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Mr. P. B. PORTER. I have risen for the purpose of asking the attention of the House to a subject, than which I may confidently say, there is none that regards our domestic politics more important or which more loudly calls for the interposition of the National Legislature. The subject to which I allude, is the improvement of the U. States by canals and canals—And I intend, before I sit down to offer a resolution, the object of which will be to ascertain the opinion of the House in relation to the propriety of appropriating a part of the public lands to such improvements. I am not in the habit of trespassing on the patience of the House, and I shall not apologise for the length of time I may occupy in presenting my views on this subject, as the importance of it seems, in my opinion, to demand it. I know that the time of the House is precious—I am aware that there are many matters connected with our foreign relations, that have claims to its attention; but they ought not to exclude every other subject from legislation. I have the honor to represent a portion of the country which is perhaps as little affected by external commercial relations as any part of the United States; and yet I have, with great attention and interest, followed the various plans and proposals which are daily submitted and discussed in the House, and with which I have been almost exclusively occupied for the protection and security of our commerce; and I trust that I shall be able, on my next proper occasions, to consider my constituents as bonded together with their persons and their property, and to the last extremity, the rights of the merchants of this country. On the other hand, I have a right to say that the gentlemen who represent the mercantile interest, will not only be with me in the proposition I am about to submit, but that they will be ready to give me the fair opportunity, I intend to afford them, of proving the soundness of those professions which we have often and so loudly made in favor of the agricultural interest. The gentleman in question tells us that the gentlemen of the hand-maid of agriculture, that their zeal to protect the interests of agriculture, is not only a desire to protect their interests, but through its instrumentality to protect the interests of agriculture. I have no objection to the sincerity of these professions, nor the correctness of the assertions they assert, but it is to be regretted that the gentlemen will be unwilling to give a direct encouragement to agriculture, as to do it indirectly is the medium of commerce. It is to be regretted that a bill was introduced on your table, from which I have embraced the subject of agriculture. What course this bill has taken, or what may be the result in that House, were it to come before me to conjecture, it would be for me to state in this place, and to discuss the present state of my constituents on that subject. I maintain that it is because I had some little to say on that subject in the form of a resolution on your table, and in consequence of its having appeared in the Session, that it therefore shows a practical mode of carrying out the provisions of the resolution into effect. I must beg the House to bear in mind the observations which I am making, should these observations be taken as to gain the ear of the House. It is possible that some of the views which I have taken of this subject may be considered as too extravagant in their nature, and that they may at first appear to be the ravings of affection. However, it will be recalled that the subject is in itself of vast magnitude and extent; and that, in order to do it with any degree of justice, it is necessary to consider it in all its bearings, and the great and corresponding views which are calculated to produce it. And permit me, in the first place, to say that some great system of internal navigation, such as is contemplated in the bill introduced into the House, is not only an object of the first importance to the future prosperity of the country, but is considered as a measure

of political economy, but as a measure of state policy it is indispensable to the preservation of the integrity of this government. The United States have for twenty years past been favored in their external commerce, in a manner unequalled perhaps in the history of the world. Our citizens have not only grown rich, but they have almost gone mad in pursuit of his commerce. Such have been its temptations, as to engage in it almost the whole of the floating capital of the country, and a great part of its enterprise; and every other occupation has been considered as secondary and subordinate. This extraordinary success of commerce has been owing partly to our local situation, partly to the native enterprise of our citizens, but primarily to the unparalleled succession of events in Europe. The course of these events, before so propitious to our interests, has of late very materially changed, and with it has changed the tide of our commercial prosperity. I am far however from believing that this sudden reverse may not eventually prove fortunate for the true interest of the U. S. The embarrassments, which the belligerents have thrown in the way of our external commerce, have turned the attention of the people of this country to their own internal resources. And in viewing these resources we perceive with pride that there is no country on