

REPORT  
OF  
THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*December 2, 1850.*

SIR: The duties which have been devolved by law on the Department of the Interior are of the most varied and important character. As the name of the department would imply, they relate to most of the interests of the country which are of a domestic nature. They embrace not only a variety of subjects, but the duties to be performed are widely dissimilar, and partake in some degree of a legislative and judicial, as well as of an executive character.

To this department is intrusted the general supervision and management of all matters connected with the public domain, Indian affairs, pensions, patents, public buildings, the census, the penitentiary, and the expenditures of the judiciary.

It is the duty of the person in charge of it to see to the faithful administration of the laws relating to these several branches of the public service, and to prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to give full effect to the legislative will. And in addition to these functions of an executive and legislative character, he is required by law to act in a judicial capacity, and to decide all cases of appeal which may be brought before him for adjudication from any of the bureaus in his department. Many of these appeals, especially from the Pension, Land, and Indian offices, are of great importance in a pecuniary view, and involve the examination of voluminous records, and the investigation and decision of intricate questions of law and equity. The act of Congress which created the department was drawn up, probably by design, in very general terms. Many of its provisions are exceedingly vague, and there seems to have been no attempt to define with precision the boundaries of its jurisdiction, or the extent of its powers. In the outset this was probably the most judicious course, as experience is generally the best guide in the adjustment of such matters. But it would seem to be proper now that there should be more definite legislation, prescribing the duties and powers of the department, so that there may be no conflict with other departments, and little or nothing left to the mere discretion of the incumbent.

My predecessor, in his annual report, called your attention to the incongruity in the law in reference to the designation of the department. In the title of the act it is styled a "Home Department;" but the body of the law provides that it shall be called "The Department of the Interior." The late incumbent, under whose auspices the department was organized, felt himself bound by the mandatory terms of the law to adopt the latter designation in all his official acts; but it is obviously proper that Congress should, by supplemental legislation, remove the ambiguity and uncertainty on this subject.

My predecessor also recommended, for reasons very clearly and forcibly stated by him in his report, to which I respectfully refer, the creation of the office of Solicitor of the Department of the Interior, to be filled by a lawyer competent to investigate and decide many of the important questions of law and fact arising upon the numerous appeals which are taken from the bureaus. My brief experience in the administration of the department enables me to appreciate the wisdom of that recommendation, and to urge its speedy adoption by Congress. In all cases, however, the action of the solicitor should be subject to the revision of the head of the department, for nothing should be done to diminish in the slightest degree his official responsibility.

As the reports of the heads of the several bureaus will give full information in regard to their condition and wants respectively, and as I have not been long enough in office to make myself thoroughly acquainted with all the details of their organization and functions, I do not deem it either necessary or proper at this time to give more than a general review of their operations, with such explanations and suggestions as the public interests seem to require. As preliminary to this review, I respectfully submit, in tabular form, a summary of the estimates for each branch of the public service within the jurisdiction of this office.

In a distinct column, and opposite to each item, is a statement of the estimate for the present fiscal year for similar services.

This comparison seems to be proper, as it will exhibit to the representatives of the people, at a single glance, a view of the whole subject, and at the same time afford me the opportunity of presenting, by a succinct commentary on each item, such explanations as I desire to offer.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

*Estimates for the fiscal year ending 30th June, 1852, compared with those of the present fiscal year.*

	1852.	1851.
Department proper.....	\$28,250 00	\$72,347 68
Land service.....	836,152 50	679,034 21
Indian Affairs.....	2,441,472 66	1,018,439 17
Pension Office.....	2,624,726 31	1,479,256 78
Census.....		1,116,000 00
United States courts.....	592,747 00	557,537 00
Public buildings.....	481,275 00	456,975 00
Pauper lunatics.....	10,000 00	9,928 00
Agricultural statistics, &c.....	5,500 00	6,500 00
Penitentiary in the District of Columbia.	11,900 00	7,355 00
Mexican boundary survey.....	100,000 00	
	7,132,043 47	5,403,372 84

Excess over last estimates \$1,728,670 63.

The first fact which strikes the mind upon looking at this recapitulation is, that the estimate for the next fiscal year exceeds that for the present, \$1,728,670 63. Faithful guardians of the public treasury will naturally inquire, how does this happen? The question demands a candid answer, and I shall proceed to give one which I hope will be no less satisfactory than free from all attempt at concealment or disguise.

