

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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THE LEGISLATURE,

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1837.

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SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE.

No. 8.

HOUSE.

MEMORIAL

IN RELATION TO THE BELFAST AND QUEBEC RAIL ROAD.

To the Legislature of Maine, January Session, 1837.

At a convention of citizens, holden at Belfast, on the thirty-first day of December last, a resolution was passed to memorialize your *Honorable Body* to subscribe in behalf of the State, for a portion of the stock of *The Belfast and Quebec Rail Road*, to construct which a Company was incorporated by your predecessors of last year;—and the undersigned were designated a Committee to carry that resolution into effect. In discharge of that duty we would respectfully call the attention of the Legislators of the State, to a few of the topics that have suggested themselves to our minds on the occasion.

You, Gentlemen, are all aware of the vast and interesting change, which the application of Steam, to the transportation of passengers and merchandize, has effected in the business of the civilized world; and all partake of the just pride, that the first successful employment of this mighty power in navigating the waters was through the genius and perseverance of a native American. This has begun, and must complete a revolution in commerce, as

signal and auspicious to many important interests, as that which our patriotic fathers achieved in the political world. We have adopted from our mother Country, the more recent use of the same wonderful energy, to facilitate locomotion on land, and have already surpassed that, and all other countries, in the number, length and importance of our rail-roads.

This subject at this time has, what it so well deserves, the deep attention of the Agriculturist, the Merchant, the Capitalist, and the Statesman. It is the duty, as surely it will be the inclination of the lawgivers of the State, to see that their people duly participate in the advantages and blessings that flow from a judicious system of internal improvements; and particularly by authorizing and patronizing the construction of such rail-roads, as promise the most immediate and permanent benefit to the community.

The time has arrived when manual labor and mere animal force, without such improvements, cannot advance us in wealth and importance.

It would now be considered quite as well to discard the use of machinery and its iron fingers, in the arts and manufactures, (where hands without the modern inventions to create and modify motion, would be as inefficient as hands without a head to direct them,) as to overlook the iron horses and iron oxen, that are now made to carry us and our burthens, as it were, on the wings of the wind, upon iron pavements. Internal improvements are, we conceive, one of the most economical, equal and republican modes of expending the public revenues. They consist not in elegant and costly edifices and monuments to gratify the taste of a few, or to perpetuate the memory of one, but in those facilities of intercourse, of a practi-

cal and solid utility, in which all directly or indirectly participate; making attainable to the poor, by plenty and cheapness, what has heretofore been enjoyed mostly by the rich, carrying "the greatest good to the greatest number," in abridging the hard labor of their hands, and the excessive sweat of their brows.

To express the great force of steam on a level surface, and to give a lively idea of it, it is only necessary to repeat, as one of the deductions of science, that many a strong man among us would be able to carry on his shoulder a quantity of coal, the virtue residing in which would be sufficient to propel a load of one ton, the whole distance on a rail road that should begirt the globe.

If then steam can be made so faithful a slave to man, requiring no food fit for human sustenance, and working as constantly as ingeniously in his service, without taxing his humanity, shall it not be employed for want of enterprise among our citizens, when its utility is most signally displayed, on roads adapted to its propelling nature?

The cost of transportation is one of the greatest elements of value; and rail roads, by abstracting a large part of that expense, bring articles of necessity and convenience to a price within the means of all. By diminishing the expense of conveyance, a less quantity of produce will be spent in carrying the remainder to market, and the surplus will be divided between the producer and consumer; thus giving a greater profit to one, and more of the article at a given price, to the other.

As this benefit will be felt in proportion to the bulk of the article and the distance from the market, the farmer and the lumberman will particularly feel the advantage of increased facilities of transporting the produce of their fields and forests to the place where they are wanted, for

sale or use. Charters for rail roads we therefore esteem true *agrarian laws*, equalizing in the most legitimate manner the advantages of wealth, promoting the independence of the working classes, and augmenting national wealth in the aggregate, by multiplying the number of those who possess a share of it. These charters can be, and they surely ought to be, freed from any tendency to monopoly, by judicious and obvious provisions.

Your memorialists are not unaware that a great part of the good people of this State object to the prosecution of works of internal improvement by the Federal Government; but when making their protest against the exercise of such powers by that government, it is rather to the constitutional competency of its authority, than to the naked policy of such undertakings,—to the abstract right, rather than the intrinsic expediency of the thing; and it was mainly, because it was thought best that the several States should exercise the jurisdiction over this subject, that it has been yielded to them so readily. It is doubtful whether Congress would have relinquished the claim, had it not been believed, that the local Legislatures would more efficiently and more certainly carry forward such improvements; for it was never doubted that they would constantly entertain a disposition to do all within their means.

