Dec 5 1859 (?)

From the National Intelligencer

In the House of Representatives Decr. 12th 1831.

Mr. Adams of Massachusetts, (the Ex President of the United States) presented fifteen petitions all numerously subscribed, from sundry inhabitants of Pennsylvania, all of the same purport, praying for the abolition of slavery, and the slave trade, in the Dist. Col. and moved that the first of them should be read, and it was read accordingly.

Mr Adams then obsewed, that it had doubtless been remarked that these petitions came, not from Massachusetts, a portion of whose people he had the honor to represent, but from citizens of the State of Pennsylvania. He had received the petitions many months ago, with a request that they should be presented by him, and, although the petitioners were not of his immediate constituents, he had not deemed himself at liberty to decline presenting their petitions, their

transmission of which to him manifested a confidence in him for which he was bound to be grateful. From a letter which had accompanied those petitions, he inferred that they came from members of the Society of Friends; a body of men than whom there was no more respectable and worthy class of citizens, none who more strictly made their lives a commentary on their professions — a body of men comprising, in his firm opinion, as much of human virtue, and as little of human infirmity, as any other equal number of men of any denomination upon the face of the Globe.

The petitions, Mr A. continued, asked for two things: the first was, the abolition of slavery: the second, the abolition of the slave trade in the Dist. Col. There was a traffic in slaves carried on in the Dist. of which he did not know but that it might be a proper subject of legislation by Congress, and he, therefore, moved that the petitions he had had the honor of presenting,

should be referred to the Committe on the affairs of the Dist. Col. who would dispose of them as they, upon examination of their purport, should deem proper, and might report on the expediency of granting so much of the prayer of the petitioners as referred to the abolition of the Slave trade in the District.

As to the other prayer of the petitions the abolition by Congress of slavery in the District of Col., it had occured to him that the petitions might have been committed to his charge under an expectation that it would receive his countenance and support. He deemed it, therefore, his duty to declare, that it would not. Whatever might be his opinion of slavery in the abstract, or of slavery in the Dist. of Col., it was a subject which he hoped would not be discussed in that house; if it should be, he might perhaps assign the reasons why he should give it no countenance

or support. At present, he would only say to the House, and to the worthy citizens who had committed their petitions to his charge, that the most salutary medicines wrongly unduly administered, were the most deadly of poisons. He concluded by moving to refer the petitions to the Committee on the District of Columbia.

John Quincy Adams

Mr Adams