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Bands of Chippewas in Wisconsin

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BANDS OF CHIPPEWAS IN WISCONSIN.

MARCH 3, 1879.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 6334.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 6334) for the relief of the Lac de Flambeau and other Indians in the State of Wisconsin, have had the same under consideration, and recommend its passage with the following amendments:

In line seven, section second, strike out "over" and insert "of," and after the word "age" insert "or over."

In line fifteen, after the word "lands" add "so as to exclude mineral lands."

The committee refer specially to the letter of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, hereto attached, for full statement and explanation of the objects of the bill, which supersedes the necessity of any further report on the part of the committee.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, February 3, 1878.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a draft of a bill for the relief of the Lac de Flambeau, Bad River, and Lac Court Oreilles bands of Chippewa Indians in the State of Wisconsin, with the request that the same be transmitted to the chairman House Committee on Indian Affairs, with your recommendation for favorable consideration.

In connection with said bill, I desire to submit a few of the more prominent considerations which render its passage at this session of Congress of great importance to the government and the Indians.

The three reservations occupied by these Indians were set aside for their use by the treaty of September 30, 1854, with the Chippewas of Lake Superior (10th Stats., 1109), and are as follows: For the Bad River bands a tract on the coast of Lake Superior, near Ashland, containing 124,333 acres; for the Lac Court Oreilles band, a tract on the headwaters of the Chippewa River, containing 69,136 acres; and for the Lac de Flambeau Indians, a tract on the headwaters of the Flambeau and Wisconsin Rivers, containing 69,824 acres, all in the State of Wisconsin. There is an area of arable land of fair quality on the Bad River and Lac Court Oreilles Reservations sufficient for the occupancy of the three bands, numbering 3,145 persons. Interspersed with the maple timber, which is the prevailing growth on these reservations, are to be found large quantities of pine of the finest quality. The maple and pine growing together mark their most valuable agricultural lands.

The Lac de Flambeau Reservation is said to contain no arable land, being valuable only for its pine timber, of which there are estimated to be about three hundred million feet, worth two dollars or more per thousand feet.

There are, by estimation, about one hundred and fifty million feet of pine on the Bad River Reservation, valued at \$1.50 per thousand, and at least two hundred and fifty million feet on the Lac Court Oreilles Reservation, with, say, two dollars per thousand feet.

The purpose of the bill is to sell the Lac de Flambeau Reservation in small tracts, after appraisement, and consolidate the 665 Indians, belonging thereon, on the Lac Court Oreilles and Bad River Reservations as they may elect; and after such consolidation is effected, to allot eighty acres of land to each head of a family or single person over eighteen years of age, a like amount to each orphan child under eighteen years of age, and forty acres to each other unmarried person under eighteen years of age, belonging to the tribe. After the allotments are made, it is proposed to appraise the merchantable pine timber on the lands allotted, and also all the unallotted lands, and sell the same for cash to the highest bidder at not less than the appraised value, allowing three years for the removal of the pine from the lands allotted, after which patents, without the power of alienation for twenty-five years, will be issued for the lands allotted. The funds arising from the proposed sales it is believed will net at least one million dollars, which, under the provisions of the bill, are to be invested in four per cent. bonds, the interest thereon to be expended annually for their benefit under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior.

As at present situated these Indians are in extreme poverty. On the Bad River Reservation, which is within a short distance of the agency, some progress has been made within the last few years. They have no annuities, and, consequently, are without the means with which to carve out a home, which is no small task in a heavily-timbered country.

The Indians at Lac Court Oreilles were never visited by an agent until since the appointment of the present agent, and for want of funds but little has been done for them.

They are, however, in common with the majority of the other bands, very anxious to take the initiatory steps looking to the creation of a home, and to effect this have been importuning the department for the allotment of their lands in severalty. This desire should be gratified, but in doing so it is, in my judgment, the duty of the department to see that the large resources which they possess in their pine timber should be utilized for the benefit of the whole tribe. This can only be done by a sale of the pine by the government, and the funding of the proceeds. If allowed to sell it themselves it will be disposed of for less than a quarter of its value, and the proceeds wasted.

If disposed of by the government and the proceeds judiciously expended for their benefit they will, in my judgment, be independent of the government in a few years.

It is exceedingly desirable, also, that the pine on these reservations should be sold to prevent the yearly increasing waste, arising from fires, windfalls, the depredations of trespassers, which are not inconsiderable, and the natural decay of the timber which long since passed its maturity.

Other and equally weighty considerations might be presented, but the foregoing are, it would appear, sufficient.

I inclose a copy of this letter and of the bill in question for the files of the department.

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

E. A. HAYT,
Commissioner.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.