If then the right of the general government to construct rail-roads and canals within the several States be denied or abandoned, a stronger argument is thereby afforded for the exercise of the undisputed right of the States in the premises. The power to make such improvements, is identified with no political aversion, except when exercised by a stretch of construction of the federal compact by the federal authorities,—when power, not

expressly given, is derived by implication. The principle, rightly avowed in relation to the government of the union, degenerates into a prejudice, when extended to the several States, in order to obstruct their individual action on the subject.

The recent act of Congress, to distribute to the States, the surplus revenue of the nation, has afforded to them the disposable means which the nation possessed for the purpose of these improvements. Thus provided with the funds, the duty devolves upon the several States, and the eyes of the world will be upon them, to see the revenue applied to discharge the obligation.

The share of this surplus, which will be deposited with this State, will be large, and is not wanted by the State for any ordinary purpose. To this ample fund, your memorialists look when they ask the State to take a portion of the stock of the Belfast and Quebec Rail Road. And in what way can it be disposed of with more safety and advantage to the whole community? Shall it be distributed to the several towns of the State, in proportion to their respective population? There is something preposterous in the idea of a nation collecting vast sums of money for the purpose of returning it directly to the pockets of the people, whence it came. By necessity a very large portion of it must be expended by the double operation of amassing and diffusing it. Much will escape in each part of the process; but far the most in the scattering operation.

When a nation has been at the trouble of filling its treasury, it would seem that the mass collected ought rather to be devoted to some great design of common good, than to be broken into fragments hardly perceptible, and scattered at large. If however, the principle of

such diffusion be correct, it should be carried *out*, and the money should be deposited equally with each individual in the community.

This would be the only mode by which it were possible to restore it to the original owners. By dispersing it to the several towns in the State, it is in effect given to people in proportion to their property, to the rich in proportion to their wealth, and to the poor in the inverse proportion to their poverty ; as its obvious operation will be to diminish taxes imposed upon property, of which each one would receive the benefit in the degree that he might have estate to be taxed. Should it ever be called for, towns would have no resource to meet the demand, but by an onerous and odious direct taxation, as tardy as it would be oppressive. Should the several towns manage it as a fund, the income of which alone should be appropriated to the use of the towns, the multiplicity of agencies, the variety of stocks, and the numerous unforeseen accidents attending such concerns, would be found to impair the principal ; and seldom would they rest satisfied with the consumption of the bare interest. It must of course go to the management of many, who, however well disposed, will lack the peculiar ability required for the discreet creation, care and disposal of stocks. It must annually pass from the superintendence of one set of men to that of another, furnishing constantly a bone of contention to disturb the tranquility of our municipal elections ; and respectable minorities will often see the funds used for purposes in which they do not participate, and cannot approve. In time the whole will probably be lost, without leaving any lasting monument of its usefulness. This would be accomplished by a constant and perhaps imperceptible absorption of the minute parts, into which it would necessarily be divided.

There is no reason to expect that any further distribution of the surplus revenue will again be made by the United States to the several States. The policy of doing it at all, was, to say the least, doubtful, justified only by the peculiar state of things, a recurrence of which will undoubtedly be prevented by a reduction of the tariff, or by new regulations concerning the sale of the public lands, conformable to the wants and necessities of the general government. The revenue will soon be graduated to the actual and ordinary requirements of the nation, and measures are now in preparation, by the proper authorities, to prevent the necessity of any future recurrence to a policy so unprecedented. Distribution was no part of the original design of the collection of the money, and can be looked upon only as the extreme remedy demanded by the extraordinary crisis, and not as a precedent justifying repetition.

The right to reclaim it, is expressly reserved in the act of Congress, and the several States are to be held as trustees, liable when called upon, to refund it.

It is a deposite and not a donation. It should be carefully invested in such stock, as may be easily sold for cash to enable the State to restore the deposite, without burthening the people with taxes.

What stock has proved more profitable, or could be more readily reduced to cash, than rail-road stocks, both in this country and in Europe? We have nothing better adapted to command money from rich foreigners, than our rail roads and canals. The confidence in them, is constantly increasing, and judicious investments in such projects will prove, not only profitable at first, but safe in the end.

