

ROBERT A. JONES.

APRIL 15, 1856.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. PRINGLE, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the petition of Robert A. Jones, of the State of Wisconsin, respectfully report:

That it is stated by the petitioner that, on the 22d day of August, 1854, he entered into a contract or agreement with the Menomonie tribe of Indians, through their chiefs and headmen, by which said Indians granted to the petitioner the right of cutting pine timber on their lands situated on the Oconto river and its branches, for the period of ten years, for the consideration of a payment to them of one hundred barrels of flour annually for ten years. That the contract was made at the same time that a treaty was made by the United States with the said Indians, which treaty was greatly to the advantage of the United States, and that it would not have been made with the said Indians had it not been for the influence of the petitioner, and by the expenditure by him, in presents to the said Indians, of over two hundred dollars in value. That the services of the petitioner were rendered at the request of John V. Suydam, then Indian agent; and that the contract made by the petitioner with the said Indians was ratified and approved in writing at the time by the said Indian agent, who well knew that all his attempts to make said treaty would have proved fruitless and unavailing had it not been for the petitioner.

It appears from the statement of the petitioner that he was aware, at the time of distributing his presents and making his contract with the Indians, that there was no law authorizing his action, and that the whole transaction was void; and now he asks Congress to pass an act which will authorize the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to approve and ratify the said contract.

Your committee have set forth at large the statement of the petitioner (substantially in his own language) upon which he grounds his application for relief; and without inquiring whether or not the statement be true, of which they have no evidence outside of the petition, but allowing that the facts are in strict accordance with his representations of them; and while your committee refrain from characterizing this transaction in terms which, under the circumstances, might be justifiable, they simply express the opinion that it would be unwise

to approve, or even to tolerate, the making of contracts between individuals and the Indian tribes of the kind described in the petition; that the sanction by Congress of such a policy would be likely to lead to great frauds upon the Indians, and tend to induce them to distrust the honesty and good faith of the government in their dealings, and greatly embarrass future negotiations and intercourse with the Indians. Therefore, your committee recommend that the prayer of the petitioner be denied.