

SENATE.....No. 18.

To the President of the Senate, and

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The undersigned, a Committee appointed on the petition of Peleg Slocum and others, praying for a division of the town of Dartmouth, in the County of Bristol, to visit that town, and to report to the Legislature the result of an investigation into the facts necessary to be ascertained, in order to determine whether the prayer of said petition ought to be granted, *now Report*, that having met the parties agreeably to appointment, they proceeded to Dartmouth, where they examined the several villages of which it consists, its harbor, its public buildings and its roads, and at New Bedford, heard their respective witnesses and counsel.

The petitioners propose to divide the town by a line drawn from the east to the west line, nearly equi-distant from the north and south lines of the town.

The principal facts which came under the observation of the Committee, or were proved or acceded to, are the following, viz :

By the roads usually travelled, the town is about twenty miles long, and five miles wide. An air line, drawn from the extreme parts, would be about seventeen miles long. It contains, including small streams and Slocum's River in the south part of it, forty thousand five hundred and fifty-five acres of land. Its whole population is 3867. In 1831, the whole number of its polls was 689. By the valuation of the assessors in 1831, its value was 1,148,000 dollars. It has 29,075 rods of roads and twenty-five school districts. The proposed line would run nearly through the middle of the town. On the north it would leave 21,160 acres of land, on the south 19,395 acres ; on the north 283 polls, on the south 406 polls ; on the north 1683 inhabitants, on the south 2184 inhabitants ; on the north 462,000 dollars, on the south 686,000 dollars ; on the north 14,456 rods of roads, on the south 14,619 rods ; on the north eleven school districts, on the south thirteen, one school district being divided, so as not, injuriously, to break up farms.

There are several villages or settlements in this town. On the south is Clayville and Padanaram ; on the north Smith Mills village and a settlement at Hix's Meeting House.

At Padanaram there is a fine harbor, and were it not for the proximity of New Bedford, doubtless the Committee would not be obliged to add, that but about one thousand tons of shipping is navigated from this place. Situated as a part of this town is, on Buzzard's Bay, and possessing so good a harbor, it yet has but an inconside-

able commercial and navigating interest. The reason is obvious. Materials for preparing vessels for sea, excepting perhaps timber, are more abundant, artisans more numerous and skilful, in the neighboring port of New Bedford. The town is chiefly agricultural; manufactures, on any considerable scale, there are none.

The condition of the roads did not appear, to the Committee, to be either a reason for, or an objection to, a division.

The mart of this town is in New Bedford. There they transact the principal part of their commercial business. Between the north and the south, there is no business connexion, or an inconsiderable one. The north is more particularly connected with New Bedford.

Since the adoption of the Constitution, forty-six towns have been divided, all of which had a population less than that of Dartmouth. If the proposed division should be made, each town would have a population exceeding that of one hundred and ninety towns in the State, and the north town would have a population greater than two hundred and thirty-one towns in this State. There are one hundred and thirty-five towns which, by the valuation of 1832, have a less valuation than the north would have.

On the north there is no petition for a division.

There has been no corporate vote for or against a division.

On the south there are fifty-five remonstrants.

There are three hundred and sixty remonstrants, and three hundred and seventy-seven petitioners, and the number of petitioners and remonstrants who are not qualified voters, are in the same proportion.

All the public buildings, excepting the school houses,

are in the south, and there is no particular inconvenience felt by the inhabitants of the south in attending public meetings; the inconvenience, if any, being felt by the north.

It appeared to the Committee, they regret to add, that there had existed for many years, in the town of Dartmouth, two parties, known as the south and the north parties, distinctly marked and hostile to each other; that the town meetings, always contentious, were often distinguished by violence and disorder, so as to deter some peaceable citizens from attending them; that this feeling was not of recent origin, although it had kindled up all its spirit in the last canvass for a member of Congress in Bristol district, and seemed to have arrived at that point which it is to be hoped was its climax; that this division was not caused by, but seemed rather to mark the general political division of the town, the north espousing one side with the same zeal, with which the other side was embraced by the south; that time had not produced its usual effects in subduing this hostility, but that although none could recollect when it did not exist, it was now in its full force and vigor.

It was natural for the Committee to inquire, why this state of things should remain unchanged. They believe that it may be referred principally to the fact, that there is no general communication between the inhabitants of the north and the south parts of this town. New Bedford, although on the east line of the town, is for all purposes of intercommunication, as much between them, as if it were locally there. Hence the inhabitants of the north and the south oftener meet in New Bedford than in the south or the north, and are now as really divided in fact, although not in law, as they ever can be; they

are divided by the pursuit of their interests. They meet each other now, whenever the town meets, as the south and the north, and although no public improvement has been *finally* defeated, yet a proposition from one side, has generally met with a prompt opposition from the other. The violence established the protracted existence of a contentious spirit, now in full operation, and which is not likely to subside in the present condition of the town.

In viewing the whole case, opposed as we are generally to a division of towns, yet considering, that in territory, in population and in wealth, the new towns would be so nearly equal, that both of them would be respectable towns in all the requisites for such corporations, and that there exists between the north and south a spirit, which is not likely to be extinguished but by a division, we are constrained to believe that this is a fit occasion for the interposition of the Legislature, and therefore report, that said town ought to be divided, according to a red line marked on the accompanying map:—

That provision should be made for the valuation of the town-house, alms-house, and other public property (excepting school-houses,) and that the south should pay to the north one half the value thereof, and have the property:—

That the south should assume the support of the present paupers of the town, without charge to the north:—

That the south and north should be equally at the expense of maintaining the line of road between Westport and Dartmouth, as nearly as may be, according to the existing division of said road:—

That the proportion of taxation to be borne by each

town, shall hereafter be according to the valuation of 1832.

BARKER BURNELL,
JOHN W. LINCOLN,
THO. MOTLEY.

Boston, January 7, 1833.

IN SENATE, JAN. 8, 1833.

Referred to the Committee on Towns.

Sent down for concurrence.

CHA'S. CALHOUN, *Clerk.*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JAN. 9, 1833.

Concurred.

L. S. CUSHING, *Clerk.*

WALTER HUNTER,
JOHN W. LINCOLN,
ED. HOFFET.

For a further...

In Volume 1...

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