earth, which in the fertility of its soil, the extent and variety of its climate and productions affords the means of national wealth and greatness in the measure they are enjoyed by the people of the U. States. If these means are properly fostered and encouraged by a liberal and enlightened policy, we shall soon be able not only to defend our independence at home, which however I confidently trust, we have now both the ability and the disposition to do, notwithstanding the fears that are attempted to be excited on this subject, but we shall be able to protect our foreign commerce against the united power of the world. One great object of the system I am about to propose, is to unlock these internal resources—to enable the citizen of one part of the United States to exchange his products for those of another, and to open a great internal commerce, which is acknowledged by all who profess any skill in the science of political economy to be much more profitable and advantageous, than the most favored external commerce which we could enjoy. The system, however, has another object in view not less important. The people of the U. S. are divided by a geographical line into two great and distinct sections—The people who live along the Atlantic on the east side of the Alleghany mountains, and who compose the three great classes of merchants, manufacturers and agriculturalists, and those who occupy the west side of those mountains, who are exclusively agriculturalists. This diversity and supposed contrariety of interest and pursuit, between the people of these two great divisions of country, and the difference of character to which these occupations give rise, it has been confidently asserted and is still believed by many, will lead to a separation of the United States at no very distant day.—In my humble opinion, sir, this very diversity of interest will, if skillfully managed, be the means of producing a closer and more intimate union of the states. It will be obviously for the interests of the interior states to exchange the great surplus products of their lands, and the raw materials of manufactures for the merchant and manufactured articles of the eastern states; and on the other hand the interests of the merchants and manufacturers of the Atlantic will be equally promoted by this internal commerce—and it is by promoting this commerce, by encouraging & facilitating its intercourse, that it is by producing a mutual dependence of interests between these two great sections, and by these means only, that the U. S. can ever be kept together. The great evil, and it is a serious one indeed, sir, under which the inhabitants of the western country labour, arises from the want of a market. There is no place where the great staple articles for the use of civilized life can be produced in greater abundance or with greater ease. And yet as respects most of the luxuries and many of the conveniences of life, the people are poor.—They have no vent for their produce at home; because, being all agriculturalists, they produce alike the same arti-

cles with the same facility; and such is the present difficulty and expence of transporting their produce to an Atlantic port, that little benefits are realised from that quarter. The single circumstance, of the want of a market, is already beginning to produce the most disastrous effects, not only on the industry but upon the morals of the inhabitants. Such is the fertility of their lands, that one half of their time spent in labor is sufficient to produce every article, which their farms are capable of yielding in sufficient quantities for their own consumption, and there is nothing to incite them to produce more. They are therefore, naturally led to spend the other part of their time in idleness and dissipation. Their increase in numbers, and the ease with which children are brought up and fed, far from encouraging them to become manufacturers for themselves, puts at a great distance the time, when, quitting the freedom and independence of masters of the soil, they will submit to the labor and confinement of manufacturers.—This, sir, is the true situation of the western agriculturalist. It becomes then an object of national importance, far outweighing almost every other that can occupy the attention of this House, to enquire whether the evils incident to this state of things, may not be removed, by opening a great navigable canal from the Atlantic to the western states; and thus promoting the natural connection and intercourse between the farmer and the merchant, so highly conducive to the interests of both. This brings me more immediately to the object of the resolution which I shall have the honor to submit. And I must beg the indulgence of the House while I attempt to shew, by a geographical detail, not only the importance but the practicality of such a navigation. The great ranges of mountains, continued from the circular mountain in Georgia, on the south, to the Mohawk river in the State of New York, on the north, intercept and destroy the navigation of all the rivers which discharge into the Atlantic and approach the western country. But when you have passed these mountains from the Atlantic, that country opens a scene of natural internal navigation unequalled in the world. The face of the country is so uniformly level as to make almost every small stream by which it is intersected, navigable for boats of considerable size. The chain of western