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Domesticated reindeer in Alaska

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DOMESTICATED REINDEER IN ALASKA.

APRIL 15, 1892.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Agriculture, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 7764.]

The Committee on Agriculture, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 7764) to secure the introduction of domesticated reindeer into Alaska, report the same with a favorable recommendation. This bill does not properly come within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Agriculture, but should have been considered by the Committee on Appropriations. At the suggestion of the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations the Committee on Agriculture, having heard the testimony of the missionaries from Alaska, the Commissioner of Education, and others in regard to the merits of the bill, have considered it and recommend its passage.

The testimony showed that there are no reindeer in Alaska; that Alaska could support many times enough reindeer to furnish the inhabitants with food and clothing, and that the reindeer skins are indispensable for clothing; that the whale and walrus, the principal supply of food, have been destroyed to such an extent as to cause much suffering for food; that dogs are used for transportation, and in many places the supply of food is becoming so scarce that the natives are compelled to eat their dogs, thus depriving them of the means of hauling their supplies; that for the development of the country the domesticated reindeer is absolutely indispensable; that the domesticated reindeer can make a speed of 19 miles an hour, and that a fair average rate of speed is 12 miles per hour; and this means of transportation is necessary to develop the gold fields of the interior, which can only be worked from two to two and one-half months a year; that the reindeer would be distributed at the Government schools, the native youths taught to herd and raise them, the increase to be given to worthy students and native teachers for services rendered; that this will induce the natives to become herders, be self-supporting, and not a charge upon the Government; that the natives have no vessels that can transport the live reindeer from Siberia to Alaska; that the vessels from San Francisco to Alaska leave the 1st of May to the 1st of June, none later than the last date mentioned, and that if anything be done this year it is absolutely necessary to get the appropriation in time to send the goods for the purchase of the reindeer by the revenue cutter that leaves San Francisco the 1st of June.

The description given by the missionaries and others of the country, the habits of the natives, etc., was interesting. The distress caused by the continued failure of the food supply shows plainly that the natives will not be able to sustain themselves, and will become a charge upon the Government. For these and other reasons the Committee on Agriculture urge the passage of this bill.