

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 13, 1890.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. MANDERSON, from the Committee on Territories, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 1739.]

The Committee on Territories, to whom was referred bill (S. 1739) providing for a steam-vessel for the use of the civil government of Alaska, have given the matter full consideration and brought the bill back with a recommendation that it pass.

Reference to Executive Document No. 93 of the House of Representatives of the Fifty-first Congress, first session, being a letter from the Acting Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, with accompanying papers and estimate, from the Secretary of the Interior, for appropriation for the purchase and maintenance of a steam-vessel for the use of the civil authorities of Alaska, shows full and abundant reason why this bill should pass.

The Territory of Alaska is of such vast extent, and there is such a great extent of sea-line consequent on the innumerable inlets, islands, and peninsulas, that a vessel of the character provided for is indispensably necessary for the good government of the people of Alaska. Without it the civil authorities of that outlying province are absolutely unable to enforce the existing law.

The following letter has been received from the Secretary of the Interior, and constitutes a further showing of the necessity of the passage of the bill:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 30, 1890.

SIR: I have the honor to furnish, in addition to the inclosed communication from Gov. Lyman E. Knapp, of Alaska, and others, what information I have at my command relative to the need of the civil government of Alaska for a small steam-vessel.

In a communication addressed to this Department August 6, 1889, Governor Knapp said:

"The situation is this: Southeastern Alaska consists of something more than eleven hundred islands, containing over 5,000 square miles of land, together with a deeply-indented shore-line of mainland of more than 400 miles, among which islands and along the shore-line are innumerable ship passages. In this Territory (southeastern Alaska) are twenty-six native villages and a large number of white settlements, canneries, mines, mills, and other enterprises.

There are no wagon roads, mails, telegraphs, or other means of communication, except by boat. The Pacific Coast Steamship Company's line carry mails and passengers and freights fortnightly from Fort Townsend to Sitka, touching at only five or six places. There is no regular communication with the other villages. The lives and property of those engaged in business in these out of the way places, are, to a considerable extent, subject to the caprices of partially-civilized natives, who know their power and opportunity, and who, when inflamed by intoxicating liquors, are certainly dangerous in the extreme. Ordinarily they are a very peaceable people. But there are bad tempers and rough characters among them, as well as among many civilized people. Besides, their medicine-men, ("Shamans") do not hesitate to appeal to their superstitions and arouse their evil passions on occasions. Where they can be readily reached, the fear of punishment prevents serious damage ordinarily

2 STEAM-VESSEL FOR USE OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES IN ALASKA.

but in the remoter settlements crime and ravage and bloodshed often hold high carnival."

In a letter to this Department of date August 30, 1889, the Secretary of War says: "I had quite a talk the other day with Doctor McIntire, who is the superintendent of the Alaska Seal Company. He has been in the service of that company for many years, and although spending most of his time on the seal islands, has traversed the Territory and is very well acquainted with the whole situation. I had not received this letter when I saw Doctor McIntire, but I was asking him about the necessity of a small military force in Alaska.

"His reply was directly in the line of Governor Knapp's suggestion, that a boat would be much more useful than a military force. If there was a boat patrolling the waters there would be little danger of trouble, while a military force would be only at one or two points, and with no means of transportation might, and probably would, be of little use."

In another letter, of December 21, 1889, the Secretary of War says:

"I have given a good deal of attention to the situation in Alaska on account of the numerous applications that have been made to this Department to send a military force there; have consulted with Senator Manderson and others who have been there the past summer, and Senator Manderson has given the matter special attention on account of his interest as one of the Committee on Military affairs. It seems to me that something like Governor Knapp's plan is the very best possible one. I think it the better plan to have the whole matter under your Department than to have divided jurisdiction. With the vessel and some little militia and police, or similar organization, I do not believe there will be any occasion for an army detachment there. The governor's arrangement will be very much more useful and provide for every contingency much better than any other plan that has been suggested."

The late Governor A. P. Swineford, in his report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1888, in discussing the necessities for enlarged mail facilities for Alaska, says:

"Unless such routes are established, particularly the one to the westward from Sitka, a vessel for the transportation of officials, always at their command, will be absolutely indispensable to an extension of the civil authority over any part of the Territory save the southeastern section, which embraces less than one-twentieth of its nearly, if not more than, 600,000 square miles."

Governor Knapp, in his report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1889, says:

"The judge and district attorney, whose experience and observation during their term of office render their opinions of especial value, are emphatic in their declarations that the greater hindrance to the rapid dispatch of the business of the court and the administration of justice is the inadequacy of the means of transportation and the great expense and difficulty of obtaining competent jurors. There ought to be provision for transporting the court officials, prisoners, witnesses, and jurors to and from the place of holding court. This is essential to the administration of the laws in Alaska. There are a great number of native villages situated at a distance from the mail-steamer routes, with no access to them except by canoe. In many instances it has been impossible to serve processes for the want of a light-draught vessel within the absolute and immediate control of the civil government, without the embarrassment and uncertainty of depending upon the courtesy and convenience of those acting under the orders of another Department of the Government than the one upon which the responsibility rests. A vessel of 100 tons capacity, thoroughly built and sea-worthy, with a wooden hull, filled with first-class machinery, adapted to our inland channels, with accommodations for twenty to twenty-five passengers, carrying one or two 3-inch-bore breech-loading guns and perhaps a Gatling gun, would probably serve all ordinary purposes of the civil government when there is no unusual excitement or trouble."

In view, therefore, of the immensity of the Territory of Alaska, the impossibility of land communication, the great extent of the sea line consequent on the innumerable inlets, islands, and peninsulas, and of the contiguity of the settlements to the water-ways of that distant region, I regard a vessel of the character provided for in Senate bill 1739, for the use of the civil authorities of the Territory, as indispensably necessary to the well-being and good government of the people of Alaska, and I earnestly recommend that said bill become a law.

In this connection I would refer to my estimate for this purpose, with accompanying documents and exhibits, printed Ex. Doc. No. 93, Fifty-first Congress, first session.

Very respectfully,

J. W. NOBLE,
Secretary.

Hon. ORVILLE H. PLATT,
Chairman Committee on Territories, United States Senate.