nov. 16, 1909

Resources.

Loans and Discounts,	\$382,433.83
Overdrafts	12,160.02
Furniture and Fixtures,	3,389.27
Real Estate, Stocks and Bonds owned	5,600.00
Demand Loans	5,000.00
Installments due on Stock Subscriptions	3,990.00
Cash and Due from Banks,	59,026.60

Liabilities.

Capital Stock	\$471,599.72
Undivided Profits	\$100,000.00
Bills Payable	25,881.60
	51,000.00
Deposits	294,718.12

Assets June 1st.	\$471,599.72
Assets Nov. 16th	\$207,000.00
	471,599.72

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