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Report : Petition of E. White.

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IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 2, 1846.

Submitted, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. ATCHISON made the following

REPORT :

[To accompany bill S. No. 71.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the petition of Elijah White, sub-agent of Indian affairs west of the Rocky mountains, for compensation, &c., submit the following report :

Your committee have carefully investigated the petition of Elijah White, sub-agent of Indian affairs west of the Rocky mountains, and examined the evidence in relation to the prayer of the petitioner to be reimbursed certain expenditures actually made by him in discharge of his official duties, and for compensation for services actually rendered.

Your committee find that the said Elijah White was appointed, in January, 1842, by the Hon. John C. Spencer, then Secretary of War, to take charge, generally, of Indian affairs west of the Rocky mountains, as a sub-agent, no law being in existence which permitted the establishment of a full agency in that country. Your committee find, in the correspondence of the Secretary, and other evidence, sufficient proof to show that the petitioner has acted under discretionary orders, written and verbal, from the head of the department.

The petitioner, it appears, repaired to his station upon the Wallamette in the spring of 1842, by the overland route, accompanied by a party of one hundred and twenty emigrants, induced by his representations to settle in the Oregon territory. This was the first party of emigrants which has crossed the continent, and successfully met the difficulties of the then unexplored route.

The petitioner has continued, since that time, to reside in Oregon, discharging his duties with efficiency, and all possible economy. These have become annually more numerous and delicate, arising from the rapid influx of population, by the overland route and by sea.

The committee find the statements contained in the petition to be fully sustained by vouchers and evidence.

The difficulties continually arising between 8,000 whites arriving and seeking settlements in an Indian country, destitute of any political or mili-

tary authority, appear to have been met promptly by the petitioner, and the peace and quiet of the country admirably maintained.

Your committee find in the reports made annually by the petitioner to the department, and published, satisfactory representations of the inadequacy of the salary and allowances of a sub-agency to meet the necessities of his situation. The petitioner, moreover, has repeatedly requested that, unless his expenditures made from year to year should be sanctioned and allowed, he should be relieved from his responsibilities and recalled. Your committee find that he has not been so relieved or recalled, nor has any communication ever reached him from the department during his residence in Oregon, disallowing his expenditures or restricting the discretionary powers originally given by the Secretary.

The petitioner asks to be remunerated in the following amounts :

His actual travelling expenses to and from his station on the Wallamette, being upwards of 7,000 miles	-	-	\$864 65
Expedition to the sources of the Wallamette and Cascade mountains in the spring of 1845	-	-	486 52½
Balance suspended by the department, under the heads of interpreters, guards, transportation, provisions, erection of agency, and presents to Indians	-	-	3,087 43
Additional charge for salary as agent for four years, at \$750 per annum	-	-	3,000 00
			Total
			\$7,418 60½

Your committee find this first charge to be the amount actually and necessarily expended by the petitioner, and believe it to be moderate and equitable, and that it ought to be allowed.

The second charge appears equally just, and to have been made in compliance with the instructions of T. Hartley Crawford, superintendent of Indian affairs, of February 9th, 1842, and enforced by the resolution of the Oregon legislature, expressing the hope that Congress will reimburse the expenses of the petitioner thereby incurred.

The third charge is for moneys actually paid under the specified heads by the petitioner, and for which drafts are now under protest, being disallowed by the department. These accounts, your committee find, have been suspended by the department under a decision made to restrict the petitioner to the amount allowed by law to sub-agents, viz: \$1,250 per annum in all. Your committee believe that these amounts are equitably and justly asked, and should be granted by Congress, although the committee approve of the decision of the department, and think, in cases like the present, that such extra allowances should be made only by Congress.

Your committee have had a variety of testimony before them, showing that the affairs of his position have compelled the petitioner to transact and regulate Indian relations amongst ten large tribes, and many more small ones, speaking different languages, and for the most part warlike, excitable, and suspicious people. The Indian population amongst whom he has been the only official organ amounts to twenty-five thousand souls. The petitioner has been left to support himself by his solitary energies and exertions, without the aid of troops, annuities, or the awe which the power of the government exercises over Indians to whom it is known. The prices

of all articles, (especially provisions,) and the wages of interpreters and assistants, and the means of travelling and transportation, are very high, and difficult to be procured.

Your committee believe that the petitioner would be left without any compensation for four years of arduous, harassing, and vexatious services, unless the relief for which he prays be extended to him by Congress.

The committee, therefore, report the accompanying bill, and recommend its passage, as sanctioned by the equity and justice of the case, and according with the uniform policy and practice of the Congress of the United States in similar cases.