It would seem too that this State's proportion of the Sur-

plus, should be disposed of in some great work of public benefit, beyond the unassisted efforts of individuals to accomplish;—something that should give glory and renown to the State, as well as happiness to the people,—wherein the utility of the thing shall be splendid from its magnitude and universality;—To a brilliancy of this kind, it is neither good taste nor good sense to object, as surely it is forbidden by every democratic sentiment.

Your memorialists would not object to the establishment of a great school fund from this surplus, but if it be appropriated for such a purpose, it should be invested in suitable stock, the income of which alone, without encroachment upon the principal, should be annually used. That the profits of such rail roads as the State may own should be devoted to the purposes of general education, there would seem to us to be no reasonable objection; at any rate there is no inconsistency in such a dedication of it, with the particular investment which we ask to be made of this surplus. If it be desired solely to make a school fund profitable, we do not know in what better way to employ it as capital; a way whereby the capital may be employed to advance the common comfort, while the income is reserved for the special purpose of enlightening the minds, and improving the morals of the rising generations, in all time to come.

Your memorialists do not ask for what has not been done by our sister States. Most of them have been aroused to the importance of advancing their own local improvement.

In *Massachusetts*, the State has subscribed for one million, of the stock in their great Western Rail Road, a project which bears no sort of comparison with that for which we ask the patronage of the Legislature.

The *State of New York* built the great canal that has reflected so much honor upon her policy, and been so highly promotive of her prosperity, and has recently made a loan of Millions to assist the construction of a Rail Road to unite Lake Erie with the Hudson.

Pennsylvania owns as a State 120 miles of Rail Road and 600 miles of Canal.

An Internal Improvement Bill was passed by the Legislature of Maryland last June, providing for a subscription on the part of the State, of eight millions of dollars towards the completion of four rail roads and canals; one of which rail roads extends from Baltimore to the Ohio River, a distance of 360 miles.

Virginia has provided a permanent State fund of over three millions for internal improvement.

In South Carolina a rail road has been projected to connect Charleston with Cincinnati, a distance of 600 miles, and one million of her part of the surplus revenue, has been pledged to aid it.

Georgia has appropriated two thirds of her proportion of the same surplus, to aid her rail roads.

In Ohio, 400 miles of canal have been constructed at the expense of the State, and twenty eight rail road companies were incorporated at the last session of her Legislature. That from Cincinnati to Lake Erie, is longer than the distance from the Atlantic to the St. Lawrence across our State.

Indiana has provided for borrowing ten millions of Dollars on the credit of the State, to be expended on her internal improvement. In this new State upwards of 500 miles of rail road are about to be made.

In Tennessee a Bill has been reported to the Legislature

with favor, to authorize the Governor to subscribe for the State to the amount of \$3,600,000 in rail roads.

In other States, much has been done under State authority that undoubtedly has not escaped your notice ; and in almost every one, numerous private corporations have been organized, and are carrying on plans of internal improvement on their own account, in the spirit of the age.

It is believed that what has been done is but the beginning of such a system of connected improvements as will bring the far west and extreme east, as it were, in contact, carrying the Atlantic to the Mississippi and the Lakes, and bringing them in turn to the ocean ; and binding the Union together in the strong bonds of commerce and friendship.

While other States are doing so much, it well becomes the guardians of the public at home seriously to consider what will be our relative position, if we stand still, while others are advancing so rapidly in the career of improvement. Every rail road in other States, is offering inducement to our population to leave a soil, hard to be cultivated, and a climate of rigorous cold, for more fertile plains and a more genial sun, and at the same time opening avenues by which they are invited to make their escape. We cannot expect to retain our people, or in any way to compete with other parts of the country, if we wholly neglect the use of those artificial advantages, which others are so industriously applying, still more to enhance that superiority of location, which nature has already made so great. We should arouse to a just conception of our true condition ; and while we have the skill and the means to prevent our local situation from being made more uninviting in comparison with others, that skill and those means should not be left to lie dormant. Our inhospita-

ble climate, and our comparatively unproductive soil must be made tolerable by all the facilities of intercommunication in our power to create, and which present themselves in an aspect as favorable for use, as any in other States. Shall we take no hint from the example of those, who in the nature of things must be our rivals?

We are pleased to perceive that the Governor, in his late annual message, has invited the attention of the Legislature to this momentous subject.

With these general views, your memorialists would solicit the patronage of the State for the Belfast and Quebec Railroad, and to dispose of its portion of the surplus revenue, in making a part of this great highway. The progress that has been made, under the favor of the Legislature, has already been made known to you, in the reports of an experienced and intelligent Engineer, to which we refer for the evidence of the feasibility and practical nature of the proposed route.