#### DEPARTMENT PROPER.

Under this head the estimate for the next year falls below that for the present, \$44,097 68. This results from the fact that there is no deficiency of a previous year to be provided for. Last year there was a deficiency of \$34,737 68 to be met. Now there are unexpended balances on hand, which, in addition to the sum estimated, will supply the wants of the department.

#### LAND SERVICE.

The estimates under this head exceed those of last year \$157,118 20. This is caused by the increased expense consequent on the passage of the act of 28th September, 1850, granting bounty land, by the contemplated extension of the land system over the newly acquired territory, and by the deficiencies in the estimates of the last fiscal year.

#### INDIAN AFFAIRS.

Here there is an excess over the estimates of last year of \$1,423,033 49. A reference to the report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs will show that whilst many of the items embraced in the former estimate have been reduced or omitted in the present, the aggregate of the present estimate has been increased by making provision for deficiencies, which was not done in the estimate of last year, and by embracing large sums necessary to carry into effect new treaty stipulations, and to extend our Indian relations into new territories, in pursuance of recent acts of Congress. Some idea may be formed of the magnitude of these latter items, when it is remembered that our Indian population has been almost doubled by our recent acquisitions of territory from Mexico.

#### PENSION OFFICE.

In this item there is also an apparent excess of startling magnitude. It exceeds the estimate of last year \$1,145,469 53. But a little examination will show that it is, to a great extent, merely apparent, and that, so far as it is real, it results from causes over which the executive officers could exercise no control, and which are entirely consistent with the true interests of the country.

These positions are susceptible of ready demonstration, as I will proceed in a few words to show. The estimate of last year fell short of the actual expenditures of the bureau, including the deficiencies of the preceding year, \$924,688 45. This deficiency was supplied by the appropriation of \$560,000 in the "deficiency bill" of last session of Congress,

and by \$364,688 45, which sum is embraced in the present estimate. Adding these sums to the estimate of last year, and the aggregate is \$2,403,945 23. Then deduct from the estimate of the next year \$364,688 45, which amount is asked for to supply the deficiency of the present year, and which is not properly chargeable to the next, and the true amount of the estimated expenditure of the Pension Bureau for the ensuing year is ascertained to be \$2,260,037 86, or \$143,907 37 less than the actual expenditure of the current year, including the deficiency of \$560,000 for 1850.

This mode of stating the account, however, although it exhibits a true comparison of the present estimates with the actual expenditures of the current year, does not present a fair view of the amounts legitimately chargeable to the Pension Bureau for the two years respectively, because it embraces among the expenditures of the year ending June 30, 1851, \$560,000, which was a deficiency in the year 1850. Discarding that sum from the calculation, the result is as follows:

Estimate for the year ending June 30, 1851	-	-	\$1,479,256 78
Add deficiency embraced in present estimate	-	-	364,688 45
			<hr/>
Aggregate chargeable to year ending June 30, 1851	-	-	1,843,945 23
			<hr/>
Estimate for year ending June 30, 1852	-	-	\$2,624,726 31
Deduct estimate for deficiency of year ending June 30, 1851	-	-	364,688 45
			<hr/>
Aggregate chargeable to year ending June 30, 1852	-	-	2,260,037 86
			<hr/>
Excess of present estimate over the expenditure of year ending June 30, 1851	-	-	416,092 63
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This excess embraces the anticipated increase of expenditure occasioned by the extension of the benefits of the pension laws, and the administration of the bounty land law, so far as it devolves on the Pension Office.

#### CENSUS.

In the last estimate, the amount submitted as the probable expense of this whole service was \$1,116. This sum having been appropriated for that object by the act of September 30, 1850, chapter 90, page 172, no further sum is deemed necessary now.

#### UNITED STATES COURTS.

The estimate for this service exceeds that of last year \$35,210, in consequence of the anticipated increase of business in the courts corresponding with the increase of the population and business of the country.

The estimates of the current year and the year preceding were found to be insufficient, and Congress was compelled at its last session to make a specific appropriation of \$50,000 to supply the deficiencies for this service during those years. Taking this sum into the account, the estimate for the coming year is \$14,790 less than the expenditure of the last.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS, PAUPER LUNATICS, AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS, AND  
THE PENITENTIARY.

In these several items there are no material variations between the present and past estimates, and it is not deemed necessary to enter into any detailed explanation of them, as the reports of the various officers charged with their management will supply satisfactory statements in regard to them.

The last item in the estimate for the ensuing year is—

MEXICAN BOUNDARY SURVEY.

The last estimates embraced nothing on this account, though appropriations were made by Congress during its last session for that object amounting to \$185,000. The sum which it is supposed will be necessary during the next fiscal year is \$100,000.

