

TRANSFER OF THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS TO THE
WAR DEPARTMENT.

MAY 8, 1880.—Referred to House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 3439.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, having had under consideration H. R. 2485 and 3439, both being bills to transfer the Office of Indian Affairs from the Interior to the War Department, beg leave to report:

This question of transfer has, in one form and another, been before the Congress of the United States for several years, and has been repeatedly the subject of debate and consideration in both branches of the national legislature. It is a subject which, in its nature, is so utterly foreign to all political differences between existing parties that it would seem it ought to, and should, command the calm judgment of the Representatives of the people and States, and be in some form definitively settled. Your committee are of opinion that wherever the government has to deal with any question, it should do it in the most direct way; that all its agents, officers, and employes should be held responsible to some one superior officer. Your committee are of opinion that the chief difficulty in the conduct of Indian affairs lies in the fact that the Interior Department, whenever a difficulty occurs in the management of any Indian tribe, are powerless to enforce its rules and regulations without calling on the Army of the United States to enforce them. The result has been that neither the Secretary of the Interior, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, nor the agents at the respective Indian agencies have secured the respect and confidence of the Indians under their charge; and whenever a difficulty has arisen, the result has been the calling out of the Army, oftentimes in the depth of winter, and exposed to the terrible snow-storms of the mountains, and when they have been stopped by the action of the Interior Department, and new agents and commissioners are sent out in search of peaceful settlement, and the result has been our Army ambuscaded, or fought in the fastnesses of the mountains, and valuable lives of officers and men have been sacrificed. Your committee are of opinion that this dual management of Indian affairs has been disastrous to the true interests of the Indians and the government alike. Your committee are of opinion that the failure to pay the annuities due the Indians promptly, and the failure to furnish the supplies due at the time specified, have been the prolific source of all our Indian wars. Your committee are of opinion that this has grown largely out of the contract system in vogue in the Interior Department. Your committee are of opinion that if the supplies were furnished to the respective Indian tribes

by the commissariat and quartermaster, and inspection system of the Army, and by Army officers, responsible, under the Army regulations, for any default in performance of their duty, that there would be fewer failures to comply with contracts, and *speedy trials and convictions* when failures did occur; that if the respective tribes could be inspired with confidence and trust in the various agents appointed to protect and guard their interest, and at the same time should be inspired with the conviction that each and every of said agents possessed the power to punish all outrages and depredations committed by them; that there would be, to a large extent, a cessation of all Indian wars, and no longer a periodical slaughter of the officers and men of our Army. Your committee are of opinion that this question should be definitely settled, and if it be the judgment of the law-making power of the government that the conduct of Indian affairs should remain in the Interior Department, then the methods of administration in said department (many of which have been praiseworthy and efficient) should be systematized and perfected in such way as to insure prompt justice to the Indians, a faithful carrying out of all treaty obligations and laws, and a perfect protection of the rights of American citizens living in proximity to the several Indian reservations. Your committee are of opinion that this dual management and control of Indian affairs is unfortunate in leaving it in doubt which of the two departments, and the officers acting under them, are responsible for the bloody wars that have hitherto occurred and may occur again; and for these reasons, and others not necessary now to swell this report by enumerating, your committee are of opinion that the bill which is reported herewith should be adopted and favorably recommended to the House for its passage.

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