lakes, extending from the north eastern extremity of Lake Ontario to the south western termination of Lake Michigan, affords now an excellent navigation, for vessels drawing ten feet of water, for vessels drawing ten feet of water, of fourteen hundred miles in extent—uninterrupted, except by the falls and rapids of Niagara, a distance of only eight miles. To the south and west of these lakes the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi approach within short distances of, and are interlocked by the waters of the lakes. The lands along these dividing waters are generally level; and the rivers are navigable and might be connected by short canals at little expence. I will mention some of the principal points at which these connexions might be formed. On the south-western part of Lake Erie, in the State of N. York, there is a portage of eight miles from that lake to a small lake, called the Chataqua. The Chataqua is the reservoir or source of one of the branches of the Alleghany river, and this stream is navigable from the lake to Pittsburg, on the Ohio, for boats of thirty tons burthen. The waters of the Chataqua are higher than those of Lake Erie, to which there is a gradual and regular descent of land; and a canal might be opened between them at a very moderate expence. On the South side of Lake Erie, in Pennsylvania, there is another portage of 15 miles, over an artificial road, from Presque Isle to French Creek, another branch of the Alleghany, and which is also navigable for boats carrying two hundred barrels. Over these two portages was sent, during the last summer, more than 100,000 bushels of salt, manufactured in the interior of the State of N. York, and transported through Lakes Ontario and Erie, across these portages and down to Pittsburg, for the use of the inhabitants of the Ohio and its tributary streams. This salt trade was commenced about seven years ago, and has been increasing ever since, at the rate of twenty-five per cent. a year; and if the great line of navigation, to which I shall presently call the attention of the House, were opened, the

people of the Ohio, and its various waters would be supplied with that great and necessary article of life, fifty per cent. cheaper than it now costs them. About 100 miles to the West of Presque Isle, in the State of Ohio, the river Cayohaga opens a good boat navigation from Lake Erie, to within six or eight miles of the navigable waters of the Muskingum; and I understand that a communication is about to be opened between them, either by means of a canal or an artificial road, under the patronage of the Legislature of that State. About 150 miles still further to the west, in the Territories of Michigan and Indiana, other communications may be formed between the waters of the Miami of Lake Erie, and the Wash and Miami of the Ohio. At the South Western extremity of Lake Michigan, the most inconsiderable expence would open a canal between the waters of that lake, and the Illinois river, one of the principal branches of the Mississippi. Nature has already made this connection nearly complete; and it is not uncommon for boats, in the spring of the year, to pass from the Lake into the Illinois, and thence by the waters of the Illinois and Mississippi to New-Orleans, without being taken out of the water. Further to the North, a connection might be formed with nearly the same facility, between the waters of the Fox river which discharges into Green Bay, and the Ouisconsin, another branch of the Mississippi; and the lands adjacent to these rivers are said to be uncommonly rich and fertile. From this view of the western country, and the great extent of its natural internal navigation, we perceive the advantages to be derived by opening it to the Atlantic by a great canal; and we discover likewise, at the same time, that it is not very important to the inhabitants, by what line this canal approaches them, as their interest would be almost equally promoted by any route that might be adopted. I presume however, there can be no doubt on this point. The Alleghany mountains have a uniform elevation of about 3000 feet above the level of the tide. Their bases, together with those of their parallel ridges, occupy a distance, transversely of about 100 miles. They present a barrier to the opening of any continued navigation from the Middle States to the Western country, which, if not far beyond the reach of art, it is certainly beyond that of our present national resources to surmount. An inspection of the map will at once point out this leading fact. To unite the highest navigable waters on each side of the mountains, by good roads, is all that can, for some years; & perhaps for some centuries be attempted; and very valuable communications may be opened in this way. To the South & West of these mountains, the river Mississippi affords an invaluable descending navigation to the inhabitants of the vast countries which it traverses—But, such is the great extent of that river, and the uniform rapidity of its current, that great doubts are entertained whether it can ever be made a valuable ascending navigation. It certainly cannot, in the present state of the science of navigation, even with the improvement of the Steam boat.