

RESERVATIONS FOR THE INDIANS IN NORTHERN MONTANA.

FEBRUARY 28, 1885.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 8282.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 5427) to provide permanent reservations for the Indians in Northern Montana, and for other purposes, have considered the same, and report as follows:

The purpose of this bill is to provide separate reservations and establish means of support, education, and advancement for the Indians of the Piegan, Assinaboine, Gros Ventre, and Blackfeet tribes, and for the various bands of Sioux collected near the Fort Peck Agency, whose destitute and starving condition has awakened the sympathy of the country for several years past, and to relieve which Congress is annually called upon to make provision in the regular and deficiency appropriation bills.

A tract of unceded country, about 500 miles long and from 70 to 100 miles wide, lying between the Missouri River and the international boundary line, was, on the 15th of April, 1874, set apart as a temporary reservation or hunting grounds, that country being then well stocked with buffalo and other wild game.

Upon this reservation there has been, from time to time, gathered the Piegans and other bands of Blackfeet, now numbering about fifteen hundred; the Gros Ventres and Assinaboines, numbering about twelve hundred, and various bands of Sioux numbering about twenty-five hundred, which Indians, by aid of small annual appropriations, subsisted well enough until the game was exterminated, and then, having no other resources, their sufferings began.

White settlements and towns had in the mean time sprung up everywhere along this immense tract, and many complaints, petitions, and protests have been filed against such a vast extent of country being reserved by Congress, blocking up the outlets of industrious communities, and given over to solitude; for the Indians could occupy but a small portion of it, and the different agencies were far apart, while the intervening country was overrun by herds of cattle which paid no tribute either to the Indians or the Government.

Congress is repeatedly called upon to appropriate money to keep these Indians from starvation, one of the first acts of this session being

to appropriate \$50,000 and the regular Indian appropriation bill gives \$ ——— for this purpose. It seems, therefore, to your committee, that the interests of the Government, its citizens, and the welfare of these Indians, demand, and will be subserved by immediate action. Bill 5247 did not seem to contain all the requisite provisions, and your committee have prepared a substitute therefor, embodying therein the recommendations of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Your committee are also advised that the Secretary of the Interior approves the provisions of the substitute, also the representatives of the Indian Rights Association, and the members of the Congressional Commission that visited these Indians. Your committee therefore report the accompanying substitute for the bill referred to them, and recommend its passage. Accompanying this report are the letters of the Secretary of the Interior and Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that your committee ask be printed therewith.

A BILL to provide permanent reservations for the Indians in Northern Montana, and for other purposes.

Whereas the Congress of the United States did, on the fifteenth day of April, anno Domini eighteen hundred and seventy-four, pass an act providing for hunting-grounds for several Indian tribes, in terms as follows, to wit: "That the following-described tract of country in the Territory of Montana be, and the same is hereby, set apart for the use and occupation of the Gros Ventre, Piegan, Blood, Blackfeet, River Crow, and such other Indians as the President may, from time to time, see fit to locate thereon, namely: Commencing at the northwest corner of the Territory of Dakota, being the intersection of the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude and the one hundred and fourth meridian of west longitude; thence south to the south bank of the Missouri River; thence up and along the south bank of said river to a point opposite the mouth of the Maria's River; thence along the main channel of the Maria's River to Birch Creek; thence up the main channel of Birch Creek to its source; thence west to the summit of the main chain of the Rocky Mountains; thence along the summit of the Rocky Mountains to the northern boundary of Montana; thence along said northern boundary to the place of beginning;" and

Whereas the buffalo and other game for which this region was noted have now become practically extinct, and no longer furnish subsistence for these tribes, and it has become necessary to permanently settle such of these tribes as still roam over this tract, and to assist them to become self-supplying by other means than the chase: Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all that portion of the Territory described in the act of April fifteenth, anno Domini eighteen hundred and seventy-four, which lies west of a line drawn due south from the national boundary, at the western extremity of the Sweet Grass Hills, to the Maria's River, shall be assigned to the Piegan, Blood, and Blackfeet Indians belonging to the Blackfeet Agency; and the President shall cause the land herein described to be held in whole for the occupancy and benefit of such Indians, or to be patented to them in severalty, if Congress shall so direct hereafter.