This project we confess, cannot in all probability, be speedily carried into effect by individual enterprise and capital. So much of the private fortunes of the people of this State, have been recently invested in the purchase of timber lands from the State, and other purchases and expenditures of private concern, that little is now waiting for new opportunities for employment. Other States are now so much engrossed in experiments and improvements within their own borders, that it cannot be expected, that they have the inclination, if they have the further means, to embark in distant projects, especially those calculated to compete with, and to diminish the profits of their own enterprises.

It is confidently believed however, that English capital will not be wanting to the amount required to complete

that portion of this rail road passing through the province of Lower Canada, where we learn a good spirit already prevails to second our views and operations : and it may be doubted whether it were good policy, if indeed the thing could be procured, for foreign capital to be employed to make that part of the road that traverses our own State.

The people of this State have a very laudable repugnance to permitting our great monetary institutions to fall into the hands of those who owe no allegiance to our republican forms of government, and have no sympathy with our democratic institutions. And it might well be doubted, whether our great thoroughfares of commerce could, with better policy, be owned by those with whom it would be unsafe to confide our banking capital. But if the State should take a part of the stock in this rail road, it would inspire a confidence in others ; it would prevent the impression from gaining ground, that in any mutation of popular feeling the stock would be put in jeopardy by any hasty legislation. The State should stimulate the exertion of individuals, and take the lead, instead of being the disinterested spectator of this great undertaking.

Our project may be stigmatized, as a speculative experiment. So indeed have been in succession all the improvements that have advanced society from the savage to the civilized state. Had nothing new ever been attempted before the expediency and practicability of the thing could be fully demonstrated,—had there been no hazards run, no theory to direct effort in uncertain paths, no untried scheme, there would have been no improvement,—neither refinement nor comfort, more than can be found among tribes of savages and hordes of barbarians ; and civilization would yet have been unborn. Original pro-

jects are by no means always chimerical ; but in relation to railroads, we already have the light of science and experience to guide us ; and all the past results are encouraging to judicious enterprise. The "big ditch" of Clinton, as it was once reproachfully called, is one of the wonders of the new world, and reflects immortal honor on the name of its projector, as it confers lasting benefit on his native State. There are indeed cases where an onward ardor instructs reason, and where to want enterprise is to want wisdom.

That the project we present to your favor is one of those safe and judicious enterprises as justify, and one also of such magnitude and interest to the State as demand public encouragement and aid, your memorialists think admits of no doubt. You, Gentlemen, will partially comprehend our view of this matter, should you for a moment imagine what would at the present moment have been the population and wealth of Maine, had the majestic St. Lawrence emptied itself into Penobscot Bay, instead taking its course through the arctic regions before meeting with the ocean. Would not this fine bay have rivalled the outlets of the Mississippi and the Hudson? What would have been the size and importance of New Orleans, had it been as healthy as the seaports on our coast, and of the same safe and easy access? What New Orleans would have been under such circumstances, Portland or Wiscasset or Belfast would have been, had the waters of the St. Lawrence, with its chain of lakes or inland oceans, found the Atlantic at either of those places. Had such been originally the order of providence, Maine would, in our apprehension, at this time, have been the richest and most populous State in the Union. But a railroad from our coast to Quebec would almost be an equivalent to such

an arrangement of nature. Such is the difficulty of entering the St. Lawrence at all seasons, and the utter impossibility of doing it for half the year ; such also the rapidity and convenience of transport on a railroad, that the uniting, as it were, these waters by such a road, would be nearly equal to the diversion of the whole St. Lawrence to our coast. This would open to our trade half a continent of fertile territory, a country of vast resources,—one of the greatest wheat regions in the world, which must in time be filled with industrious people.

The trade of Quebec is now immense, notwithstanding the disadvantages of its position for the purposes of commerce exporting a vast amount of provisions, ashes, furs, lumber, &c.

Many thousand persons annually emigrate to the Canadas from Europe, soon to be increased to 100,000 a year, and on an average it is supposed 500 lives are now lost in the St. Lawrence in the same time. A railroad would greatly accommodate these emigrants, and be the means of saving a vast amount of human life. This branch of the business would alone afford a reasonable profit on the cost of such a road. Much other travel would undoubtedly pass this route from the south and from Europe, seeking health and amusement. Quebec, celebrated in its history and its scenery, would be the summer resort of the curious. Most passengers between the Canadas and Europe, and other British provinces, would prefer this conveyance, and the projected railroad from Quebec to St. Andrews through the disputed territory, would be put at rest.

