

RED LAKE INDIAN RESERVATION.

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JANUARY 26, 1886.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. PEEL, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 1269.]

*The Committee on Indian Affairs, having had under consideration the bill (H. R. 1269) in relation to the Red Lake Indian Reservation in the State of Minnesota, submit the following report:*

This reservation is situated in the northwestern part of Minnesota, and extends northward to the international boundary line on the Lake of the Woods and one of its tributaries, the Rainy Lake River, the waters of which find their outlet in Lake Winnipeg and Hudson's Bay. In the northern part of the reservation are a few small streams flowing northward into the Rainy Lake River. In the southeastern part of the reservation is a large lake, called Red Lake, from which the reservation takes its name, and which is the source of the Red Lake River, flowing westerly into and one of the main tributaries of the Red River of the North.

The reservation extends on the west to within 50 miles of the boundary line between Minnesota and Dakota, and is believed to cover a superficial area of nearly 3,000,000 acres, of which the northern half is mainly low, marshy, and swampy, and altogether unsuitable for agricultural purposes, and of no particular value except as to a small tract of pine timber, which is believed to be situated on the Rainy Lake River, on the extreme northern end of the reservation.

In the southern half of the reservation the land on the north, east, and south sides of Red Lake are mainly timber lands composed of a mixture of pine and hard woods. The southwest quarter of the reservation is in the main prairie land and suitable for agriculture and stock-raising, though some portions of it are quite low and wet, but can be improved by drainage.

The reservation is a remnant of so-called unceded Indian territory, and is occupied by about 1,000 semi-civilized but quite peaceable and well-disposed Chippewa Indians, whose only title is that of occupancy, and whose occupancy is of a quite recent date and origin.

These Indians have made but little progress in agriculture, having scarcely 600 acres under cultivation, and subsist to a large extent by hunting, fishing, and trapping, and lead a wandering and nomadic life in this extensive territorial area, the very immensity of which tends to keep them in their shiftless, lazy, and non-progressive state. To the west and southwest of this reservation lies the so-called Red River Valley, an extensive belt of prairie country quite thickly settled and ex-

tensively improved, fertile and rich soil, but with scarcely no timber on it. The great want of this country is lumber for building purposes, and wood for fuel, which at present is brought by rail from a distance of from 200 to 400 miles, while the timber on this reservation is within from 60 to 100 miles and accessible and transportable by water.

In its present condition the reservation, instead of being a benefit to the Indians, is rather a drawback to their improvement and civilization, furnishing them no income, and tending to keep alive in them the nomadic spirit with its resultant mode of life and indifference to the more substantial pursuits of life. Under the instigation of designing white men the Indians during the last three years have been in the habit of setting fire to portions of the timber, and then, after applying for and getting permission to sell the dead and down timber, have for a mere nominal sum under such permission sold the burnt timber fired by them as aforesaid, and thus in an indirect and dishonest manner is much valuable timber being frittered away for a mere song. The real profit inures to the white instigators and purchasers, while the consumers have to pay as big a price, as though the timber had been legitimately disposed of.

In view of all the facts your committee are of the opinion that it would be for the best interests of the Indians that a reasonable amount of land be allotted to each of them in severalty, with the usual conditions and limitations as to taxation, right of conveyance, or incumbrance, and that the residue of the reservation and the timber thereon be disposed of in a fair and proper manner for the benefit of the Indians. In the opinion of your committee the best way of disposing of the timber land is to sell the stumpage at public sale, after due appraisalment. By this method the timber will bring as much in cash as though the land was sold with it, and none of it can be taken with any kind of land scrip, but only acquired with cash, as scrip will not buy stumpage. Besides, the land after the timber is cut off is available to the Indians for present use as a common, and, as the fee is retained, may again in the far future be available as timber land. The prairie lands your committee believe should only be disposed of, under the homestead law, to actual settlers; and to the end that something may be obtained for the Indians from the settlers it is proposed that homestead settlers under this act should pay fifty cents an acre, in four equal annual installments.

The provisions of the bill are substantially as follows:

The first section directs and empowers the Secretary of the Interior to procure the cession and relinquishment of the Indian title, and prescribes the mode in which this is to be done.

The second section provides for a survey, and a proper designation of lands with pine timber on, and also provides for a careful and minute appraisalment of the stumpage on the timber lands.

Section 3 gives careful and minute directions for the disposal of the stumpage at public sale, after due notice, to the highest bidder for cash, with the limitation that no sale can be made at less than the appraised price, nor less than at \$2 per acre.

Section 4 provides for the disposal of the lands, other than timber lands, to actual settlers under the homestead law at 50 cents an acre, in four equal annual installments.

Section 5 provides that the proceeds of the stumpage and the homesteads shall be put into the Treasury of the United States to the credit of the Indians, and shall draw 3 per cent. interest, and the principal and interest may be used and expended for the Indians by the Secretary of the Interior from time to time, according to his judgment and discretion.

Section 6 provides that the Indians may use and occupy as a common the timber lands both before and after the sale of the stumpage.

Section 7 provides for the allotment of lands in severalty, to heads of families 160 acres and to all other Indians 80 acres apiece. These allotments may be from any of the agricultural lands on the reservation, and the lands allotted are not taxable and cannot be conveyed or incumbered for a period of 30 years.

Section 8 provides that the proceeds of the stumpage and homesteads shall be deemed full compensation for the cession and relinquishment, and also makes suitable provision for filling the school and swamp land grants to the State of Minnesota heretofore made.

It is believed that under the provisions of the bill the stumpage will bring from \$5 to \$10 per acre, and that the Indians will ultimately acquire a permanent fund of from \$2,500,000 to \$3,000,000, certainly an ample and bountiful provision for so few Indians.

It is believed that the bill is so formed as to do full and ample justice to the Indians, and to provide the machinery for an honest and prudent disposal of the land and stumpage; and we feel that further delay in this matter will be to the grave and serious injury and detriment of the Indian; and therefore, in view of all the premises aforesaid, we recommend the passage of the bill with the amendment herewith reported.