GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE.

Message of the Governor,

On returning the bill making appropriations to the Improvement System; giving his reasons for refusing his signature thereto.

To the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives:

GENTLEMEN:—I return the bill entitled "An act further to continue and promote the improvement of the State."

I regret to be obliged to withhold the Executive approbation from an act which involves no question of constitutional right.—Nothing but a firm belief that the best interests of the whole State demand it, could induce me to do so. This reluctance is increased when duty requires the disapproval of a bill for continuing the Internal Improvements of the State. Could I believe that the measure was calculated to hasten the completion and promote the usefulness of those works, it would receive my sanction without reference to the amount of money appropriated. True economy demands that the main lines of our canals and railways, now under contract or partially completed, shall be pushed on with the less possible delay, to the points of their original destination. But it seems to me that this bill is calculated materially to retard their progress, by dissipating the funds of the commonwealth upon a great variety of objects, which, however meritorious in themselves, and interesting as local improvements, are not part of the main lines, but by the foundation for a vast increase of public debt.—The bill contains the following items:

1.—APPROPRIATIONS TO STATE WORKS:

Erie Canal,	$400,000
North Branch Canal,	400,000
West Branch Canal, from Tangascootack to Sinnemahoning,	100,000
Canal from Kittanning to the mouth of the Kiskiminetas,	75,000
Inclined Plane at Columbia,	87,500
West Branch Canal, Tangascootack line,	33,943
Gettysburg extension of the Columbia Railroad;	150,000
Reservoirs at Hollidaysburg and Johnstown,	25,000
Canal from Antietam to the mouth of the Conococheague,	50,000
Tunkhannock,	8,000
Saltsburg,	4,000
Shamokin,	5,000
Elizabethtown	10,000

6.—APPROPRIATIONS TO STATE ROADS.

Saltsburg and Curwensville,	3,000
East and West,	19,000
Franklin and Butler,	10,000
Pittsburg and Beaver,	10,000
Pittsburg and Brownington,	5,000
Butler and New Castle,	5,000
Wayne burg and Cumberland Road,	4,000
Kiskiminetas and Virginia line,	4,000
Robbstown, Brownsville and Virginia line,	3,000
Steen's Tavern and Connellsville,	500
Waynesburg and Virginia line	2,000
Monongahela Bridge and Virginia line,	3,000
Greensburg and West Alexandria,	2,000
Monongahela Bridge and Umontown,	3,000
Virginia line and Monroe,	3,000
White Horse Tavern and Virginia line,	6,000

Of which the amount of appropriations to State works is	$1,396,943
Subscriptions to Company Canals and Railroads,	1,293,000
Appropriations for surveys for new works,	17,500
Subscriptions to Turnpike Companies,	189,000
Subscriptions to Bridge Companies,	42,000
Appropriations to State Roads,	81,500
Total of appropriations and subscriptions,	$3,031,943

I cannot sign this bill for the following reasons: Because,

1st. Its main feature is the distribution of a great portion of the present resources of the Commonwealth, among works not owned by the State, and its consequent withdrawal from the future prosecution of the public works, and from the present decrease of the State debt.

2nd. It bestows on capitalists and speculators, the money which is the property of the whole people, thereby enriching individuals and sections, to the injury of the rest of the community.

3d. It not only thus fritters away the means which should now be otherwise applied, but, by enabling the companies who are the recipients of its liberality, to commence and prosecute works which they will not be able to complete, it embarks the State so far in those works, that she will, at no distant day, be compelled to increase her present debt for the purpose of finishing them, or lose what is now proposed to be given.

4th. It will inevitably increase the State debt, in four years to $45,000,000, as will appear by the following short statement:

The Erie Extension of the main line will cost,	$3,000,000
The North Branch Extension,	3,000,000
The Gettysburg Railroad,	1,300,000
Tangascootack and Sinnemahoning canal,	1,000,000
West Branch & Allegheny Canal,	4,000,000
Red Bank and Franklin Canal,	2,000,000
Junction Canal at Freeport,	1,000,000
Wisconisco Feeder,	200,000
Avoiding Inclined Planes on Columbia Railroad,	500,000
Total to complete *State works*,	$16,200,000

The company works commenced by this bill, will cost as follows:

Freeport and New Castle Railroad*	81,000,000
Pittsburg and Laughlinstown Railroad,	1,500,000
Chambersburg and Laughlinstown Railroad, (which must be constructed to complete the connection,)	3,000,000
Lewisburg, Penn's Valley and Hollidaysburg Railroad,	2,000,000
Beaver and Conneaut Railroad,	460,000
Total to complete company works,	$9,060,000

Of this last sum, before the different works are completed, the State will actually have to be compelled to advance not less than one half, or close loss the whole, say $4,530,000

To which add the above cost of State works, 16,200,000

Making of debt which this bill will produce, $20,790,000

To which add the present State debt, 24,330,000

Total debt which will exist, when the system contemplated by this bill is completed, $45,120,000

It is presumed that the above estimates, if they should vary from the actual cost of the works, will be found to fall below rather than exceed it. They are all derived from the reports of Engineers, which are found in most cases to be far short of the ultimate expense, or from a comparison with the known cost of similar works.

If it should be objected to this calculation, that part of the above cost of State works has either been already incurred, or is provided for in this bill, and therefore should not be included—the reply is, that the portion already laid out will not, in all probability, be equal to one fourth of the amount which their contract price will exceed their estimated cost; and that the proportion provided for by this bill, is *borrowed* money—or at least such as the State may before long, be compelled out to repay. It may therefore be fairly assumed, as a calculation within bounds, that the passage of this bill will cause an addition at twenty-one millions to the amount of present debt and twenty-four millions—making a gross debt, at a date no more remote than 1841, of FORTY-FIVE MILLIONS. I am not prepared to sanction this, nor to become responsible for it.