Wheat would be brought in great abundance to our great water power, for the purpose of turning it into flour, and manufactured here, would be afforded cheaper than from the middle States.

The one and a half millions, which have already been appropriated to avoid the rapids of the St. Lawrence, and the railroad about to be constructed, to connect lake Huron with lake Ontario, will open remoter sources for our trade with Quebec, making a chain of easy communication, in connection with our contemplated railroad, hardly paralleled in the world. This inland navigation with canvass and with steam, to which our railroad will be the natural outlet, will soon surpass that of the Baltic or Mediterranean seas, and bear a rich and various commerce, on a thousand streams and lakes.

Great inconvenience arises from the hot and humid atmosphere of New Orleans, so unfit a place for the depot of many articles not suited to endure such a temperature. A place far to the north, as one of our seaports, would afford for many articles a much fitter receptacle or market place; and if within reach would undoubtedly be sought for that purpose. Many articles not calculated for dilatory passages will only be carried to market, where rapidity counteracts distance.

This should by no means be considered a mere local project. Every part of the State is nearly equally interested in it. It will be the great central avenue, the *prima via*, if we may be allowed the expression, of our whole system of internal improvements. A lateral road, or one parallel with the coast from Bangor to Portsmouth, would extend the advantages of this central one, to the east and to the west, and derive its chief importance from being secondary to the Canada route; but as bringing new business, and opening new resources for trade, it would bear no comparison with the one proposed to Quebec. A lateral one would indeed increase the speed by a few hours of those who now have great conveniences for travel; but

would open no new country,—no other people to our embraces. The greatest good to the country perhaps is not consulted in affording greater facilities for travelling to those who are already too fond of it ;—but in affording increased facilities in moving from place to place, as may be wanted, the necessities and comforts of life ;—and in giving employment and food to the working part of the community, now and ever to be the great majority of our citizens.

The Belfast and Quebec railroad will pass in the vicinity of many large tracts of land belonging to the State, the value of which will be much enhanced by the completion of the road ;—and in this way the public would be in a good degree remunerated at once for the expenditure ; while the rise in the value of the land, and the forest, within thirty miles on each side of it, through the whole extent of our territory, would add to the wealth of individuals more than the whole cost of the road.

Should however, the State decline, (which we cannot anticipate,) taking a part of the stock in our road, should it neglect to do all it can to expedite its completion, we may well expect private gentlemen, at this moment of general pressure for money, to be discouraged,—the commencement of the operation postponed, if not lost, and the progress of our State, in general improvement, be retarded, and relatively to others, made greatly to retrograde. We must under such inauspicious omens, expect our inhabitants and our trade to leave us,—and the destiny of our State to be involved in doubt and gloom. This is no idle fear. We would solemnly and loudly, but respectfully proclaim our alarm, at such a prospect, in the ears of our civil rulers. The boundless prairies of the West and the rich alluvions of the South, will draw off our most valuable

