

PETITION
of
A NUMBER OF CITIZENS OF THE OREGON TERRITORY,
Praying
The extension of the jurisdiction and laws of
the United States over that Territory.

June 4, 1840.

Laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

Your petitioners represent unto your honorable bodies, that they are residents in the Oregon Territory, and citizens of the United States, or persons desirous of becoming such.

They further represent to your honorable bodies, that they have settled themselves in said Territory, under the belief that it was a portion of the public domain of said States, and that they might rely upon the Government thereof for the blessings of free institutions, and the protection of its arms.

But your petitioners further represent, that they are uninformed of any acts of said Government by which its institutions and protection are extended to them; in consequence thereof, themselves and families are exposed to be destroyed by the savages around them, and others that would do them harm.

And your petitioners would further represent, that they have no means of protecting their own and the lives of their families, other than self-constituted tribunals, originating and sustained by the power of an ill-instructed public opinion, and the resort to force and arms.

And your petitioners represent these means of safety to be an insufficient safeguard of life and property, and that the crimes of theft, murder, infanticide, &c., are increasing among them to an alarming extent; and your petitioners declare themselves unable to arrest this progress of crime, and its terrible consequences, without the aid of law, and tribunals to administer it.

Your petitioners therefore pray the Congress of the United States of America to establish, as soon as may be, a Territorial Government in the Oregon Territory.

And if reasons other than those above presented were needed to induce your honorable bodies to grant the prayer of the undersigned, your petitioners, they would be found in the value of the Territory to the nation, and the alarming circumstances that portend its loss.

Your petitioners, in view of these last considerations, would represent that the English Government has had a surveying squadron on the Oregon coast for the last two years, employed in making accurate surveys of all its rivers, bays, and harbors; and that, recently, the said Government is said to have made a grant to the Hudson's Bay Company, of lands lying between the Columbia river and Puget's sound; and that said company is actually exercising unequivocal acts of ownership over said lands thus granted, and opening extensive farms upon the same.

And your petitioners represent that these circumstances, connected with other acts of said company to the same effect, and their declarations that the English Government

own and will hold, as its own soil, that portion of the Oregon Territory situated north of the Columbia river, together with the important fact that the said company are cutting and sawing into lumber and shipping to foreign ports, vast quantities of the finest pine trees upon the navigable waters of the Columbia, have led your petitioners to apprehend that the English Government do intend, at all events, to hold that portion of this Territory lying north of the Columbia river.

And your petitioners represent, that the said Territory, north of the Columbia, is an invaluable possession to the American Union; that in and about Puget's sound, are the only harbors of easy access, and commodious and safe, upon the whole coast of the Territory; and that a great part of this said northern portion of the Oregon Territory is rich in timber, waterpower, and valuable minerals. For these and other reasons, your petitioners pray that Congress will establish its sovereignty over said Territory.

Your petitioners would further represent, that the country south of the Columbia river and north of the Mexican line, and extending from the Pacific ocean one hundred and twenty miles in the interior, is of unequalled beauty and fertility. Its mountains, covered with perpetual snows, pouring into the prairies around their bases transparent streams of the purest water; the white and black oak, pine, and cedar and fir forests that divide the prairies into sections convenient for farming purposes; the rich mines of coal in its hills, and salt springs in its valleys; its quarries of lime-stone, sandstone, chalk, and marble; the salmon of its rivers, and the various blessings of the delightful and healthy climate, are known to us, and impress your petitioners with the belief that this is one of the most favored portions of the globe.

Indeed, the deserts of the interior have their wealth of perpetual pasturage, and their lakes evaporating in summer, and leaving in their basins hundreds of bushels of the purest soda. Many other circumstances could be named, showing the importance of this Territory in a national, commercial, and agricultural point of view. And, although your petitioners would not undervalue considerations of this kind, yet they beg leave especially to call the attention of Congress to their own condition as an infant colony, without military force or civil institutions, to protect their lives, and property, and children, sanctuaries and tombs, from the hands of uncivilized and merciless savages around them. We respectfully ask for the civil institutions of the American Republic. We pray for the high privileges of American citizenship; the peaceful enjoyment of life; the right of acquiring possessing, and using property; and the unrestrained pursue of rational happiness. And for this your petitioners will for ever pray.

DAVID LESLIE, and others