

3-18-1874

Report on the Mission Indians of California

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 18, 1874.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. OGLESBY submitted the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the communication of the Secretary of the Interior, with accompanying papers, in regard to the Mission Indians of California, have had the same under consideration, and respectfully report :

Under date of October 28, 1873, John G. Ames, who was appointed a special agent for that purpose in May, 1873, reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs the results of his visit to and examination of the Mission Indians of California.

January 8, 1874, he submits a supplemental report, in which he states there are about 4,000 of those Indians.

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, January 22, 1874, transmits to the Secretary of the Interior the reports of Agent Ames, and states there are about "5,000 souls" in the several tribes known as the Mission Indians; indorses the report of Agent Ames; commends its statements to approval; and recommends an appropriation of \$150,000 for their immediate relief, and that an Indian agency be established among them for their supervision and care.

The Secretary of the Interior, January 24, 1874, transmits to the chairman of this committee the above reports and correspondence for the consideration of Congress, and states that "their present wretched condition, as reported to this Department, calls for some legislation for their immediate relief."

On the 20th of February, 1874, the Secretary of the Interior transmits to the chairman of this committee, for the consideration of Congress, "a copy of a report, dated the 18th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and accompanying papers therein referred to," and again recommends legislation in behalf of those Indians. The report referred to is a communication of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated February 18, 1874, to the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting a letter from the Rev. J. G. Ames, special agent, dated February 17, 1874, with copies of the inclosures therein referred to. The letter of Rev. J. G. Ames, of February 11, 1874, merely states that he transmits, for the information of the Indian Office, "Extract copies of letters received by him from Mr. M. H. Crafts, of San Bernardino, and C. N. Wilson, of Los Angeles, Cal." The letter of Mr. Wilson to Mr. Ames states: "The recommendations in your report are, in my opinion, all very good, and if any or all of them are carried out by the Government, must be of great advantage to the Indians;" "they trust in the promises made by you to them, and look for speedy help from the Government."

The letter of Mr. Crafts relates mainly to the shooting of an Indian by a white man, and the efforts of Mr. Crafts to have the white man arrested in January last.

The report of Mr. Ames, October 28, 1873, enters largely into a history of the Mission Indians, their present condition, and the treatment they have received from the white race settled near them, in two or three counties of Southern California, since the occupation of that country by the United States. It states that under Spanish rule they were humanely treated, and for 100 years have had the benefits derivable from Catholic missions among them; that the Mexican republic succeeding to the sovereignty of the country, they were regarded and treated as citizens, and allowed the right to vote, adopting for this purpose the report of Mr. Whiting, an Indian superintendent, who sustains this view, and thereupon argues, under the terms of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, that they were to sustain the same relation to the United States they did to the Republic of Mexico; that they are of right citizens of the United States. The report states they have not been so regarded or treated by this Government, but have suffered in various ways from neglect and abuse, no attention being paid either to their rights or wants; that they have from time to time been driven from their homes, and that the several tribes are now scattered in small settlements, rancherias, or villages, between the white settlements and the borders of the desert to the east; that they still sustain the tribal relations, and decline to separate, settle, and occupy the country as other people, or to go on to any reservation which might be set apart for them, but insist upon their right to hold, by occupancy, certain lands and districts of country as their tribal property, descended to them from their forefathers; express a desire to have schools; to receive implements of husbandry, or any other instruments of improvement and civilization the United States may feel disposed to donate to them. It is now proposed to appropriate \$150,000 for their relief and benefit, and to inaugurate a system of gratuities and annuities applicable to them, doubtless, so long as their present condition and relations may continue. It seems strange, after 100 years of association with the white race, partially, if not continuously, under the influence of our civilization, occupying agricultural lands and pursuing an agricultural life, the request should be made to furnish these tribes with seed and farming implements, the first instruments of husbandry, for food and clothing, articles it might reasonably enough be supposed they would, by this time, have secured for the most ordinary purposes of life.

The facts submitted do not offer a basis upon which to found a final system in our treatment of these Indians. If they will not go forward and accept the higher plane of American citizenship, abandon the tribal relation, and accept the benefits of our pre-emption and homestead laws, but prefer to adhere to their ancient system of Indian life, it may be better, after a thorough investigation by a responsible commission of their wants, capacities, and condition, their rights to any portion of the soil, and the final abandonment of any hope to reclaim them as citizens, to enter fairly into some arrangement with them by which they may be transferred to some reservation upon which, in their own right, they may reside, secured and protected by laws of the United States. The proposition to appropriate funds (an easy method so long as the funds may be cheerfully furnished) to meet any mere passing demands we feel is but a temporary and unsatisfactory plan. It contemplates no settlement of the difficulty, and does not present a sound and final set-

tlement of the question. The lands in California are held either under recognized grants from the Mexican government, or, if public, are open to settlement under our generous homestead and pre-emption-laws. There is no middle ground upon which to build a middle policy in the settled portions of the country for a class of people who will not accept our citizenship nor conform to our civilization. It is a difficult subject to deal with, presenting new and unpleasant features at every turn. It is by no means a pleasant reflection to contemplate the fate of an unfortunate race which will not willingly accept the destiny of elevation to American citizenship, with all the social privileges to follow from civilization, but seem rather to adhere to that other destiny which leads to no hope, possibly to extermination. We indulge the conviction that the American people will not long endure a policy which may look to fostering this race in idleness and ignorance upon its bounty, perpetuating the prejudices of past ages, and nursing the relations forever festering between civilized and barbarous peoples.

We ask to be discharged from the further consideration of the subject.