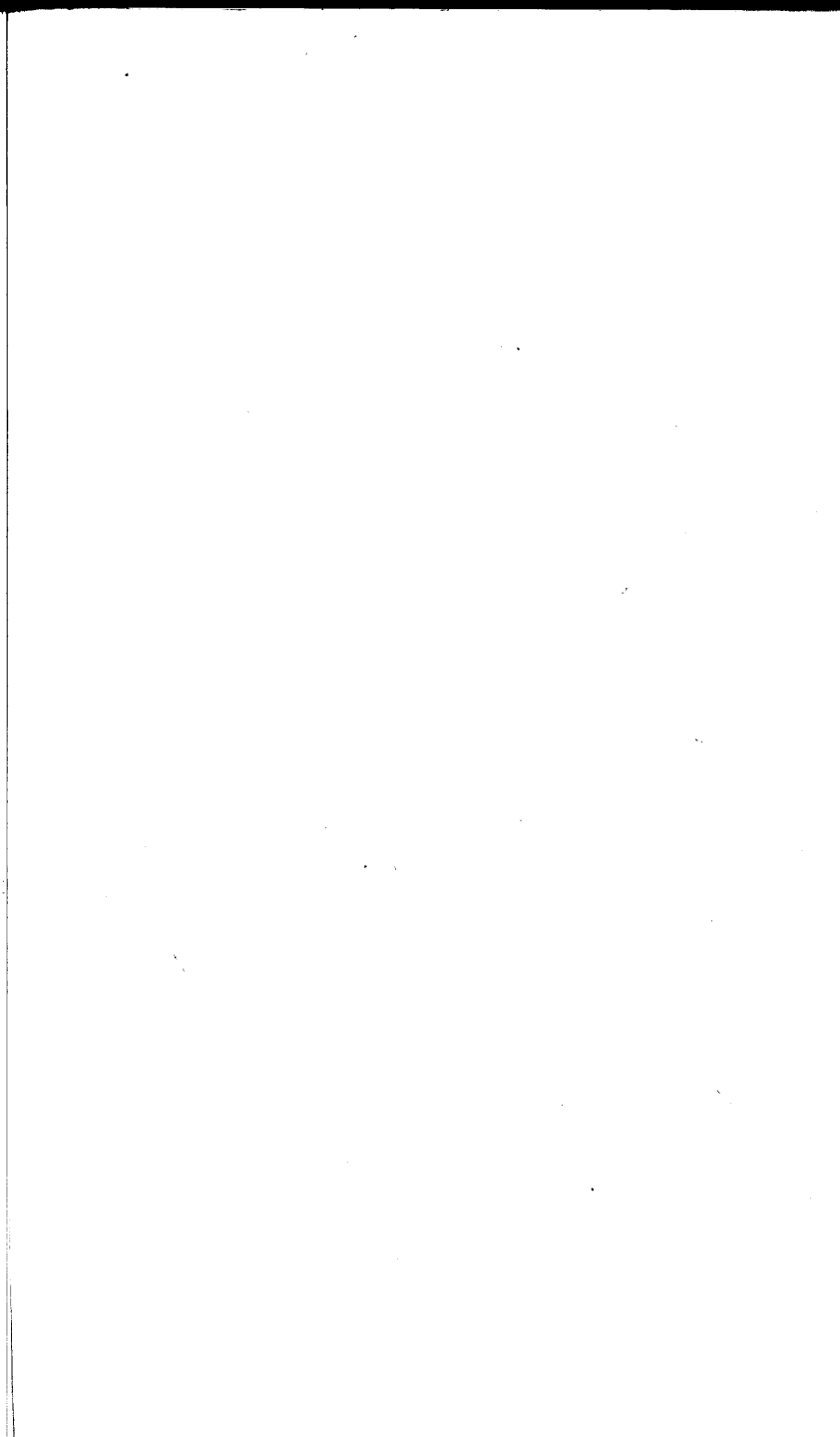
population. The facilities which other States are affording their citizens for commerce, business, labor and industry of all kinds, added to their superior natural advantages, will afford a stimulus to quicken into intense action the desire already prevailing to go out from among us, and which cannot be much longer resisted. If this State can be so narrow and illiberal in its policy, so indifferent to what is going on every where else, as to neglect this golden opportunity to evince by substantial deeds its sense of the necessity and importance of encouraging its own internal improvement, it will entail upon us and our posterity unhappy and irremediable consequences.

Your memorialists have forbore to enter into minute calculations and particulars upon the subject of their address to you, from the fear of exhausting your patience. They possess much statistical information which was inconvenient for them to embody in detail, or to present in tabular form, in this short argument which they intended should be general in its nature.

It only remains for us to ask you, gentlemen, to act upon this urgent and all important subject with a sagacity and a fearlessness that shall honor the memory of the Legislature of 1837, in all coming time; and which we respectfully submit, as we confidently believe, can best be done by responding to the sentiments of your memorialists, and carrying them into effect by an act guarded from all dangers, and yet not too timid and too limited in its character, to be of any essential and decisive service.

ALFRED JOHNSON,
H. O. ALDEN,
PHILIP MORRILL,
WILLIAM RUST,
H. J. ANDERSON,

JOHN HANLY,
JOSEPH HOCKEY,
PETER HARMON,
JESSE SMART,
MOSES TRUE,
STEPHEN PRESCOTT, JR.
BOARDMAN JOHNSON,
HOLTON MANSUR,
JOHN McLURE,
THOMAS SAWYER, JR.
S. S. HEAGAN,
J. WILLIAMSON,
HENRY. W. CUNNINGHAM,
J. WHITE.



STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
JANUARY 25, 1837. }

Read and referred to the Committee on Rail Roads and Canals, and one thousand copies of the petition ordered to be printed for the use of the Legislature. Sent up for concurrence.

H. HAMLIN, *Speaker*.

IN SENATE, January 26, 1837.

Read and concurred.

J. C. TALBOT, *President*.