I have thus presented a brief statement of the wants of the department and a comparison between the present requisitions and the actual expenditures of the preceding year.

In making these estimates I have instructed the heads of bureaus to endeavor to cover the whole amount of the probable expenditure for the fiscal year. Any other course tends to entangle the expenditures of one year with those of another, and to throw the financial arrangements of the government into inextricable confusion. Nothing should be asked from Congress which the public interests do not require; but, when an appropriation is ascertained to be necessary, the demand should be fairly made and the responsibility of granting or withholding it left with the representatives of the people.

If my instructions have been complied with, as I have every reason to believe they have been, I hope there will be no necessity in future for estimating for deficiencies, unless some contingency should occur which could not have been readily foreseen.

Having submitted these general views, I will proceed to present in a condensed form a few remarks in regard to the operations of each bureau separately.

PENSION OFFICE.

The whole number of persons now on the pension rolls of the United States is 19,758; but many of these are probably dead.

The whole number who have drawn pensions during the first and second quarters of the present calendar year is 13,079.

Many, however, do not draw their pensions until the close of the year, and therefore the last statement does not show the whole number living. The number of deaths reported within the last year is 846.

*Revolutionary pensions*

The whole number of persons pensioned under the act of March 18, 1818, is 20,485; of these there now remain on the rolls but 1,523.

Under the act of May 15, 1828, there were added to the list of revolutionary pensioners 1,152 ; of these there now remain but 162.

Under the act of June 17, 1832, there were added to the rolls of revolutionary pensioners 32,758. At this time there remain of these on the rolls 5,247 ; and of this last number there were but 2,408 who have applied for their pensions during the first half of the present calendar year.

*Widows of revolutionary soldiers and others.*

Under the act of July 4, 1836, pensioning certain widows and orphans therein described, the number who have been pensioned is 4,984 ; of these there remain on the rolls but 1,118.

Under the act of 7th July, 1838, giving pensions to the widows of revolutionary officers and soldiers who were married prior to 1794, the number of persons who have been pensioned is 11,002.

During the first two quarters of the year, payment has been made under the law to 201.

The act of 1838 was limited originally to five years, but was extended for one year by act of 3d March, 1843. On the 17th June, 1844, it was extended for four years longer; and finally, on the 2d February, 1848, the benefits of the law were continued during widowhood. There are now on the rolls under the last mentioned act 4,876.

On the 29th April, 1848, pensions were given from the 4th March, 1848, during widowhood, to widows of officers, soldiers, seamen, and marines who were married prior to January, 1800. Under this law the number pensioned is 686.

It will thus be seen that the beneficiaries under the laws designed to provide for the soldiers of the Revolution, and the widows of those who were dead, are rapidly passing away. But, on the other hand, the number of pensioners under the acts for the relief of invalids and the widows of those who died in the service of the United States has been considerably augmented during the past year, in consequence of the war with Mexico. The number of invalid pensioners is now 4,742, being an increase during the year of 627.

*Widows of soldiers engaged in the Mexican war.*

Under the act of 21st July, 1848, and the supplementary act of 22d February, 1849, and the joint resolution of 28th September, 1850, allowing pensions to the widows and orphans of soldiers who were killed in the Mexican war, or died from disease contracted in the service, the number pensioned is 1,456.

*Amount expended.*

The whole amount expended for pensions during the past year is estimated by the Commissioner at \$1,400,000.

There has been paid since the 1st November, 1849, on account of revolutionary service of Virginia State troops and navy, \$88,060 30; and as commutation or half-pay and interest, \$138,543 44.

*Land warrants, revolutionary service.*

The whole number of land warrants issued to commissioned officers of the continental army is 2,826; to non-commissioned officers and privates 9,762. Land is still due to 111 officers, and to 1,993 non-commissioned officers and privates.

*War of 1812.*

Whole number of warrants issued to persons entitled, under various acts of Congress, for services in war of 1812, is 28,978.

*Mexican war.*

The number of claims presented for services in the Mexican war is	-	-	-	-	-	-	81,373
And for scrip or money in lieu of land	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,332
Making an aggregate of	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>84,705</u>

*The general bounty-land law of September 28, 1850.*

The number of claims already presented under this comprehensive law, up to the 5th November, 1850, was 9,418; and the number is increasing rapidly, scarcely a mail arriving which does not swell the list. The whole number of persons who, if living, would be entitled to the benefits of that law, would exceed half a million. The Commissioner supposes, from the best data within his reach, that one-half are dead, leaving no person entitled to claim under them. If this estimate be correct, (and I imagine it will be found to approximate accuracy,) the whole number of claimants will be about *two hundred and fifty thousand*.

