

2-17-1849

## Report : Mr. Rusk

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IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 17, 1849.

Submitted, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. RUSK made the following

REPORT :

[To accompany bill S. No. 467.]

*The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, to whom was referred the memorial of William A. Bradley and his associates, having had the same under consideration, beg leave to report:*

The memorialists propose to become contractors for the transportation of the United States mail between the city of St. Louis, in the State of Missouri, and the port of San Francisco, on the Pacific ocean. In return for this service, they ask from government the sum of \$750,000 in money, and the pre-emption right to certain sections of the public lands, with the privilege of levying tolls from those who may travel over the road to be constructed by them. Of the money which they are to receive, they propose to ask no portion until the Postmaster General shall have been satisfied that they are in condition to perform the service to be rendered, fixing the expiration of six months, from and after the 1st day of June next, as the period at which the service is to commence, and the money be paid thereafter in equal monthly instalments.

Whatever may have been the diversity of opinion in the public mind with reference to the acquisition of new territory on the Pacific, it is believed there neither is, nor can there be any difference of sentiment, since the acquisition has taken place, as to the propriety and even absolute necessity of opening, at the earliest time practicable, a safe and speedy channel of communication with those of our fellow citizens who have gone or are now going in crowds to take up their abode in this new and unbounded field for enterprise. It is true that public opinion is much divided in regard to the *precise route* through which such a communication shall be effected, but, so far as your committee are informed, all men agree upon two points. The first of these points is the one alluded to above, the necessity for the communication; and the second, that the route selected shall be exclusively over our own territory. Whether the proposition of the memorialists presents

the best line by which this desirable intercourse shall be brought about, as well as the most economical and effective mode in which so magnificent an improvement can be introduced, it will be for the Senate to determine. The committee are of opinion, that while it does not come into conflict with the political prejudices of either of the parties of the country, for speediness of execution, economy of cost to the government, and security from the mischances which, not unfrequently, attend great undertakings, it recommends itself as an eminently useful and practicable scheme.

In making their report upon a subject so vitally connected with the welfare of our country at large, and, more especially, of the vast portion of it watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries, your committee feel it to be their duty to advert to some of the benefits likely to arise from the opening a safe and speedy communication with the Pacific. If it be so very desirable, as some think, to divert the trade with China and the east from its present circuitous route, and, through the instrumentality of railroads across the isthmus of Panama or that of Tehuantepec, cause it to pour out its stores of wealth along our maritime frontier, how much more so must it be to cause its course to pass through the bosom of the country, enriching in its way every section through which it will go, and making the wilderness "to blossom as the rose." To the country at large such an improvement may be regarded as the golden zone by which our national body politic will be encircled and bound together, whilst to the States west of the Alleghany mountains, occupying the great valley of the Mississippi, it will be the source of unbounded prosperity, by furnishing to the hardy yeomanry of those States a *home market* for the products of their soil, which now remain comparatively valueless on their hands for the want of consumers.

So soon as the proposed road shall have been constructed, its borders will be occupied by settlements of industrious farmers, who will be enabled to dispose of their crops at their own doors, for cash, and in this way money will be distributed throughout the land, whilst the value of real estate, in private hands or the property of the government, will be enhanced to a degree of which no accurate estimate can be made. The multitudes of living creatures which would start into existence under the impulse of this vast influence, would at once create a demand on the spot for articles of food which are not at present produced, or which, if they exist, are suffered to rot and pass away without conferring any benefit upon the human family. In the progress of such a work, the half-starved and wretched millions of Europe, who are now flocking to our shores, would find prompt and profitable employment, in the midst of health and plenty, instead of remaining in our cities and becoming victims to poverty and its attendant vices. With no inducements to crime—where honest industry would receive its reward—thousands on thousands who are now destitute and homeless would seek the mighty west, and carry with them the blessings of civilization, where, as yet, scarcely a human foot, save that of the hunter, has ever trodden.

