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### Memorial of Henry O'Rielly, John J. Speed, and Tal. P. Shaffner, concerning the completion of telegraph lines to Fort Laramie and Salt Lake

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## MEMORIAL

OF

HENRY O'RIELLY, JOHN J. SPEED, AND TAL. P.  
SHAFFNER,

CONCERNING

*The completion of telegraph lines to Fort Laramie and Salt Lake.*

JANUARY 12, 1858.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia. Motion to print referred to the Committee on Printing. Report in favor of printing submitted, considered, and agreed to.

*To the Senate of the United States:*

The undersigned, corporators of the "St. Louis and Salt Lake Telegraph Company," hereby propose to extend telegraphic communication through Kansas and Nebraska to Fort Laramie, or the "South Pass" of the Rocky mountains, about eight hundred or a thousand miles west of the present westerly terminus of the "Missouri River line," before the *fifteenth day of August next*, so as to place the federal government in close communication with the "army of Utah," as well as with the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska; *provided* the federal government, before the 1st of February, will direct the construction so as to enable us to arrange for *active field* service at the earliest period of spring.

The vast importance of telegraphic facilities for communication between the federal government and the civil and military authorities stationed in those interior Territories, *at any time*, is too obvious to require comment; but, in connexion with military movements of warlike character, we may quote the remark often repeated by Governor Marcy, that if telegraphic facilities had existed *southwardly* at the commencement of the Mexican war, the government might have prevented much loss of life, and *saved half a million of dollars by a single telegraphic despatch*. Another fact speaks volumes upon this subject—and that fact is, that our intelligence from the *extremities of Europe* is now *four weeks later* than from the *American army* on the borders of Nebraska and Utah, near the *centre of our own country*.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, (1835,) a small band of *Seminoles* commenced hostilities by murdering the settlers and desolating the settlements of South Florida; and a fragment of that tribe yet

maintain themselves amid the "Everglades" in defiance of our troops, after having already cost hundreds of lives and many millions of dollars.

With such vast sacrifices, through four and twenty years, to subdue a handful of Seminoles, where our troops surround them by land and water, who will predict the severity or duration of warfare waged by our army, a thousand miles from supplies, against rebels animated by fanatical zeal and military fury like the Mormons, fighting by their own firesides, in alliance with the most powerful Indian tribes of our continent, and dwelling among mountain strongholds, rendering their power formidable, like that of the Caucasians with their bloody resistance to the Russian armies?

With the example of the "Maroon war," also before us—a war wherein the British government sacrificed thousands of lives and millions of money in a struggle for many years in subduing the insurgent negroes of the Jamaica mountains—it is seemingly probable, now that the Mormons are resolved on maintaining their mountain strongholds, that the *war of Utah* may be long continued as well as desperate, and that *telegraphic intercourse* will become one of the most important elements of sustenance towards the troops operating against rebellion in that isolated region, distant a thousand miles from reinforcement and supplies.

In conclusion, the memorialists repeat their proposition for an extension of telegraphic facilities to the seat of war, and express their hope that the action of the government will be taken in time to afford opportunity for completing arrangements to take the field with several efficient bodies of telegraph constructors at the earliest practicable period of the approaching spring.

All which is respectfully submitted.

HENRY O'RIELLY, of *New York*.

J. J. SPEED, JR., of *Michigan*.

TAL. P. SHAFFNER, of *Kentucky*.

NEW YORK, *January 8, 1858.*