It will thus be seen that the act of September 28, 1850, is by far the most important bounty-land law that has ever been passed, whether we consider the number of beneficiaries under its provisions or the extent of the domain granted. Deeply impressed with the responsibility incident to the administration of a trust of such magnitude, I have sought to make the necessary arrangements to insure its prompt and efficient execution. Forms have been prepared, with ample instructions to guide applicants in presenting their claims, and assurances given that every proper facility will be afforded for the establishment of just demands under the law.

Plates have been ordered to be engraved for printing the warrants, and every precaution has been adopted to guard against fraud and forgery. These plates will soon be completed, and there need then be no delay in commencing the issue of warrants. I regret to say, however, that the law contains no provision for the employment and compensation of the clerical force necessary for its own execution. Under the terms of the law, as I have been constrained to construe them, the warrants are not assignable. The holders of them cannot, therefore, make them available until they have been located and patented. This process will necessarily require a considerable time, and it is therefore peculiarly proper, in order to insure the enjoyment of the bounty by those for whom it was intended,

that no unnecessary delay should be encountered. To avoid this evil, the Commissioner recommends that provision be made for the employment of two efficient clerks, with a salary of \$1,700 each, competent to investigate the claims of applicants. This recommendation (except in regard to the amount of salary, which is unnecessarily large) meets my cordial approval; and the only doubt I have is, whether two will be sufficient. To guard against all contingencies, I would respectfully urge the propriety of authorizing this department, in the event that two clerks should prove insufficient to keep pace with the business, to employ one or more in addition, and such temporary assistants as may be required from time to time. Unless the department has the means of adjudicating the claims as fast as they are presented, and of issuing the warrants when they are allowed, dissatisfaction and suspicions of favoritism will inevitably arise.

Should Congress concur in these views of the subject, I shall esteem it no less a privilege than a duty to see that their beneficent policy is carried out with all practicable despatch and economy.

PUBLIC LANDS.

The report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office exhibits some very interesting facts.

The surveys of the public lands have been pressed forward with commendable activity, and having been completed in several States, the archives connected with them have been delivered to the State authorities, as required by law. The sales of public lands in the year 1849 amount to

	1,329,902.77 acres.	
Area located in that year in satisfaction of Mexican		
war bounty land warrants	3,405,520.00	
State selections, under the act of 4th September, 1841	259,806.60	"
Improvements of rivers, &c.	135,246.21	"
Choctaw certificates -	53,935.33	"
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Total acres thus disposed of -	5,184,410.91	"
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During the three quarters of 1850 there have been		
sold	869,082.32	"
Located by Mexican bounty-land warrants during		
the first and second and part of the third quarters	1,520,120.00	"
State selections under the act of 1841	379,805.58	"
Choctaw certificates -	46,360.52	"
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Aggregate thus disposed of in the first, second, and		
part of the third quarters of 1850 -	2,815,366.42	"
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It is shown by the Commissioner's report that the public lands have been a rich source of revenue to the government, averaging about one and a quarter million of dollars per annum for the last fifty years, over and above all costs and expenses. It is gratifying to find that the business of the Land Office is actively progressing. The accounts of all the receivers of public moneys have been adjusted to the 30th September last. A speedy consummation is anticipated of State selections, under the grant of the 4th September, 1841, and for various internal improve-



ments under other laws. Measures have been adopted to give effect to the munificent donation of "swamp lands" to certain States of the Union, by the act of Congress of the 28th September, 1850.

The Commissioner recommends an extension of the act of 3d August, 1846, in order to remove suspensions which arise and accumulate in the administration of that office under general laws.

He also suggests a slight modification of the pre-emption provisions of the act of 4th September, 1841, and the delegation of authority to the General Land Office to sell abandoned military sites, or such tracts as had been appropriated to public uses and afterwards relinquished. These recommendations, if carried out by early legislation, will be productive of beneficial results.

Amongst the first and most prominent subjects claiming the attention of Congress is the necessity of making provision by law for a speedy and complete extension of the land machinery over our possessions on the Pacific.

At present there is no mode by which a good title can be obtained to any part of the public domain in that great extent of territory.

