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Report : Claim of the Northwest Fur Company

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JANUARY 23, 1873.—Ordered to be printed.

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

R E P O R T :

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the claim of the Northwest Fur Company for supplies furnished Indians at Fort Union, Dakota Territory, in March, 1866, report :

That in February, 1869, the Secretary of the Interior transmitted to Congress a claim of the Northwest Fur Company, amounting to \$20,501.70, for money paid Indian soldiers for defending Fort Union, Dakota Territory, between the 1st of December, 1866, and the 30th of April, 1867, and for supplies furnished such Indians and their families during the same time. Messrs. Brugier & Geowey also presented a claim for supplies furnished the Indians during the same period. The accounts were referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs; and as both rested upon the same state of facts, both were considered in a report which was made to the Senate on the 1st day of February, 1871, adverse to the payment of the claims. The further consideration of the subject was indefinitely postponed and the committee discharged. (Sen. Rep. 337, 41st Cong., 3d ses.)

On the 7th day of February, 1871, the Secretary of the Interior transmitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives another bill of the Northwest Fur Company against the United States, amounting to \$12,575.18½, for supplies furnished Indians of the same agency during the month of March, 1866. The bill is certified by Mr. Wilkinson, United States Indian agent, as being correct and just, and that the supplies were necessary to prevent starvation among the Indians, and that he had no money in his hands applicable to the payment of the same. On the 3d day of February, 1871, Mr. Wilkinson made oath, before a justice of the peace in this the city of Washington, that the Indians comprising the agency returned from a hunt about the 1st of April to Fort Union; that many had perished from starvation, and that to prevent deaths the Northwest Fur Company, with his approval, provided them with supplies.

In examining this claim, in connection with the one which had been previously made by this company, it appears that this bill of particulars was certified to by Mr. Wilkinson two days after the action of the Senate on the adverse report of the Committee on Indian Affairs upon the first bill; that the first bill which had been presented was for supplies which were said to have been delivered between November, 1866, and May, 1867, and that this bill was for supplies said to have been furnished eight months previous.

It is difficult for your committee to conceive of a good reason why a company should present a claim for the payment of supplies furnished at one period which did not include those previously supplied, or how an agent could give a correct certificate of the quantity of those which had been furnished nearly five years previous to the time of making such certificate. It is also very remarkable that this claim, if right and just, should not have been presented until the first claim had been rejected, and that it should follow so closely upon such rejection.

Your committee find it impossible to reconcile the dates, certificates, and statements which accompany these bills with each other, and are satisfied that they are so destitute of proof that their payment would encourage extravagant, if not fraudulent, claims, which if allowed would be a robbery of the public Treasury.

They therefore report adversely upon this claim.