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Military Telegraph in Dakota and Montana

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

APRIL 9, 1878.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. SPENCER, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT :

[To accompany bill S. 864.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 864) to provide for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a military telegraph in Dakota and Montana Territories, have had the same under consideration and submit the following report :

This bill appropriates the sum of \$30,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining, under the direction of the Secretary of War, a military telegraph line from Deadwood, in the Territory of Dakota, to Fort Ellis, in the Territory of Montana, embracing by connection the line of military posts at or near the Yellowstone and Bighorn Rivers.

The Secretary of War, upon being addressed and requested to express his views respecting the propriety of constructing the proposed military telegraph line, replies as follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, March 18, 1878.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th instant, transmitting Senate bill 864, "to provide for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a military telegraph in Dakota and Montana Territories," and in reply beg to transmit herewith a copy of a report of the General of the Army, containing his views upon the subject, in which I concur.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. W. McCRARY,
Secretary of War.

Hon. GEORGE E. SPENCER,
Chairman Committee on Military Affairs,
United States Senate

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Washington, D. C., March 12, 1878.

Respectfully submitted to the honorable Secretary of War, who is the only proper medium of communication with the Congress of the United States.

I most heartily approve of the measure contemplated in the inclosed bill (S. 864). A telegraph line from Deadwood City, in the Black Hills, to Forts Keogh, Custer, and Ellis, in Montana, would be most valuable to the military authorities.

Its maintenance will cost less than the usual military couriers sent from post to post, using up and killing annually many horses. This telegraph will furnish prompt intelligence along a line which must soon be occupied by settlers, and will greatly facilitate such settlement; soon to be followed by the usual stages and wagon travel.

I trust this bill will meet the sanction of the honorable Secretary of War and of Congress.

W. T. SHERMAN,
General.

The following communications have been received by the chairman of your committee from Lieut. Gen. P. H. Sheridan and General George Crook, both commending the proposition to construct and maintain the proposed line of military telegraph :

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
Chicago, March 23, 1878.

SIR: I noticed with pleasure the introduction of a bill in Congress to extend a line of telegraph from Deadwood City, Black Hills, Fort Keogh, mouth of Tongue River, Yellowstone Valley, Fort Custer, mouth of Little Horn, Bighorn Valley, and Fort Ellis, Montana.

If you can in any way expedite the passage of this bill it would be of the greatest importance to the military service and a large economy in our expenditures. If we can connect Forts Keogh, Custer, and Ellis, it will be of great value in our military operations. The necessity for a line of this kind has been so great that if I could only have gotten money enough out of our Army appropriations to have purchased the wire and insulators and hire a good foreman, I would have put the line up myself by the labor of the troops, and would have had it built now.

I am so anxious about this line, or some other line making connection with the posts named, that I believe we could put it up from Deadwood to Fort Ellis without its costing a cent more than \$30,000.

I am, sir, yours truly,

P. H. SHERIDAN,
Lieutenant-General, U. S. A.

Hon. GEORGE E. SPENCER,
Chairman Senate Military Committee, Washington, D. C.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
COMMANDING GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Omaha, Nebr., March 21, 1878.

MY DEAR SIR: I have been requested to give my views in regard to the proposed construction of a telegraph-line to connect the city of Deadwood, Dak., with the military posts on Tongue River and the Little Bighorn.

In regard to this project I beg leave to say that I regard it as a measure of public importance. In a military point of view it would be of incalculable value, and any reasonable sum expended in aid thereof would, in my opinion, result in a large saving to the public treasury.

The same view of it would apply to other branches of the public service, notably the Indian Department.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEORGE CROOK,
Brigadier General, Commanding Department.

Hon. GEO. E. SPENCER,
U. S. Senate, Chairman Military Committee, &c., Washington, D. C.

From these official documents, it appears the construction, operation and maintenance of the proposed military telegraph-line are necessary for the public service; and, in addition to the value of the line as respects prompt transmission of military orders and dispatches of the government, will really prove an economy, costing less than the usual employment of military couriers sent from post to post, with the attendant risks of life and property. The necessity for prompt intelligence along this range of military posts cannot, in the judgment of your committee, be questioned, and the line will greatly benefit and expedite military movements in a section overrun with hostile Indians, where troops are constantly employed in checking depredations upon the settlers.

The bill provides that private dispatches of lawful nature may be transmitted over the line, when the same is not needed for public use, at reasonable rates, to be established by the Secretary of War. This will create, as your committee are advised and believe, an amount of revenue at least sufficient to keep the same in repair, if not more. The rules and

regulations governing the use of the line are to be determined by the Secretary of War, so that it will be strictly under control of the military authorities. Other departments of the government, and notably the Indian Bureau, as suggested by General Crook, will be largely benefited by the construction of this line.

Your committee, therefore, in view of the recommendations of the Secretary of War, the General of the Army, Lieutenant-General Sheridan and General Crook, believe the construction of the proposed line of telegraph is a military necessity, and will accomplish desirable results of value to the government and to the people of that locality. They therefore recommend the passage of the bill.

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