Nothing contributes more to retard the improvement of a country than uncertainty in relation to the title to its soil. Great inconvenience has already been experienced from this cause in California. Grants are alleged to have been made for large tracts of land in that State by authority of the Spanish or Mexican governments. Many of these are of very questionable validity; but, until they shall have been examined and settled by a tribunal of competent jurisdiction, they will continue to throw a cloud over the title to valuable bodies of land, and seriously affect the settlement and prosperity of the country. To remedy this evil, it would seem to be proper to make provision by law for the appointment of a commission to investigate all claims of this character, with a view to their final adjudication. But the extent of the powers with which it should be invested is a subject worthy of the serious consideration of Congress. The Commissioner of the General Land Office has discussed the question fully, and his report contains much valuable information in regard to it.

#### *Mineral lands.*

The proper disposal of these lands is a subject of much intrinsic difficulty, and one on which a great diversity of opinion exists among judicious men. Three different modes of disposing of them have been suggested, each of which has some advantages, and all of which are liable to serious objections. The report from the Department of the Interior which accompanied the last annual message of the President to Congress recommended that the mineral lands should be divided by actual survey into small parcels, and leased out for terms of years, reserving to the government, by way of rent, a percentage on the products. Many persons, whose opinions are entitled to respect, have urged the grant of licenses to individuals, at fixed prices, to mine within particular districts, with or without machinery, as the license may prescribe. Others, of equal judgment and experience, insist that the only way to avoid difficulty, and make the mineral lands available, is to lay them off into small tracts, and sell them out at auction. The arguments in favor of leasing them are certainly entitled to great respect. But a careful examination of the sub-

ject, and a reference to our own experience of the operation of that system in regard to the mineral lands in other parts of the Union, have induced me to doubt whether the evils inseparable from it would not more than counterbalance its advantages. It would create a system of fiefs which would soon become odious to the people. The relation of landlord and tenant being established between the government and the occupants of the mines, the jealousy and irritation which that relation too often engenders would soon arise. The lessees would regard the government as an exacting and oppressive landlord, and a strong feeling opposed to the payment of rents would spring up.

The officers intrusted with the supervision of the mines and the collection of the public dues would become objects of hatred and distrust, and the miners, instead of looking to the government as their guardian and protector from wrong, would be driven by the force of circumstances into an attitude of hostility to it as the source of all the evils which oppressed them. Attempts to enforce the payment of rents by legal process would prove abortive, because the whole community would have an interest adverse to their collection. Collisions between the tenants and the officers of the law would ensue, the feelings of the people would be alienated, and the whole country involved in turmoil and confusion.

No considerations of a mere pecuniary character should induce the government to adopt a policy which would tend to consequences like these.

The system of licenses is obnoxious to similar objections, varying only in degree. I am therefore of the opinion that the mineral lands should be divided into small tracts, and sold in fee-simple to the highest bidder at public auction. The extent of the lots should depend on the apparent richness of the mines; but they should be small enough to afford persons in moderate circumstances an opportunity of becoming bidders, and thus enlarge the field of competition as far as possible.

If these lands are leased, it will be necessary for the government to maintain a large number of officers in California at high salaries, whose responsibility must, from the circumstances of the case, be almost nominal. But by selling the lands, all connexion between the miners and the government will be severed, permanent interests will be acquired in the country, and a new stimulus given to the enterprise of our citizens.

#### INDIAN AFFAIRS.

Our relations with the Indian tribes will demand the prompt and earnest attention of Congress. The annexation of Texas and the recent treaty with Mexico have, it is estimated, added about one hundred and twenty-four thousand persons to our Indian population. Many of the tribes thus brought under our control are fierce in their disposition and predatory in their habits, and, it is feared, can only be restrained from committing great outrages on the persons and property of the inhabitants of neighboring territory by the military power of the country. No provision having been made by law until the close of the last session of Congress for the appointment of agents to take charge of the numerous tribes in California and New Mexico, the government had no means of obtaining much satisfactory information respecting their condition and wants. It is hoped, however, this defect will be supplied by the agents and commissioners

who have been recently appointed, and who are now on their way to the scene of their labors.

Shortly before the close of the last session, and immediately after the passage of the act authorizing the appointment of Indian agents for California, nominations were made to and confirmed by the Senate of three persons well qualified for the discharge of their respective duties. Instructions were prepared by the department; and when the agents were ready to set out on their journey, it was discovered that by some oversight no appropriation had been made to pay their salaries. Their movements were therefore arrested for the time; but, as it was deemed important that all unnecessary delay should be avoided, and as provision had been made for the appointment and payment of three commissioners to negotiate treaties with the Indians of California, it was concluded to appoint the same persons commissioners who had been nominated and confirmed as agents. By adopting this course, the commissioners were enabled to proceed without delay to the Indian territory, where they will acquire such knowledge of the habits and character of the Indians as will qualify them to enter efficiently on the discharge of their duty as agents as soon as the appropriation shall be made for their salaries: when that is done, their functions as commissioners will cease.

