

REVISED STATUTES.

FEBRUARY 1, 1888.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 1417.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs report back the bill (H. R. 1417) to amend section 2133 of the Revised Statutes of the United States, so that Indians, other than of the full blood, may trade without a license, with a negative recommendation, for reasons given in two letters inclosed—one by the Indian Commissioner to the honorable Secretary of the Interior, and the other a letter from said Secretary of the Interior to the Indian committee.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
Washington, January 23, 1888.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith a copy of a letter of the 21st instant to this Department from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wherein his views are set forth on a bill (H. R. 1417, Fiftieth Congress, first session), to amend section 2133 of the Revised Statutes, in compliance with an informal request made by Hon. Smedley Darlington.

It is proposed by the bill to amend section 2133 of the Revised Statutes, heretofore amended by the act of July 21, 1882, (22 Stat. L., p. 179), relating to trade with the Indians, so as to permit any member of an Indian tribe to introduce goods in the Indian country and trade without license and bond, as now required by law.

The Commissioner reports that trade by full-blood Indians is not restricted under the existing law; if the law should be amended as contemplated, he states that half-breeds and "squaw-men" will trade at will, without restraint, obligation, bond, or other responsibility; that such persons constitute an element wholly adverse to the interests of the Indians, and their bad influence should be subordinated rather than encouraged. For these reasons he expresses opposition to the object of the bill.

The views of the Commissioner on this subject have the concurrence of this Department.

Hon. Smedley Darlington has been advised of this action.

Very respectfully,

WM. F. VILAS,  
Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
Washington, January 21, 1888.

SIR: Hon. Smedley Darlington has informally requested the views of this Department upon the inclosed bill (H. R. 1417, Fiftieth Congress, first session) to amend section 2133 of the Revised Statutes.

The object of this bill is to amend the act approved July 31, 1882—which is amendatory of section 2133 of the Revised Statutes—relating to trade with Indians, so as to permit any member of an Indian tribe to introduce goods and trade without a license and bond, as now required by law.

I am opposed to the object of the bill as inimical to the interests of the Indians. As the law now stands, no exception is made save in the case of full-blood Indians.

In the appointment of traders, men of the very best character and standing are selected, evidenced by indorsement of their neighbors and friends, and they are required to give ample and properly conditioned bond.

If the present law should be amended as contemplated, half-breeds and “squaw men” could trade at will, without restraint, obligation, bond, or other responsibility.

It is a well-known fact that as a general rule half-breeds and that class of white men who intermingle and marry with Indians form an element wholly adverse to their interests, and their bad influences should be subordinated rather than encouraged, as would evidently result from such a law.

The history of the Indian service demonstrates the fact that the class of white men referred to are not such as seek the education, civilization, and Christianization of the Indian, but are either refugees from justice or are animated by personal motives in connecting themselves with the Indian. It is this class that would receive most, if not the entire, benefit resulting from the proposed amendment.

As to the form of the bill, I have to invite attention to the fact that the words “a member of” should be inserted after the word “than” and before the word “an” in line one of the act of 1882, instead of after the word “other” and before the word “than.”

A copy of the bill and the act of 1882, are herewith inclosed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. D. C. ATKINS,  
*Commissioner.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.