

REPORT

Of the Committee to which was referred so much of the President's message, as relates to Indian affairs, accompanied with a bill for establishing trading houses with the Indian tribes, &c. &c.

Made January 22d, 1818, and with the Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House on Monday next.

The committee to whom was referred, so much of the President's message as relates to Indian affairs, report; that the capital appropriated for prosecution of Indian trade, was, in 1809, augmented from \$200,000 to \$300,000, which sum by succeeding acts, has been continued down to this period; of the capital thus appropriated \$290,000, have been drawn from the Treasury and actively employed under direction of the superintendent of Indian supplies. Under the various laws enacted for the support and encouragement of Indian trade, eight factories or trading posts have been established at the following points:

1. Fort Mitchel, Georgia.
2. Chickasaw Bluffs, Mississippi Territory.
3. Fort Confederation, on the Tombigby River.
4. Fort Osage, on the Missouri River, near the mouth of the Osage.
5. Prairie du Chien, on the Mississippi, near the mouth of the Ouiss Consur River.
6. Ordered to Sulphur Fork, on Red River, formerly at Natchitoches.
7. Green Bay, on the Green Bay of Lake Michigan, Illinois Territory.
8. Chicago, Lake Michigan.

The committee deem it unnecessary to present a detailed view of the profits and loss of each particular agency: Submit in relation to the general establishment; that it has been a losing institution owing, it is presumable, to adventitious circumstances originating in our late belligerent state, and not growing out of any defect in the organization or government of the trade. From the first operation of this traffic, up to December, 1809, it sustained a loss of \$44,538 36 cents, since that period the trade has been more successful, it having yielded a profit, on the capital actually vested in merchandise of about \$15,000 annually, after covering a loss of \$13,369, which accrued in consequence of the capture of several trading posts, by the enemy during the late war.

In this view of the subject, the committee have not embraced an item of 20,000, annually disbursed at the Treasury for the superintendent and his clerks, the factories, &c. and which when applied to the concern as necessarily it must be in making an estimate of profits and loss, will absorb the profits arising from the funds employed in trade and furnish an annual charge against the establishment of \$ 5,000: this annual loss being sustained by the Treasury pursuant to appropriations for the pay of the superintendent and his assistant, is a loss to the government, but not to the concern, in the diminution of its capital, which under all circumstances remains stationary.

The act passed 29th of April, 1816, giving to the President the discretionary power of licensing foreigners to a participation in the Indian trade, is less exceptionable, in theory than in practice; with all the guards of the act, and precautions of the executive, it has been found impracticable under dispensing power, to avoid the admission of men of vicious habits, whose conduct tends to interrupt the peace and harmony of the United States and the Indian tribes; nor can such be introduced while the door is left open to foreign traders, either admit or exclude all. A system partial in its character, will by inhibiting a worthy applicant do him injustice, and by permitting the fraudulent speculator, the savage for whom the provision is made and the country are wronged. The executive must rely on recommendations in the exercise of the power deposited with him, and no doubt, often deceived in the character of persons recommended to presidential patronage.

The committee are apprised, that the exclusion of foreigners will be attended with a momentary irritation, and a temporary expense to the nation, as the inhibition will devolve on the government an obligation to increase its trading posts and augment Indian capital, so as to supply the wants of such tribes as are now dependent on foreign trade. The prosecution of this policy will be strongly aided by the additional vigor with which the system will inspire the commercial enterprize of the American citizen. The committee has been unable to ascertain with any degree of accuracy the amount of capital employed by foreigners in this trade, consequently it is somewhat at a loss to suggest the amount necessary to fill the vacuum that may be occasioned by the withdrawing of foreign capital; but from the best lights which have been afforded, the committee are induced to believe that dollars in addition to the present appropriations, having the auxiliary exertions of individual enterprize, and aided by a superintendence of St. Louis, or some other suitable place, could be amply sufficient to accomplish what must be desirable in the government, at the supply of those dependent upon its humanity upon terms advantageous to both.

Your committee further report, that they consider supplying the Indian tribes with such articles of merchandise as are necessary to meet their pressing wants, is not only an act of humanity, but a sound national policy, and that every measure that would tend to civilize those savage tribes ought to be pursued by the United States. Your

committee are induced to believe that nothing in the power of government to do would have a more direct tendency to produce this desirable object than the establishment of schools at convenient and safe places amongst those tribes friendly to us. Your committee are aware that many plausible objections may be raised against the proposed measure; but we believe that all difficulties on this subject may be surmounted: and that the great object may be carried into practical effect. In the present state of our country, one of two things seems to be necessary, either that those sons of the forest should be moralized or exterminated: humanity would rejoice at the former, but shrink with horror from the latter. Put into the hand of their children the primer and the hoe, and they will naturally in time take hold of the plow, and as their minds become enlightened and expand, the bible will be their book, and they will grow up in habits of morality and industry, leave the chase to those whose minds are less cultivated, and become useful members of society.

Great exertions have of late years been made by individuals and missionary societies in Europe and America: schools have been established by those humane and benevolent societies in the Indies, amongst the Hindoos and Hottentots, and notwithstanding that superstition, bigotry, and ignorance have shrowded those people in darkness for ages, thousands of them have already yielded to instruction.

The government has no such difficulties to encounter: no bibles nor books to translate into foreign or other languages: only establish some English schools: the experiment may be tried at a very small expense. The committee believe that increasing the number of trading posts, and establishing schools on, or near our frontiers for the education of Indian children, would be attended with beneficial effects, both to the United States and the Indian tribes, and the best possible means of securing the friendship of those nations in amity with us, and in time to bring the hostile tribes to see that their true interest lies in peace and not in war. And therefore the committee report a bill.

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