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Report on Allotments of Land to Indians

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MAY 13, 1874.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. INGALLS submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 778.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom the subject was referred, submit the following report:

The section proposed to be amended provides that any Absentee Shawnee of pure or mixed blood, being the head of a family, or a person above the age of twenty-one years, who has continuously resided for the term of three years within the thirty-mile square tract lying west of the Seminole reservation in the Indian Territory, having made substantial improvements thereon, shall receive from the Secretary of the Interior a certificate of allotment for eighty acres of land, to include as far as practicable his or her improvements with an addition of twenty acres for each minor child of said Indian, the costs of said land to the United States to be paid from the funds now held by the United States for the benefit of said Indians and charged as part of their distributive share of said fund.

This bill proposes to allow the Indians entitled to an allotment to select and purchase from the United States a quantity of land equal to the quantity allotted to himself and his children, to be selected as near as practicable to his allotment and paid for within three years to the United States at the rate of 25 cents an acre, payment to be made to the central superintendent of Indian affairs, deposited with the receiver of the nearest local land-office and covered into the Treasury the same as the proceeds of the public lands.

The committee are unable to perceive any necessity for the passage of this bill. The quantity under the allotment is amply sufficient for the purposes of agriculture and probably much larger than receives profitable and scientific cultivation. Nor is any reason apparent why the Indians, if they are to become purchasers and need the additional land, should not buy it upon the same terms as our own citizens as to time and terms of payment.

Twenty-five cents per acre with three years' credit indicates a pecuniary condition not favorable to the immediate improvement of the soil, and implies either an absence of accumulation from previous effort or a desire to speculate in the enhanced value of the land before the time for payment shall arrive.

The Government certainly can receive no benefit by the passage of this bill. If it becomes a law, every acre that can be acquired under it will undoubtedly be secured by the Indians at one-sixth of the price that is demanded, and would be cheerfully paid by citizens, if permitted to purchase.

The committee, therefore, recommend the indefinite postponement of the bill.

