

INDIAN COMMISSION.

MARCH 5, 1888.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 1340.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 1340) to provide for the appointment of a commission to inspect and report on the condition of Indian affairs, and for other purposes, report the same back with amendments; First, to fill the blank in the third line of section 5 with the word "ten;" second, to fill the blank in the fourteenth line of section 5 with the words "Ten thousand;" third, to fill the blank in the sixteenth line of section 5 with the words "Ten thousand;" fourth, to strike out of the bill all of lines 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23 of section 5.

This bill, in substance if not in exact language, was introduced at the first session of the Forty-ninth Congress, as part of, and in connection with, the exhaustive report of a special committee of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker on the 4th day of March, 1885, to inquire into the expenditures of public moneys in the Indian service and the Yellowstone Park, and certain other matters connected therewith, which report may be found as Report No. 1079 of House reports of first session of Forty-ninth Congress. It is believed that this measure was the outcome of a recommendation of the Secretary of the Interior, made in the annual report of that officer for the year 1885, and most vigorously enforced and called to the attention of Congress by and in the first message of President Cleveland communicated to the two houses of Congress at the beginning of the Forty-ninth Congress. The President, in such clear and forcible language, presents the true inwardness of this old-time vexed Indian problem, that your committee deem it wisdom and the best presentation of reasons for the passage of this act. We here quote from that message as it relates to the bill now reported for a favorable action on the part of this House:

The report of the Secretary of the Interior, containing an account of the operations of this important Department, and much interesting information, will be submitted for your consideration.

The most intricate and difficult subject in charge of this Department is the treatment and management of the Indians. I am satisfied that some progress may be noted in their condition as a result of a prudent administration of the present laws and regulations for their control.

But it is submitted that there is lack of a fixed purpose or policy on this subject, which should be supplied. It is useless to dilate upon the wrongs of the Indians, and as useless to indulge in the heartless belief that because their wrongs are revenged in their own atrocious manner, therefore they should be exterminated.

They are within the care of our Government, and their rights are, or should be, protected from invasion by the most solemn obligations. They are properly enough called the wards of the Government; and it should be borne in mind that this guardianship involves, on our part, efforts for the improvement of their condition and the enforcement of their rights. There seems to be general concurrence in the proposition that the ultimate object of their treatment should be their civilization and citizenship. Fitted by these to keep pace in the march of progress with the advanced civilization about them, they will readily assimilate with the mass of our population, assuming the responsibilities and receiving the protection incident to this condition.

The difficulty appears to be in the selection of the means to be at present employed toward the attainment of this result.

Our Indian population, exclusive of those in Alaska, is reported as numbering 260,000, nearly all being located on lands set apart for their use and occupation, aggregating over 134,000,000 of acres. These lands are included in the boundaries of one hundred and seventy-one reservations of different dimensions, scattered in twenty-one States and Territories, presenting great variations in climate and in the kind and quality of their soil. Among the Indians upon these several reservations there exist the most marked differences in natural traits and disposition, and in their progress toward civilization. While some are lazy, vicious, and stupid, others are industrious, peaceful, and intelligent; while a portion of them are self-supporting and independent, and have so far advanced in civilization that they make their own laws, administered through officers of their own choice, and educate their children in schools of their own establishment and maintenance, others still retain, in squalor and dependence, almost the savagery of their natural state.

In dealing with this question the desires manifested by the Indians should not be ignored. Here, again, we find a great diversity. With some the tribal relation is cherished with the utmost tenacity, while its hold upon others is considerably relaxed; the love of home is strong with all, and yet there are those whose attachment to a particular locality is by no means unyielding; the ownership of their lands in severalty is much desired by some, while by others, and sometimes among the most civilized, such a distribution would be bitterly opposed.

The variation of their wants, growing out of and connected with the character of their several locations, should be regarded. Some are upon reservations most fit for grazing, but without flocks or herds; and some, on arable land, have no agricultural implements; while some of the reservations are double the size necessary to maintain the number of Indians now upon them; in a few cases, perhaps, they should be enlarged.