A resident superintendent and three general agents have been appointed for the Indian tribes of Oregon.

Two special agents have been commissioned, under the act of September, 1850, to co-operate with the resident agent in Texas in conciliating the Indians of that State.

Under the authority of the same act, three commissioners have been appointed to accompany the joint commission now engaged in running and marking the boundary line between the United States and Mexico, for the purpose of obtaining full and correct information in regard to the Indian tribes who are scattered along our southwestern frontier, and, if possible, to establish friendly relations with them.

It is greatly to be regretted that no authority was conferred by law for the appointment of resident agents in New Mexico, where they are more necessary than in any other part of the territory of the United States. The Indians of that country, comprising the Camanches, Navajoes, Utahs, Apaches, and Jicarillas, are the most savage and lawless within our boundaries. For many years they have been in the habit of making hostile incursions into the neighboring provinces of Mexico, and ravaging whole neighborhoods—murdering the men and carrying the women and children into captivity. By our recent treaty with Mexico, the government of the United States has bound itself to repress these outrages by Indians resident within our borders. It is essential, therefore, for the fulfilment of our treaty stipulations with our sister republic, as well as for the protection of our own citizens, that agents should be sent among those tribes who can exercise a restraining influence over them. The necessity for this measure has been painfully illustrated by the outrages which have been committed upon our citizens travelling to and from Santa Fe. The attack upon Mr. White and his party, within a few days' journey of that place, has obtained a melancholy notoriety. He and his whole party were brutally murdered, with the exception of his estimable wife and a daughter under ten years of age, who were made captives. Subsequently, being pressed by a body of men who were in

pursuit of them, the Indians murdered Mrs. White, but still retain the daughter in horrible captivity. At the last session, Congress appropriated \$1,500 to be used in procuring her release. This sum was promptly placed at the disposal of Colonel Calhoun, the nearest resident agent, whose judgment and knowledge of the Indian character fit him in a peculiar manner to discharge the duty, with full power to use it in such manner as he might think best. He has also been instructed to convey information to the Indians, that unless this child be delivered up they will receive the chastisement by the military power of the government which their savage cruelty so richly deserves.

#### HIGHWAY TO THE PACIFIC.

Considerations of great national interest seem to require that the means of intercourse with our possessions on the Pacific coast should be improved by the construction of a great thoroughfare, entirely within our own territory, from the valley of the Mississippi to the Pacific. Whether this can be best accomplished by a railway, a turnpike, or a plank road, or by a combination of the different modes of improvement, can only be determined after a careful survey of the country and its resources shall have been made. Our only access to them now is by a toilsome journey of months' duration through comparatively trackless wastes, or by a circuitous voyage, attended with many privations and dangers. A highway, commencing at some point in the valley of the Mississippi and terminating on the coast of the Pacific, with lateral branches, would not only furnish the means of convenient intercommunication, but would lead to the establishment of a chain of settlements along its line which would link together the widely separated portions of our country by an inseparable bond of union. The gigantic character of the work, however, admonishes us of the necessity of adopting every precaution in ascertaining the best means of effecting the object. With that view, care should be taken to obtain full and accurate information as to the shortest and best route, having due reference not only to distance between the termini, but also to the soil, climate, and adaptation to agricultural purposes of the intermediate country. If the report should be favorable, it would then be for the wisdom of Congress to determine how far the probable augmentation of the value of the public land, the increased facilities in the transportation of the mail, and the other advantages already referred to, which may be reasonably anticipated from the completion of the work, may justify liberal contributions of land or money towards its construction.

I therefore beg leave most respectfully to call your attention to the subject, and to suggest the propriety of authorizing an immediate examination of the country, and such surveys as may be necessary to determine the practicability and probable cost of the work.

#### AGRICULTURAL BUREAU.

In surveying the various interests of the country, no one can fail to observe how little has been done by government to promote the cause of agriculture. It is true, the cultivator of the soil, in common with all other classes of society, enjoys the protection of the laws, and the blessings incident to good government. But something more seems to be due

to a branch of industry which employs more than half our population, and, to a great extent, sustains the other.