SEC. 2. That there is hereby assigned and granted to the various bands of Assinaboine and Gros Ventre Indians belonging to the Fort Belknap Agency all that portion of the Territory reserved in said act of April fifteenth, eighteen hundred and seventy-four, which is described as follows, to wit: Inside a line beginning at Milk River, at the mouth of Clear Creek, and running thence east of south below the foot-hills of the Bear Paw Mountains to the Three Buttes; from these to the western extremity of the Little Rocky Mountains; thence easterly along the dividing ridge of this range to the head of Beaver Creek; thence down the channel of Beaver Creek to Milk River, and thence up the channel of Milk River to the point of beginning. The lands within these boundaries shall be held by the President as a whole for the occupancy and benefit of these Indians, or shall be patented to them in severalty if Congress shall so direct hereafter.

SEC. 3. That in order to enable these Indians to give up the chase, and to assist them in becoming an agricultural and pastoral people, and to become self-supporting, the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars a year is hereby granted to the Indians of the Blackfeet Agency, and a like sum of seventy-five thousand dollars a year is granted to the Indians at the Fort Belknap Agency, for the term of fifteen years from the pas-

sage of this act; this money to be expended by the direction of the Secretary of the Interior in the purchase of agricultural implements, seed, and other agricultural necessities, or in the purchase of cattle or sheep, or otherwise for the benefit of such Indians, and to help them on the way to civilization and self-support; and, in addition, the Government shall issue such rations to these Indians as may be necessary, in addition to what they produce; to their comfortable subsistence for three years after the passage of this act.

SEC. 4. That the Government shall cause to be erected such new agency buildings, mills, and blacksmith, carpenter, and wagon shops as may be necessary, and maintain the same. It shall assist the Indians to build houses and inclose their farms, and shall cause to be maintained such boarding and industrial schools as may be necessary to educate the Indian boys and girls, and teach them how to labor; and Congress shall appropriate for the same on the basis of estimates furnished by the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 5. That all the remaining portions of said Territory reserved and set apart by the act of April fifteenth, eighteen hundred and seventy-four, are hereby restored to the public domain, and declared open to occupation and settlement under the public-land laws of the United States: *Provided*, That the President may, by proclamation, reserve such land as may be required for military purposes by the garrison of Fort Assinaboine: *Provided further*, That he may further reserve any portion of the Territory described in that act which lies east of Porcupine Creek and north of the Missouri River for the occupancy of the various bands of Sioux collected at Poplar Creek Agency and Fort Peck, until some permanent disposition is made of such Sioux bands, either by removal to reservations for the Sioux Nation or until such time as Congress may provide them with lands of their own.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, Feb. 3, 1885.

HON. OLIVER WELBORN,
Chairman Committee on Indian Affairs, House of Representatives:

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith copy of report of 30th ultimo, with inclosure, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in response to your telegram of 28th ultimo, respecting H. R. 5427, now pending in committee, "To provide permanent reservations for the Indians in Northern Montana, and for other purposes."

Similar inquiry to yours having, under same date, been presented to the Commissioner by the chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, in relation to S. 1710, for a like purpose, and identical in form, the report to the Department mentions both these bills.

The Commissioner discusses the provisions of the bill, and suggests certain amendments thereto, which bill, as amended, he recommends may be adopted.

The action contemplated by this bill, amended as proposed, will insure certain and definite provision for these Montana Indians, and will provide them with the means and facilities for becoming self-supporting.

I concur in the suggestions and recommendations of the Commissioner.

Very respectfully,

H. M. TELLER,
Secretary.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., January 30, 1885.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR:

SIR: I am in receipt of a letter and telegram from the chairman of the Senate Committee, and a telegram from the chairman of the House Committee on Indian Affairs, all of date January 28, 1885, requesting to be advised as to whether this office has any further communications to make relative to Senate bill No. 1710, and House bill No. 5427, present Congress, "To provide permanent reservations for the Indians in Northern Montana, and for other purposes." These bills are identical in their provisions and form, and have been before reported upon by this office, the former under date of April 4, and the latter April 3, 1884.

In reply to the present inquiries, I would respectfully state that since the date of my former reports I have received some additional information concerning the reservations to which these bills relate, and while adhering to my recommendations in respect of the Indians of the Fort Peck Agency, I am convinced that a change is required in the boundaries, as therein proposed, for the permanent reservation for the Indians belonging to the Fort Belknap Agency.

Gold has been discovered in the Little Rocky Mountains, and it is strongly urged that in the proposed reduction of the reservation, which at present embraces an area of over 21,500,000 acres, the south side of the Little Rocky Range be left out, so that the people may have the benefit of the mines. Agent Lincoln recommends it, and suggests that lands north of Milk River, or further down the river on the south side, be given the Indians in lieu of the tract between the Little Rocky Range and the Missouri River.