Add to all this the difference in the administration of the agencies. While the same duties are devolved upon all, the disposition of the agents, and the manner of their contact with the Indians, have much to do with their condition and welfare. The agent who perfunctorily performs his duty and slothfully neglects all opportunity to advance their moral and physical improvement, and fails to inspire them with a desire for better things, will accomplish nothing in the direction of their civilization; while he who feels the burden of an important trust, and has an interest in his work, will, by consistent example, firm, yet considerate treatment, and well-directed aid and encouragement, constantly lead those under his charge toward the light of their enfranchisement.

The history of all the progress which has been made in the civilization of the Indian, I think, will disclose the fact that the beginning has been religious teaching, followed by or accompanying secular education. While the self-sacrificing and pious men and women who have aided in this good work by their independent endeavor have for their reward the beneficent results of their labor and the consciousness of Christian duty well performed, their valuable services should be fully acknowledged by all who, under the law, are charged with the control and management of our Indian wards.

What has been said indicates that in the present condition of the Indians no attempt should be made to apply a fixed and unyielding plan of action to their varied and varying needs and circumstances.

The Indian Bureau, burdened as it is with their general oversight and with the details of the establishment, can hardly possess itself of the minute phases of the particular cases needing treatment; and thus the propriety of creating an instrumentality auxiliary to those already established for the care of the Indians suggests itself.

I recommend the passage of a law authorizing the appointment of six commissioners, three of whom shall be detailed from the Army, to be charged with the duty of a careful inspection, from time to time, of all the Indians upon our reservations or subject to the care and control of the Government, with a view of discovering their exact condition and needs, and determining what steps shall be taken on behalf of the Government to improve their situation in the direction of their self-support and complete civilization; that they ascertain from such inspection what, if any, of the reservations may be reduced in area, and in such cases what part, not needed for In-

dian occupation, may be purchased by the Government from the Indians, and disposed of for their benefit; what, if any, Indians may, with their consent, be removed to other reservations, with a view of their concentration and the sale on their behalf of their abandoned reservations; what Indian lands now held in common should be allotted in severalty; in what manner and to what extent the Indians upon the reservations can be placed under the protection of our laws and subjected to their penalties; and which, if any, Indians should be invested with the right of citizenship. The powers and functions of the commissioners in regard to these subjects should be clearly defined, though they should, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Interior, be given all the authority to deal definitely with the questions presented, deemed safe and consistent.

They should be also charged with the duty of ascertaining the Indians who might properly be furnished with implements of agriculture, and of what kind; in what cases the support of the Government should be withdrawn; where the present plan of distributing Indian supplies should be changed; where schools may be established and where discontinued; the conduct, methods, and fitness of agents in charge of reservations; the extent to which such reservations are occupied or intruded upon by unauthorized persons; and generally all matters related to the welfare and improvement of the Indian.

They should advise with the Secretary of the Interior concerning these matters of detail in management, and he should be given power to deal with them fully, if he is not now invested with such power.

This plan contemplates the selection of persons for commissioners who are interested in the Indian question, and who have practical ideas upon the subject of their treatment.

The expense of the Indian Bureau during the last fiscal year was more than six and a half million dollars. I believe much of this expenditure might be saved under the plan proposed; that its economical effects would be increased with its continuance; that the safety of our frontier settlers would be subserved under its operation, and that the nation would be saved through its results from the imputation of inhumanity, injustice, and mismanagement.

The allotment act, or lands in severalty law, as it relates to the Indians, passed at the second session of the Forty-ninth Congress, is now in active and harmonious action. This bill is a step in the same direction—or rather is a measure that should have proceeded and set in motion the beneficial results of the allotment statute. It will have that effect, and in no way is superseded or made useless by the act of the Forty-ninth Congress. The two acts are the twin sisters of a true Indian policy—the joining of the two hands that the Government now holds out to the scattered and disappearing race of red men, to give them permanent homes and enduring citizenship.