

the correspondence passing between the mother country and the colonies, the measure proposed would prevent certain abuses which were incident to the existing arrangement. Where the bag hung open in a coffee house, any person might examine its contents on the pretext that he wanted to get his own letter back, and when the ship had reached its destination it was the practice of some captains to delay the delivery of the letters in their hands until they are ready to sail again, and then they got rid of their letters in any way they could.

If the mails were made up in post offices, and the captains were compelled by law to deliver them to the post office at the port of destination before they broke bulk, these evils would be corrected, and a large revenue now lost to the post office would be saved.

Neale and Hamilton also submitted a revised tariff of postal charges, in which there was a general increase. The postmasters general in England rather deprecated the increased postal rates, stating that experience had taught them that low rates were found to be more productive of revenue than those which placed the post office beyond the reach of the mass of the people. They approved of the suggestion that post offices should be established in England for the handling of oversea mails, and hoped that a few years of good management would make the service a remunerative one.

At this point the postmasters general in London threw out a suggestion, which was worth discussion. They doubted whether a post office in private hands would ever commend itself to the colonies in the same way as if it were directly in the hands of the king. The post office depended for its prosperity on the maintenance of its monopoly, a thing naturally distasteful. The monopoly was easily evaded, even if the colonial governments supported it heartily, but any lack of inclination on their part would leave it valueless. They were of opinion that it would require all the authority possessed by the king to induce the colonial governments to co-operate with the heads of the post office in the efforts of the latter to put the service on a sound footing.

Neale, who was sinking deeper and deeper into debt, seized on this expression of opinion, and offered to surrender his patent at any time, on such consideration as seemed just. The treasury, however, were not yet ready to take over the American posts, but they directed the postmasters general to give Hamilton every assistance in their power, and requested the governors of the colonies to do the same, adding that when the value of the post office could