I have carefully considered the matter and am strongly of opinion that a reservation extending from the Little Rockies to the British line, and from Fort Assinaboine military reservation to the 108th^o west longitude, would be far better suited to the wants of the Indians than the reservation at first proposed. The lands along Milk River within the territory so described are said to be the best in that part of the country, and as the large game has almost entirely disappeared, a more extended range is not required.

I must insist upon having the Fort Peck Indians placed upon the same footing with the Indians of the other agencies, and my recommendation is that all the territory embraced within the present reservation lying east of the one hundred and sixth degree of west longitude be retained for their future use and occupancy.

I have altered a copy of the bill to conform to the views and recommendations herein suggested, and have the honor to recommend that the bill be amended accordingly and passed. (See altered copy in duplicate herewith.)

The amendments proposed are as follows:

In section 2, Senate bill 1710, strike out all of lines, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and so much of line 13 as to include the word "beginning," and insert in lieu thereof the following:

"Beginning at the northeast corner of the Assinaboine military reservation, being a point due north of the right bank of Bull Hook Creek, and two miles north of the left bank of Milk River, as defined by Executive order dated June sixteenth, eighteen hundred and eighty-one, describing the boundaries of said military reservation; thence following the boundaries of said military reservation, south and east, to the southeast corner thereof; thence in an easterly direction to the crest of the western extremity of the Little Rocky Mountains; thence following the crest or ridge of said mountains in an easterly direction to the one hundred and eighth degree of west longitude; thence north on the one hundred and eighth degree west longitude to the international boundary; thence west along said boundary to a point due north of the place of beginning; thence due south to the place of beginning."

In section 3, line 7, after the word "agency," and before the word "for," insert the following words, viz, "and a like sum of seventy-five thousand dollars a year is granted to the Indians of the Fort Peck agency."

In section 5, line 3, after the word "seventy-four" and before the word "are," insert the following words, viz, "except so much thereof as lies east of the one hundred and sixth meridian of west longitude, which excepted tract is hereby assigned and granted to the Indians of the Fort Peck agency, to be held by the President for the occupancy and benefit of said Indians as a whole, or be patented to them in severalty if Congress shall so direct hereafter," and strike out all of said section after the words "provided further" in line 8, and insert in lieu thereof the following:

"That nothing in this act shall be so construed as to deprive any Indian who has settled and made improvements upon any of the lands restored to the public domain under the provisions of this section of the lands, not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres in extent, upon which his improvements are situated."

In conclusion, I would say that the Indians of the several agencies embraced within the reservation to which the bills in question relate, have vastly more land than they need or will ever make use of, and while the territory to be retained for them under the provisions of said bills, when amended, is much less in quantity than they now have, it is ample for all their future wants; and the mills, schools, houses, and money they will receive in return for the lands taken will prove a lasting benefit to them, whereas the holding of millions of acres of unoccupied land to the exclusion of white settlers is unquestionably a serious drawback to their progress.

These Indians have no treaty stipulations with the Government, and what little they receive toward their support is in the nature of gratuities, so that they are almost entirely dependent upon the generosity of Congress for the simple means of self-existence.

Every winter the country is regaled with the story of their sufferings, and this Bureau is roundly berated for want of proper attention to their needs. The fact is, the conditions have so changed in the last few years with these people that it has been found impossible to prevent suffering amongst them with the limited means placed at the disposal of this Department, added to their own personal efforts. The game upon which they have heretofore largely depended for food and clothing has gradually become extinct.

But three or four years ago their reservation abounded in game, large and small,

which made them comparatively independent. Now it is said to be as absolutely destitute in that respect as is the country hundreds of miles south of them. The buffalo has entirely disappeared; more than once their crops have failed, and in spite of their best efforts they have several times been brought to the very verge of starvation—indeed they have not always escaped starvation. One of our inspectors, writing under recent date, stated that there was no doubt that “many of the young children died from lack of food during last winter and spring” (1883).

To allow this condition of affairs to longer continue would be most discreditable to the Government. Surely there is an obligation growing out of the changed condition of things, requiring us to make some suitable provision for their support at least until they can become self-supporting in agricultural and other civilized pursuits.

The bills under present consideration will afford them permanent relief, and thereby remove them from further dependence upon the capricious bounties of the Government, which have of late been almost their only hope.

Two copies of this report are herewith inclosed, also maps showing the boundaries of the present reservation and the three reserves to be retained for the permanent homes of the Indians.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. PRICE,
Commissioner.

H. Rep. 2648—2

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