

E. G. CHAMBERS ET AL.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 352.]

FEBRUARY 1, 1852.

Mr. GIDDINGS, from the Committee on Territories, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Territories, to whom was referred the memorial of E. G. Chambers and twenty others, praying that Congress would bestow upon them the means of surveying and locating a wagon-road from the Missouri river to the Pacific ocean, and also bestow lands along said road on which to commence settlements, report:

That the subject is one of great importance, demanding the immediate consideration of Congress. It is found, upon investigation, that sixty-five thousand emigrants, over two hundred thousand head of stock of various kinds, more than seven thousand wagons, and all the indispensable equipage necessary for such a vast multitude, have crossed the plains during the past season. It is also found that, notwithstanding all the toil and suffering of former emigrants, emigration is annually on the increase, and that women and children form a large portion of every train. Your committee represent that, as the genius of our country fosters such enterprise, and as the spirit of our institutions encourages it, so Congress should adopt measures to facilitate it.

It is supposed that more deaths occur annually on the route to California than on all the other routes within the United States put together. These are brought about by exposure—a great part of which is no doubt involuntary. The sick emigrant has no place to stop; when once started, to go he must, sick or well.

These facts show that we have a large amount of property, and a great number of lives, travelling over a route nearly two thousand miles in extent—a route so neglected, that water, which Heaven designed should be as free as air, is doled out for the exorbitant price of ten cents per pint. Can any one, who has not been in a similar situation, imagine what must be the emigrant's feelings when compelled to pay that price for a drink of water for his sick child or famishing wife?

But emigration is not the only cause which imperiously demands an improved route; a telegraphic communication with the Pacific, in consequence of not having it, is prevented.

A proposal was made some time since to put up a line of telegraph, if Congress would only furnish the means of protecting it. The demand for such a communication is a fixed fact, loudly calling for attention.

It is well known in some parts of the country that one of the wealthiest stage companies in the United States has, for some time past, contemplated putting a line of coaches on the route to California, if the proper facilities for such an enterprise could be obtained. The method proposed by the memorialists to accomplish this object seems to be simple and practical. They propose to have a survey made and a new road located, for the purpose of finding a more direct and feasible route than is now used. They next propose to take up four sections of land in all places along the route suitable for a settlement, provided they do not occur oftener than once in twenty miles. On these four sections they propose to begin each settlement by employing a suitable number of men to form a sufficient protection not only for themselves, but also for single families, who without this preliminary could not be induced to locate in a new settlement. They propose, further, that all lands situated within seven miles of each place of beginning shall be given to actual settlers on the same. This would multiply settlers, and numbers begetting competition, travellers would be exempted from extortion in the procuring of the necessaries which they require. "Then people of small means could travel upon their own conveyances, without other expense than the provisions consumed—the equipment of animals and vehicles being about worth their cost, either for use or disposal, after their arrival. Then people could communicate, could have intercourse, and could go and come without paying enough to an ocean line to set up a small farmer, or taking the chance of death from disease, starvation, and Indians on the exposed and neglected inland route."