

VERMONT—CANADIAN FRONTIER.

MEMORIAL

OF

INHABITANTS OF ST. ALBAN'S, VERMONT,

*Upon the subject of the Attack on the Steamer Caroline, the Neutrality Law, and the Disturbances on the Canadian Frontier.*

FEBRUARY 19, 1839.

Referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

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

Your memorialists, citizens of the county of Franklin, State of Vermont, would respectfully represent: That, in the opinion of your memorialists, the act passed at your last session, commonly called the "neutrality law," is unjust and dangerous to the rights and liberties of the citizens of the United States, and uncalled for by the character of the times and the position of the country; that, thereby, the natural and constitutional rights of the people to keep and bear arms, to remove at pleasure with their effects, to be exempt from unreasonable search and seizures in their persons and property, and from the terror of excessive bail, are all infringed, and only allowed at the discretion of executive and judicial officers; and, as if it were apprehended that these unprecedented encroachments upon the rights of the people might excite distrust and alarm, the Executive is invested with the extraordinary power of employing the whole military and naval forces of the Union to awe the citizens into submission, or, in the mild words of the act, to *prevent* its violation. These provisions of the act your memorialists deem repugnant to the spirit and letter of all American institutions, incompatible with freedom, and in direct violation of the rights of the people, solemnly declared and guarantied by the constitution of the United States.

In the execution of this law, your memorialists have witnessed, with deep regret, the officers of the United States army moving, with hysterical agitation, from one part of the Union to another, and tarnishing their profession by searching the houses and seizing the property of the citizens, and acting in the double capacity of a supervisory police over the citizens, and of informers to a foreign Power—watching the acts and sayings of the former, and communicating the information thus derived to the officers of the British Government; and, under color of neutrality, have afforded aid

and assistance to one belligerent, and have restrained the citizens from all commerce with the other. Large sums of money have already been appropriated to this extraordinary defence of the frontier; and it is understood that a special appropriation has been asked for *secret-service moneys*, to render this military police complete.

Your memorialists are aware that the declared object of this law was to enable the country to fulfil the obligations of its treaties; but they would respectfully suggest that the laws of this country made to fulfil its treaty obligations prior to the passage of this act had been substantially the same for more than forty years—an eventful period in the history of the old and new world—and no reasonable complaints have ever been made that the citizens of this country were not sufficiently restrained from interfering with foreign states. And your memorialists are unacquainted with any obligations that the United States are under, by treaty or otherwise, to Great Britain or any other Power, that require the sacrifice of the rights of our citizens, whenever the exercise of those rights may come in conflict with the views of a foreign Government.

And your memorialists would further represent, that this law is partial, and unjust to the citizens, in restraining the commerce of those conterminous to foreign states, and leaving those residing in other portions of the country in the enjoyment of higher privileges; thereby creating odious distinctions, calculated to foster animosity and division among the people. If the law were required by the nature of the foreign relations of the country, it is not perceived by your memorialists why it should not have been general in its operation, and have provided for the safety of the dominions of Spain and other foreign Powers, as well as for the preservation of the provinces of Great Britain alone.

Your memorialists will not disguise that they have an anxious solicitude for the growth and triumph of republican principles on this continent, and especially in Canada, and a deep abhorrence of the bloody military power that now struggles for supremacy in that province; and they earnestly hope and trust that, if any portion of this continent is doomed to be the seat of military despotism, it may never be recorded that it was established with the assent of the American people, and by aid from the acts of their representatives in Congress assembled. Therefore, your memorialists respectfully request the repeal of the neutrality law.

And your memorialists further represent, that the daring and barbarous outrage committed last winter upon American ground at Schlosser, the destruction of the steamboat *Caroline*, and the murder of unarmed and unoffending American citizens by the authority of the British Government, remain unatoned for and unavenged; and while American citizens are arrested and imprisoned by the officers of their own Government for every effort made to assist the suffering Canadians; and while they are fired upon by American officers and soldiers, the authors of the gross outrage upon American soil, upon the property and lives of our citizens, not only go unpunished, but are approved and rewarded by honors and promotion by the English Government.

In view of these facts, we respectfully ask that the dignity, honor, and independence of our country may be maintained, and that such satisfaction as the circumstances require shall be exacted from the British Government.