

EDUCATION IN ALASKA.

M E S S A G E

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A communication from the Secretary of the Interior in relation to the establishment and maintenance of schools in Alaska.

FEBRUARY 16, 1882.—Read twice, referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives :

I transmit herewith, for the consideration of Congress, a letter from the Secretary of the Interior, inclosing a letter from the Commissioner of Education, in which the recommendation is made that an appropriation of fifty thousand dollars be made for the purpose of education in Alaska.

CHESTER A. ARTHUR.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, *February 15, 1882.*

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, February 8, 1882.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for your consideration, a letter from the Commissioner of Education, in which he recommends that an appropriation of \$50,000 be made for the establishment and maintenance of schools in Alaska.

I concur in the recommendation that the appropriation be made.

Very respectfully,

S. J. KIRKWOOD,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, February 4, 1882.

SIR: My attention is called to the provisions of the law determining the purpose and duties of this office, which provides that it shall "collect statistics and facts

showing the condition and progress of education in the several States and Territories, and to diffuse such information respecting the organization and management of schools and school systems and methods of teaching as shall aid the people of the United States in the establishment and maintenance of efficient school systems and otherwise promote the cause of education throughout the country"; and it is affirmed that I have not yet made any specific recommendation with regard to education in Alaska. I cannot claim to be ignorant of the fact that there is no law either for the protection of life or property or for the establishment of schools in that Territory, nor would I be among those who are indifferent to facts reflecting so unfavorably upon us as a people. I have sought diligently to gather all information in regard to the education of the children of Alaskans, as will be seen by reference to the several reports of this office. Prior to the purchase of Alaska the Russian Government had schools in portions of that country. When it was transferred to the United States those schools were generally discontinued, and the entire Territory, with few exceptions, has been left without any means of education. From the census of 1880 we learn that there are about thirty thousand people in Alaska, and of these it is believed there are about ten thousand children or young people who ought to have some school privileges.

With regard to this people, it may be observed—

(1.) That they are docile, peaceful, and have here and there some knowledge of useful industries; are apt in the mechanical arts, and anxious for instruction.

(2.) They are a self-supporting people, needing no annuities, clothing, or rations from the government, but *do* need teachers that they cannot procure for themselves. These teachers should instruct them, not only in letters but in the arts of civilized life and the duties of American citizenship.

(3.) If given an opportunity for this kind of instruction for a few years they would, it is believed, make good progress in throwing off tribal relations and in preparation to become an integral portion of the American people, thus contributing to the common wealth and prosperity of the country.

(4.) It is well known that civilization in approaching an untutored people may be their destruction by sending its vices before its virtues. It is equally well known that various weeds spring up spontaneously where useful plants must be cultivated, and that not neglect but painstaking care is necessary to the improvement of the human mind.

The people of Alaska having received some measure of aid from the Russian Government, have expected the same from the United States. The natives, already to a limited extent demoralized by the introduction of intemperance and disease, it is thought would, by the introduction of schools, be prepared better to resist these evils and stand a far better chance to be a permanent and prosperous race.

(5.) The development of the fishing interests, the discovery of gold, and the increase of commerce in that region are now calling public attention to it, and the time seems to have arrived when school privileges should be immediately provided. In 1870 Congress appropriated \$50,000 for educational purposes in Alaska, which, on account of difficulties of administration at that time, was not expended there. This amount could now be expended there, I am sure, with most satisfactory results.

In accordance, therefore, with these considerations, and in order not to come short of any duty required of me by law, I have the honor to recommend that Congress be requested to appropriate \$50,000 for the establishment and maintenance of schools for instruction in letters and industry, at such points in Alaska as shall be designated by the Hon. Secretary of the Interior.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN EATON,
Commissioner.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.