—To the North, still more important difficulties present themselves in the navigation of the St. Lawrence. One of these is found in the great rapids of that river, and another in the severity of the climate, which is such as to shut up the mouth of the river with ice, for six or seven months in the year. The only practicable route for an ascending navigation to the lakes, is by way of the Hudson and Mohawk, in the State of New-York, the Hudson being the only river whose tide waters flow above the Blue Ridge or Eastern chain of Mountains. The Mohawk rises in the level lands of the Western Country, in the vicinity of Lake Ontario, whence it takes an Easternly direction for about 140 miles near to Albany, the seat of government of the State of N. York, where it passes around the Northern extremity of the Western chain of the Alleghany Mountains, and falls into the Hudson. From thence the two rivers united take a Southernly course, and breaking through the East chain of Mountains, commonly called the Blue Ridge, at West Point, fall into the Atlantic at New-York. The Hudson is navigable from New York to the mouth of the Mohawk, a distance of 170 miles, for sloops drawing from eight to ten feet of wa-

ter. The Mohawk is a river of respectable size, and for the most part of its distance deep and navigable; but its navigation is occasionally interrupted by falls. A canal of any extent may be made along the margin of this river, and supplied with its waters, as high as Rome, which is one hundred and twenty miles from its mouth. From Rome a canal of 1 1/2 mile in length, over lands which do not rise more than nine feet above the bed of the river, will connect it with the waters of Lake Ontario, down which the canal may be continued (about sixty miles) to the Lake. The highest elevation of this canal at Rome, would be less than 400 feet above the tide waters of the Hudson, and less than 900 above the surface of Lake Ontario. The whole expence of this canal, from the Hudson to the Lake, is estimated by the Secretary of the Treasury, in his very able report to the Senate, of April 1808, on the subject of roads and canals, at 2,300,000 dollars; and I will take the liberty to recommend to the members of this House the perusal of that report, as containing a fund of the most useful geographical and other information, which, on every subject of political economy, that gentleman is so eminently qualified to impart. From the place where this canal would connect with Lake Ontario, there is a ship navigation of 2 hundred miles to the falls of Niagara. A canal, with locks sufficiently large for the vessels which navigate the Lakes, might be opened around these falls, at an expence, estimated by the Secretary of the Treasury at 1,000,000 of dollars. From the Niagara river, there is again a ship navigation to every part of Lake Erie. It is presumed that a canal might be opened from Lake Erie to the Ohio, for the sum of 500,000 dollars, and another canal cut around the falls of the Ohio for the like sum of 500,000 dollars; & from the falls of the Ohio there is a good navigation of near two thousand miles to the gulph of Mexico. And thus, sir, for the sum of 4,200,000 dollars, a great circumnavigation might be formed, embracing the principal part of the United States and their territories; and connecting in its course, by navigable waters, the whole of the western & Atlantic countries. This canal would open to the navigation of the Atlantic, on the lakes above (inclusive of Lake Superior, the navigation to which is now obstructed by a short rapid in the river St. Mary's, which connects it with Lake Huron; but which obstruction might be removed by an expence of 30 or 40 thousand dollars)—I say, sir, it would open to the navigation of the Atlantic on the lakes above, a coast of between 5 and 6000 miles of as fine and fertile country as any in the world. And it would open on the Mississippi and its various waters, a country not less fertile and still more extensive. How many hundred millions of dollars such an operation would add to the solid wealth of the western country, I will not venture to conjecture: But, sir, I may well say, there is no work in the power of man, which would give such life, such vigor, such enterprise and such riches to the citizens of that country, as the execution of this canal. The inhabitants near the lakes would have a direct communication to and from New-York, by means of the canal, and the effect of it would be to double the price of their produce, and to add three or four hundred per cent. to the value of their lands. The people of the Ohio and Mississippi would descend with their produce to New-Orleans and to any port on the Atlantic, whence they might return with the articles received in exchange, by way of Hudson & the lakes, to their own homes. The idea of benefiting the people of the Ohio and Mississippi to any great extent by this Northern navigation may perhaps, at first, appear visionary; but I can state it as a fact, that even at this time, under all the disadvantages of that route, goods may be transported from the city of New-York, by the way of the Hudson and the lakes to any part of the Ohio, and to all those parts of the Mississippi above its confluence with the Ohio, at as cheap a rate as they can be transported from any port on the Atlantic, by any other route. The effect of opening this navigation would then be to reduce the price of transportation to those parts of the country at least fifty and probably seventy-five per cent. Another important advantage independent of the general commerce of the lakes would be felt in the reduction of at least fifty per cent. in the price of