

NUMBER XIV.

*A Memorial upon the National Defence of the Northern Minnesota Frontier.**To the Congress of the United States:*

The Legislature of Minnesota would respectfully ask the co-operation of the national government in measures of military necessity, upon the frontier between Minnesota and the English settlements at Selkirk, in Central British America.

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It is now well known, that north of latitude forty-nine degrees (49°) and west of longitude ninety-four degrees (94°), there extends to the Rocky Mountains a district which may be properly styled Central British America.

This region, at least to latitude fifty-four (54°)—five degrees of latitude in width and eleven degrees of longitude in length—is connected with Minnesota by internal river and lake navigation, and is capable of sustaining as dense a population as the States of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The climate and soil invite a similar agriculture. Selkirk Settlement, with a population of ten thousand souls, immediately joins Minnesota, and is the key to the future occupation and development of the fertile valleys and navigable streams which converge to Lake Winnipeg. One of these streams, the Red River of the North, is navigable for four hundred miles by its course within the United States, forming the Northwest boundary of Minnesota.

It was a favorite policy of the Derby ministry, and especially of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, colonial secretary, to organize a crown colony of Central British America, with the seat of government at Selkirk.

A draft for a bill for that purpose has not been pressed during the Palmerston administration, greatly to the dissatisfaction of the people most interested.

Meanwhile, the revenue and postal system of the United States has been extended to Pembina and beyond, and, with the aid of steamboat navigation, (transferred to the Red River from the adjacent sources of the Mississippi, by the enterprise of the citizens of Minnesota), has rapidly removed former prejudices to commercial and even political association with the United States. It is not too much to say, that if England shall not immediately take measures in behalf of the Red River and Saskatchewan districts, by a political organization, and effective measures of colonization, that the Americanization of a grain region as large as six States of the size of Ohio, cannot long be postponed. Hitherto the people of Minnesota have desired no other relations with their northern neighbors than the concord of international treaties. They still seek no other, satisfied with the political frontier entrusted to their keeping although claiming to be central to a vast division of physical geography.

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With these preliminary observations, purposely omitting many considerations which late events would suggest, but upon which it may be inexpedient to enlarge, your memorialists proceed to an enumeration of a few topics which seem at this time essential to the relation of Minnesota to an important, although hitherto isolated, portion of British dominion on this continent.

First. We urge the immediate construction and occupation of a fort of the United States near Pembina on the international frontier.

The merit of this suggestion is enforced by an appropriation of fifty thousand (50,000) dollars at a late session of congress, although the expenditure for that purpose has been temporarily postponed by our present national difficulties. Such a fortress would powerfully contribute to the suppression of the hereditary feud between the Chippewas and Dakotahs. The Red River of the North is the boundary—not inaptly called the Red River—which separates these implacable foes.

Second. The extension of settlements to Otter Tail Lake, to Georgetown, on the Red River and other points, renders it highly expedient to close a treaty with the Red Lake bands of Chippewas, removing all impediments to the transit of mails, merchandise and emigrants, on the routes between the settlements of the Upper Mississippi river and Lake Superior, the American community at Pem-

bina and the English settlements at the mouth of the Red River of the North.

On this subject, the legislature heartily accords with the recommendation of Hon. Clark W. Thompson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Minnesota, and of the Governor of Minnesota, in his annual message of January ninth, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two.

Third. Besides the advantages of the present mail service in the valley of Red River, to citizens of Minnesota, there is abundant evidence that the intelligent community of Selkirk, and the occupants of trading posts through the interior, estimate very highly the benefits thus conferred by the government at Washington. By present arrangements, their communications are firmly established twice each month; if these were made weekly, the favorable impression would be proportionate.

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The congress can readily anticipate the bearing of these facts, when we allude to the further circumstance, that neither Canada or England have sustained any effective or regular system of mails to the inhabitants of Central British America. In view of this neglect by the home government, we respectfully suggest the enlargement of our American arrangements.

Fourth. If circumstances shall give importance to military preparations and movements on the Minnesota frontier, the present system of forwarding supplies to our outposts from St. Louis, would not certainly be persisted in. It is respectfully suggested that this State has now attained a position, by agriculture, manufactures and commerce, which justifies a change of existing regulations in this respect. We therefore urge that the supplies for military and Indian use shall henceforth be purchased, as far as possible, in Minnesota markets.

Your memorialists, for further considerations and statistics enforcing the points of the present memorial, beg leave to refer to their senators and representatives now in attendance upon congress.

Approved January 31, 1862.