The power of the general government over this subject is limited; but this furnishes no good reason why it should not be exercised so far as it does legitimately extend. The ordinary means adopted to afford protection to the manufacturing and commercial interests are comparatively inoperative in regard to the agricultural. A tariff can do but little, directly, to benefit the farmer or the planter. The staple productions of the south are peculiar to that climate, and therefore are in no danger of competition from abroad. Those of the north and west, in consequence of the fertility of the soil, and the low prices at which land can be bought, are produced at less cost there than in other countries, and consequently, except under extraordinary contingencies, need no protection by imposts on the breadstuffs of foreign nations.

But still much may be done by government, at a small cost, to promote the interests of agriculture. The science is yet in its infancy, and great minds are now directed to the study and development of its true principles. Experiments are in progress to ascertain the qualities of different soils, the comparative nutritive properties of different animal and vegetable productions, and the utility and efficiency of various manures in fertilizing and renovating the exhausted lands of the old States. Encouragement may be afforded to enterprises like these, and facilities furnished for the collection of seeds, plants, and vegetables, from all parts of the earth, and their distribution throughout the country. Premiums may be offered for the best practical treatises on the different branches of husbandry, which can be published and sent abroad among the people. By means like these a spirit of philosophic inquiry may be stimulated, and a great impulse given to the interests of agriculture. Much has already been done in this respect through the agency of the Patent Office, but the subject is too important to be left in this dependent condition.

The last annual report from the department recommends the establishment of an Agricultural Bureau, to afford to this great branch of American industry the encouragement which it so well deserves. This is no novel suggestion. It had the sanction of Washington; who, in his last annual message, referring to the propriety of creating an agricultural board, said, "This species of establishment contributes doubly to the increase of improvement, by stimulating to enterprise and experiment, and by drawing to a common centre the results everywhere of individual skill and observation, and spreading them thence over the whole nation. Experience accordingly has shown that they are very cheap instruments of immense national benefit." I therefore renew the recommendation of my predecessor for the establishment of a separate bureau, to be intrusted with the duty of promoting the agricultural interests of the country.

The vast extent and rapid development of the mineral resources of the country seem to require that adequate provision should also be made by law for the collection and analysis of the various mineral substances which have been or may be discovered, so that their properties may be understood and their value correctly appreciated. The purchase of a farm in the vicinity of the national metropolis, to be tilled and managed under the direction of the bureau, has been suggested as an important auxiliary in illustrating the best modes of culture. If this idea should be favorably received, I would respectfully add that Mount Vernon, whose soil was

once tilled by the hands and is now consecrated by the dust of the Father of his Country, should properly belong to the nation, and might, with great propriety, become, under its auspices, a model farm, to illustrate the progress of that pursuit to which he was so much devoted.

#### CENSUS.

Shortly after the passage of the act of 23d May, 1850, for taking the seventh census, and for other purposes, a superintendent was appointed, and the other measures deemed necessary to secure the prompt and faithful performance of that duty adopted.

The returns, which are now coming in daily from all parts of the Union, give gratifying assurances that the census will be completed within the time limited by law, and in a manner highly creditable to all who have been engaged in it.

In some few instances delays may occur, in consequence of casualties which could not have been avoided; and, in one or two of the most remote territories, in the receipt of the schedules.

The amount of valuable statistical information collected and embodied in these returns will far exceed anything of the kind known in our past history, and it is therefore important that provision should be made, at an early day, for printing such abstracts as may be deemed of practical utility, in a style and form worthy of the subject and the country.

The report of the superintendent will show that additional legislation may be necessary to do full justice to the marshals of some of the more remote and sparsely populated sections of the country.

#### MEXICAN BOUNDARY SURVEY.

My predecessor reported to the President on the 18th of May last, in answer to a call from the Senate for information relative to the progress of this survey, that the initial point on the Pacific and the point of junction of the Gila with the Colorado river had been determined and fixed; that the intervening line of boundary had been run and marked, and temporary monuments erected thereon for a distance of about thirty miles; and that the operations of the joint commission had been suspended about the first of February last by an adjournment to the first Monday in November ultimo.

The temporary monuments alluded to are now being replaced by permanent ones; and the joint commission (that on the part of the United States having been reorganized prior to my taking charge of the department) have doubtless assembled at El Paso, according to the terms of their adjournment, for the purpose of running and marking the line thence westward to the river Gila.

It is the determination of the department that this work shall be pressed forward to completion with the utmost despatch, so that, if possible, the expectations of Congress, as indicated in the appropriation act of 15th May last, may be realized.

#### PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

My predecessor, in his report which accompanied the annual message of the late President to Congress, took occasion to invite attention to the

condition of the public buildings, and to show the tendency of the Capitol, the Patent Office, and the Treasury building, to dilapidation from the perishable nature of the material of which they are constructed. Personal observation has satisfied me that his fears on that subject are well founded. Experience has demonstrated that the sandstone of which they are built, when left unprotected from the action of the atmosphere, rapidly disintegrates. The only temporary preventive which has yet been discovered and applied is a strong coating of paint, which, by closing the pores of the stone, prevents the absorption of water. This expedient has been found to be attended with partial success in the preservation of the Capitol and President's house. I would respectfully recommend, therefore, that an appropriation be made of an amount sufficient to defray the cost of coating the Treasury building thoroughly with paint; but, at the same time, it should be left discretionary to adopt any improved method of effecting the same end.

In regard to the Patent Office, as the wings are to be of white marble, and the ends are now protected by being joined to the wings, leaving only the front and rear exposed to decay, and as not merely disintegration but actual dilapidation has already commenced, I would recommend that the entire exterior facing of the front be removed, and its place supplied by a veneering of white marble of the same quality as that used in the construction of the wings. The whole building would then present a uniform appearance, and be rendered comparatively indestructible by atmospheric agency. Practical workmen have expressed the opinion that it can be done at a small cost when compared with its beneficial results, and without in any degree endangering the security and stability of the walls; but, should any doubt be entertained on the subject, scientific engineers might be consulted, and means taken to ascertain the actual cost, in time for legislative action before the close of the approaching session of Congress. If the result should be favorable, it would then be time to inquire how far the same system should be pursued in reference to the Treasury building. The extent of the colonnade in front of that building, however, gives reason to doubt whether the same system can be readily adopted in regard to it. The only expedient that is left, therefore, for the preservation of that massive structure, is by a coating of paint. In this connexion, I beg leave to urge the propriety of completing with as little delay as practicable both wings of the Patent Office. Until this be done, the large sums already expended will be of no practical use, and the edifice will present a mutilated appearance. But there are other considerations of the most urgent character which call for their completion. At present the various officers attached to the Department of the Interior are scattered through six different buildings widely separated from each other, four of which are owned by private individuals.

Three of these are not only unsuited in their interior arrangements for the purposes for which they are used, but are of combustible materials and contiguous to private dwellings. The officers are, therefore, subjected to great inconvenience in communicating with the head of the department, and the public archives are in constant danger from fire. The rent now paid for rooms affording this imperfect and insecure accommodation exceeds \$8,000 per annum. But the rooms in the War Department occupied by the Indian Bureau are needed for the purposes of that department, and those in the Treasury building occupied by the General

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Land Office are required by the Secretary of the Treasury, and notice to that effect has been given to this department.

If additional rooms are rented to be used instead of those vacated in the War and Treasury buildings, the amount of the annual rent to be paid will be more than doubled, and the most valuable archives of the government, comprising the muniments of title to many millions of acres of what was once the public domain, will be placed in a condition of great insecurity.

I therefore recommend that the two wings of the Patent Office be finished, and that they be appropriated to the accommodation of the Department of the Interior, and the different offices thereto attached. They will thus be brought under one roof, the communication between the head of the department and the different bureaus will be greatly facilitated, and the records of the government safely lodged in a fire-proof building. These are advantages which will be cheaply bought by the expenditure of the sum necessary to complete those wings.

#### INTRODUCTION OF WATER INTO THE CITY.

The vast enlargements of our territorial limits, and the rapid growth of the country in wealth and population, have been attended with a corresponding increase of the public business, and of the number of persons employed to perform it. A large proportion of the population of the city of Washington is directly or indirectly connected with the affairs of government. The representatives of the people and the States from all sections of the Union annually assemble here to perform their high functions, and are detained during the greater part of each alternate year. Many of them come from salubrious regions, where the diseases incident to more southern climates are unknown. It would seem, then, to be a duty of the government, of the most imperative character, to adopt all necessary precautions to guard against everything which tends to endanger the health of these servants of the people and their families. To accomplish this purpose, and at the same time to contribute to the comfort of the whole population, and to afford an effectual safeguard to all the public offices against fire, I respectfully recommend the introduction into the national metropolis of a copious supply of pure water; to be thrown, in the first place, into a reservoir on some elevated point in its vicinity, and thence distributed through the public buildings and densely populated parts of the city.

The improvement of the public grounds by enclosing and planting them with trees and shrubbery, and providing promenades and fountains, is a subject of kindred character, tending to the same results, and only second in importance to the supply of water; I therefore commend it also to your favorable consideration.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ALEX. H. H. STUART,

*Secretary.*

To the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.