

APPLICATION OF MISSOURI FOR A CHANGE IN THE SYSTEM OF
DISPOSING OF THE PUBLIC LANDS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE JANUARY 26, 1829.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:

The memorial of the general assembly of the State of Missouri respectfully showeth: That **the system of disposing of the public lands of the United States now pursued is highly injurious, in many respects, to the States in which those lands lie**, and to none, perhaps, more so than the State of Missouri. This general assembly does not deem it necessary to inquire whether the present plan, when first adopted, and for many years thereafter, until the best lands were disposed of, might not have been harmless in its operation; but, under existing circumstances, and the condition of this country and the neighboring countries beyond the limits of the United States, **a policy more injurious both to the United States and the States in which the public lands lie could not, as your memorialists confidently believe, be pursued**. This general assembly will not set forth and reiterate the several **objections** to the present system which have **heretofore been urged** to the consideration of Congress, and which **have not been answered satisfactorily** to those acquainted with **the present condition of the western States**. But the general assembly will state that **a perseverance in the present system manifestly appears to them to be equivalent to the declaration on the part of Congress that it will not sell or dispose of nine-tenths of the public lands in this State**; and this general assembly cannot refrain from declaring that it views such refusal as **an infringement of the compact between the United States and this State**; and that **the State of Missouri never could have been brought to consent not to tax the lands of the United States whilst unsold; and not to tax the lands sold until five years thereafter, if it had been understood by the contracting parties that a system was to be pursued which would prevent nine-tenths of those lands from ever becoming the property of persons in whose hands they might be taxed**. The State of Missouri views, with deep concern, a policy pursued by the general government in the disposal of the public lands. In demanding now for refuse lands, the largest part of which are not worth ten cents per acre, the full price of one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, is, to all practical purposes, raising the prices of the public lands; and that **it has the obvious effect of preventing the population of the new States** cannot be denied. The **general government has absolutely reserved from sale upwards of seven hundred acres of land, under a supposition that it contained lead ore**. It has **reserved from sale all the salt springs** belonging to the government, **and the lands contiguous thereto**; and it has, through the Executive, **refused to sell large districts of country supposed to contain iron ore, except in alternate sections**, thereby, in effect, **refusing the necessary quantity of those lands upon which to erect iron works**. The price of lands, when we take into consideration the quality of those lands, and that

they are the refuse of many years' sales, is not only raised, but is raised to a price, in most instances, ten times above their value. The prices are not only raised far above their value, but hundreds of thousands of acres, containing **much of the natural wealth and resources of the State, are altogether reserved from sale.** The population of the State is not only prevented, but hundreds of our citizens have left it to seek lands in the Mexican States; and not one-third part of our citizens, where nineteen-twentieths of the domain are unappropriated, are possessed of lands, and the frontier of our infant State much exposed to the depredations of the restless hordes of predatory savages collected thereon by **the same government that refuses us the means of strengthening our frontier,** by requiring a price for the wild lands far above their value, thereby forcing numbers of our citizens, with their families and effects, to remove to countries beyond the limits of the United States, there to seek lands on terms more reasonable and advantageous than are offered by our government. This general assembly are convinced that **the true interests of the United States, as well as the interests of the new States, require a radical change in the system of disposing of the public land—to sell as rapidly as possible the wild lands, and apply the proceeds of those sales to the extinguishment of the public debt,** the interest of which has consumed, and still consumes, so large a portion of the revenue—to give a home to millions of citizens, and attach them to the soil and institutions of the country—to **increase the wealth and strength of the United States, and consequently the ability to bear the burdens of government in times of war or other public calamity—to augment the revenue of the United States,** by increasing the consumption of foreign goods on which duties are paid, and **the increase of the revenue of the States in which the public lands lie, are blessings and advantages which must arise from a change in the system of disposing of the public lands, and which are surely not to be treated lightly by a wise nation.** This general assembly believe that the great objects hereinbefore enumerated can best be attained, and the evils complained of can most readily be obviated, by graduating the prices of the public lands, by making donations of land to actual settlers, and **by ceding the refuse lands to the States in which they lie,** in the manner proposed by the bill at the last session of Congress, **for settlement and cultivation, and to advance the great interest of education and internal improvement.** This general assembly, therefore, do most earnestly recommend to the justice, wisdom, and liberality of Congress, the passage of a law to effect those great objects.

JOHN THORNTON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives
DANIEL DUNKLIN,
President of the Senate.

Approved December 23, 1828.

JOHN MILLER