5th. If this bill and the other proposed measures of the Legislature become law, the State will be left without a single dollar of unappropriated money in her treasury, at the commencement of the next session.—Though the last Legislature replenished the public coffers, with near four millions, and the present has received a like sum—your successors will, nevertheless, be compelled either to abandon the prosecution of the public works, or to borrow money to carry them on, and pay interest on the debt. No aid is to be calculated on from the national Treasury. On the contrary, care should be taken to keep the State in a condition to meet any demands for repayment which may be made on her from that quarter.

6th. It seems to be a total departure from our true policy. That policy is to husband our means for the present, and, while we push on our unproductive public works with all prudent speed, to a state of profitable completion, to apply the balance to the reduction of the State debt. If this course be pursued, only for *two years*, the expenditure of the Commonwealth will be brought so far within her income, that afterwards the none excess of her receipts will enable her to undertake and complete, without embarrassment, works of any magnitude. But if, on the other hand, the income, however large, is constantly kept below the amount of expenditure—her apparent riches will only increase her real difficulties.

7th. Its passage will have a most disastrous effect on our present undertakings.—In consequence of the rise in the price of labor and provisions within the last two years, and of the amount of work commenced in other states, the expense of constructing public improvements has increased full fifty per cent. If the present bill pass, the large amount of work authorized by it, will have an additional effect of the same kind, and will cause every contract in the Commonwealth to be thrown up, and re-let at an advance of not less than 50 per cent over the prices of last year. This is a grave consideration. It must be borne in mind, that while the amount of public burthen is increased by this kind of Legislation, the amount of means to sustain it remains the same; and that a million of debt must be paid with a million of dollars, whether that debt is due for the construction of sixty miles of canal, or twenty.

8th. Not only will its consequences be injurious to the finances, but to the morals of the State. The bare probability of the passage of the bill has already affected the conduct of whole sections of the State, and has given a new stimulus to the over excited spirit of speculation. If this state of things be fomented and continued, there is no limit to the injury which may result. While the gambling spirit of speculation is confined to the large towns, society may bear it without material detriment; but if it succeeds in the attempt to drag the industry of the country, the public prosperity will be shattered into its ruins. If the mania which now rages among those who speculate in the surplus property of the country, once seize those who alone render property valuable, there is an end to all hope of continued prosperity. I fear that such will be the tendency of the Legislation proposed by the present bill. A few persons fortunately located or circumstanced, will be undoubtedly considerably benefited. The mass will either become dissatisfied, or embark in the vain attempt to achieve like good fortune. While all are thus engaged murmuring or hoping at the lottery door of fortune, the plough of industry will stand idle in the furrow.

9th. Its signature would be a violation of every principle and pledge connected with the consideration of the Commonwealth, upon the faith of which the administration was entrusted to my discretion by the citizens of Pennsylvania. It is admitted that the measures of government should vary with the necessities of the times, always keeping the great land-marks of right in view. But when, as in the present case, no change of circumstances takes place authorising or even a change of practice necessary, the promises and pledges, both expressed and implied of a public agent, whether made by himself or his friends, should be kept in with the same good faith as those of a private citizen.

Two of the objects contended for by those who solicited me to administer the executive functions of the government, were, *the decrease of the state debt, and the vigorous prosecution and early completion of the public works of the Commonwealth.*—Both will either be defeated or retarded by the present bill if it become a law.

When such a state of things is produced, the path of duty is plain. Although the veto power should be cautiously used when no constitutional scruples exist, yet cases like the present, of mere pecuniary expenditure, will arise, affecting so deeply the paramount interests of the state, as imperatively to demand its exercise. If my fears are correct as to the great increase of the state debt, if of which this bill, if passed, will be the parent, I should feel it to be an abandonment of duty to the people, were I to omit any constitutional means to arrest it. Our enormous public debt must have a tendency to retard the increase of our population and productive industry, if not to diminish them. Although such debt is not in form a judgment upon the property of the people, yet in effect it is an adjudication lien.—The faith and the propriety of the Commonwealth, and of every citizen in it, are pledged for its redemption. It is obvious that the lands of a community incumbered with a line of fifty or an hundred millions of dollars, are worth less than the unincumbered property of other states. Hence, if the present debt of this Commonwealth be increased by the common advantages to be derived from the undertakings that produced it, it is plain that prudent men will be unwilling to purchase and hold property which must remain subject to its repayment. Such incumbrance must finally and unavoidably rest upon the most meritorious class of people—the farmers and mechanics. Capitalists and trades may easily withdraw their transitory means from our jurisdiction, when the day of taxation shall arrive; but the lands and buildings of the mechanic, manufacturer and farmer, admit of no removal. They must endure the whole burthens which hasty legislation may impose upon the community.

If this bill is intended as a distribution of our portion of the surplus revenue among the people, it seems to me to be unequal and unjust. The sums appropriated to the different parts of the state bear no proportion to their population or taxable property.—But if it should become necessary to return this deposite to the general government, it must be raised by taxation upon all without exception. And yet an equitable application of it may be made for the equal benefit of every citizen of the Commonwealth, without an actual distribution among the taxable citizens. If appropriations be made out of means for the present, and, while we push on our unproductive public works with all prudent speed, to a state of profitable completion, to apply the balance to the reduction of the State debt. If this course be pursued, only for *two years*, the expenditure of the Commonwealth will be brought so far within her income, that afterwards the none excess of her receipts will enable her to undertake and complete, without embarrassment, works of any magnitude. But if, on the other hand, the income, however large, is constantly kept below the amount of expenditure—her apparent riches will only increase her real difficulties.

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