

is now before the public, nothing confidential was communicated. That message contained no fact, not previously known. No one reason for war was intimated, but such as was of a nature public and notorious. The intention to wage war and invade Canada had been long since openly avowed. The object of hostile menace had been ostentatiously announced. The inadequacy of both our army and navy for successful invasion, and the insufficiency of the fortifications for the security of our seaboard, were, every where, known. Yet the doors of Congress were shut upon the people. They have been carefully kept in ignorance of the progress of measures, until the purposes of administration were consummated, and the fate of the country sealed. In a situation so extraordinary, the undersigned have deemed it their duty by no act of theirs to sanction a proceeding so novel and arbitrary. On the contrary, they made every attempt in their power to attain publicity for their proceedings. All such attempts were vain. When this momentous subject was stated, as for debate, they demanded that the doors should be opened.

This being refused, they declined discussion; being perfectly convinced, from indications too plain to be misunderstood, that, in the house, all argument, with closed doors, was hopeless; and that any act, giving implied validity to so flagrant an abuse of power, would be little less than treachery to the essential rights of a free people. In the situation to which the undersigned have thus been reduced, they are compelled reluctantly to resort to this public declaration of such views of the state and relations of the country, as determined their judgment and vote upon the question of war. A measure of this kind has appeared to the undersigned to be more imperiously demanded, by the circumstance of a message and manifesto being prepared, and circulated at public expence, in which the causes for war were enumerated and the motives for it concentrated, in a manner suited to agitate and influence the public mind. In executing this task, it will be the study of the undersigned to reconcile the great duty they owe to the people with that constitutional respect which is due to the administrators of public concerns.

In commencing this view of our affairs, the undersigned would fail in duty to themselves, did they refrain from recurring to the course, in relation to public measures, which they adopted and have undeviatingly pursued from the commencement of this long and eventful session; in which they deliberately sacrificed every minor consideration to, what they deemed, the best interests of the country.

For a succession of years the undersigned have from principle disapproved a series of restrictions upon commerce, according to their estimation, insufficient as respected foreign nations, and injurious, chiefly, to ourselves. Success, in the system, had become identified with the pride, the character and the hope of our cabinet. As is natural with men, who have a great stake depending on the success of a favourite theory, pertinacity seemed to increase as its hopelessness became apparent. As the insufficiency of this system could not be admitted, by its advocates, without insuring its abandonment, ill success was carefully attributed to the influence of opposition.