Through the agency of this all-prolific source of good the immigration into our country from foreign lands, instead of a curse, would become a blessing, and a population would grow up among the ocean prairies of the setting sun, filled with enterprize and happy in the ennobling consciousness of being free. Nor would the good effects produced by this state of things stop here. The remnants of the Indian race, by whom these far off wastes are now used as hunting grounds, would be gradually incorporated with their white brethren, and rescued from the doom which seems to be sweeping them, year after year, into the abyss of oblivion, or, at all events, prevented from inflicting outrages upon our unprotected brethren of the frontiers. In taking an extensive view of our subject, it is proper to bear in mind that the commercial advantages which would necessarily grow out of the communication of which we speak, are and must be reciprocal in their character. The manufactures and other products of the east, which would pass along this road and find their way to every hamlet in the country, would be procured in exchange for the commodities of our own country, and thus would a foreign market of incalculable value be opened to American enterprise. Instead of being accumulated, as at present, from the want of adequate outlets, the products of the country drained by the "father of waters" would be transported to the islands of the Indian ocean and the great eastern continent, there to be bartered for articles of luxury or necessity. Nor would the "black diamonds" of Pennsylvania—as her coal has been appropriately termed—and her iron, be the least valuable among the products of our soil, which would be wafted on the fiery wings of steam to where nature, bountiful in all things besides, has withheld from the dweller on the prairies the boon of fuel for domestic and manufacturing purposes. Wherever civilized man is, there are to be found the anvil and the loom; and wherever they are they must be made tributary to the necessities of man. Without steam, what would be the commerce of the nineteenth century? and without coal to warm their domestic hearth, what would be the condition of the richest tiller of the most fertile soil of the interminable west? In this way the hardy sons of Pennsylvania would be carried onward on the waves of enterprise, and, mingling their energies with those of the ardent children of the sunny south and southwest, would go to swell the rushing avalanche of American improvement.

Your committee do not intend or desire to agitate the long mooted question of the power of the general government to prosecute a general system of internal improvement. They do not propose to express any opinion in regard to that important topic, and have been, therefore, happy to find that it may be stated as one of the many reasons which have induced them to take into favorable consideration the proposition of the memorialists in its present form; that, in their opinion, it does not involve any of the powers which some strict constructionists would withhold from the government. In the first place, a very large portion of the soil over which the proposed road is to be constructed, for the transportation

of the United States mail, is not included within the limits of sovereign and independent States, but is in fact *public domain*, belonging to them all alike. Of the constitutional power on the part of the general government to construct roads for the transportation of the mails, it is believed there neither is nor can there be any rational doubt, as the power has been exercised by every administration from that of Mr. Jefferson down to the present. Under Mr. Jefferson's administration the amount appropriated for the construction and repair of roads and the improvement of harbors, was .....

was .....	\$48,400
Under Mr. Madison's .....	250,800
“ “ Monroe's .....	707,621
“ “ J. Q. Adams's .....	2,310,475
“ General Jackson's .....	10,582,882
“ Mr. Van Buren's .....	2,222,544
“ “ Tyler's .....	1,076,500

But if there were any difficulty on this score, it is only necessary to state that the proposition of the memorialists is simply to become the carriers of the mail between certain points for a given compensation, they providing the means and engaging to keep in repair the road over which it is to pass. With the construction of the road, the government, as such, has not, directly or indirectly, anything to do, inasmuch as the contract into which it enters is, in fact, nothing more or less than a contract for carrying the mail, the consideration given being graduated in accordance with the extent and difficulty of the service to be performed.

The road to which the adoption of this route will, of necessity, give origin, will be the result of circumstances, and will, to use a strong expression, *grow of itself*, out of the business of the communities formed along its borders. As the trade to which it will necessarily give rise increases, it will bring with it the means of giving a permanent form to the road over which it will pass. Nor can the right to levy a toll be regarded in any other light than as a portion of the consideration money given for the service performed; not taken from the national treasury, it is true, but, like the postage on letters, drawn from the pockets of the millions by whom the treasury is directly and indirectly supplied. So much for the territory of the United States through which the proposed mail route is to pass. With reference to the States through which it may pass, your committee has no hesitation in assigning much weight to the opinions of the late venerated President Jackson, and the other great and patriotic statesmen above named. To the opinions of General Jackson on the subject of internal improvements, his opponents can only object on the score that he did not go far enough to meet their views, whilst his friends in and out of Congress sustained him throughout, in the distinction taken between improvements of a *national character*, in contradistinction from those which, however useful, were of a local or partial description. Certainly nothing can be more entirely national than the road proposed, the object of which is, by a direct and contin-

uous line of communication, to form a connexion between the eastern and western points of this vast republic. The route proposed, extending thousands of miles, will enable the traveller to go from one end of North America to the other, passing through State after State, diverging neither to the right nor to the left, until he shall have reached his point of destination on the Atlantic or the Pacific ocean.

It will be a great national highway, in comparison with which the great highways of antiquity will dwindle into insignificance. Entirely American in its character, it will serve as a bond to keep our blessed Union together, and preserve it from being rent asunder by the distracting power of sectional prejudices, or the fierce antagonism of interest, real or imaginary. With such a tie to hold them together, the people of these United States will constitute a mighty nation of freemen, speaking, with slight diversities, the same language, and governed by the same laws. In contemplating such a spectacle, the sage seeks in vain for its parallel among the records of past ages, and the heart of the philanthropist leaps with joy in the anticipation of so much happiness for the human race.

The limits of this report are such as to prevent your committee from entering into an elaborate detail of the various and important interests which would be promoted by the establishment of the direct and speedy communication with the Pacific ocean and the countries beyond, to which the proposed mail route is but the introduction. It is only necessary, however, for the inquirer after knowledge to place before him a map of the great basin of the Mississippi, and trace the innumerable rivers by which it is watered to their sources, to be convinced that there is not a State between the great northern lakes and the gulf of Mexico which would not be an immediate partaker in the benefits to which this improvement would give rise.

The following brief statement of facts, while it shews us a picture of the past calculated to astonish the wisest mind, presents to us the anticipation of a future so grand as to put all calculation at fault, and force us to await the developments of time, which can alone ascertain the degree of greatness at which our country is destined to arrive.

“But thirty years ago, the total population of that valley was but about 2,000,000; now it cannot be less than 8,500,000. Then the entire ascending commerce of New Orleans with the whole of the upper country, was not more than sufficient to employ about twenty barges of about one hundred tons each, making but one voyage a year. Now constant employment is furnished in the 12,000 miles of river navigation above New Orleans, for at least 1,200 steamboats alone, having an aggregate burthen of about 200,000 tons, while the value of the property now annually floating upon these waters is estimated by those best qualified to ascertain it, at at least \$220,000,000; and this amount is yearly increasing at a rate which seems to defy calculation.”

Through the aid of steam navigation, on the noble streams by

which the country is intersected, the proposed road would become the line of deposite for all the products in which these States abound. To the regions north of this line, the currents of those streams would furnish every facility required to transport their commodities to a market, comparatively near home; while to those lying south of the road, steam vessels would furnish the means of overcoming the obstacles interposed by nature. Having reached this great artery of trade, as it might well be termed, these commodities would at once be borne, with the fleetness of the wind, towards the rising or the setting sun, and deposited upon the shores of the vast oceans by which our continent is girded. Whether the millions of Europe or those of Asia stand in need of the products of our fertile soil, commerce will spread her wings alike to satisfy their hunger and gratify their tastes. Forming the great middle ground of the world's traffic, the nations of the remotest parts of the globe would meet upon our shores and shake hands together. Nor would we, perhaps, be considered as going too far when we say that, thus, in the land of Washington, the crescent of the Musulman and the altar fires of the idolator will alike grow dim and disappear amid the purer and brighter lights that beam from the revelations of the Christian faith.

Your committee have not in their possession the information necessary to enable them to determine the exact point of departure or of termination for the proposed road; they therefore propose to leave the selection to the President, to be made so soon as the Postmaster General shall have collected the facts required for an intelligent disposition of the subject.