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Letter from the Acting Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting a communication from the Secretary of the Interior submitting an estimate of appropriation for the purchase of reindeer for Alaska.

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PURCHASE OF REINDEER FOR ALASKA.

LETTER

FROM

THE ACTING SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

A communication from the Secretary of the Interior submitting an estimate of appropriation for the purchase of reindeer for Alaska.

FEBRUARY 7, 1896.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
February 6, 1896.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the consideration of Congress, a communication from the Secretary of the Interior, under date of the 4th instant, in relation to the purchase of reindeer for Alaska, and submitting an estimate of appropriation in the sum of \$45,000 for that object under the new policy recommended for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1897.

Respectfully, yours,

S. WIKE,
Acting Secretary.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, D. C., January 17, 1896.

SIR: In a former communication I had the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a communication from you, transmitting a letter from the Acting Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 4, in which he states that "in view of the amount of work required of revenue vessels in Bering Sea, hereafter it will be impracticable for them to transport reindeer from the Siberian coast, as has been the custom in years past."

This notification necessitates a change in the plans for procuring reindeer. During the past summer and fall there have been frequent consultations in this office over the desirability of adopting a new plan that would secure a more speedy introduction of reindeer into Alaska than has been found possible through the means hitherto used. In the four

years during which we have purchased reindeer the number procured has averaged from 130 to 150, but the necessities of the work are so great that we ought to procure annually a much larger number, hence I was not unprepared for the change, the need of which was mentioned in my annual statement for 1895. This accords with your own view as expressed in your annual report, lately printed.

I had thought it might be necessary to place a purchasing party in Siberia who should remain during the winter, and in that way secure a large herd ready for transportation when the ship should arrive in the summer. But in view of the recent decision of the honorable the Secretary of the Treasury it seems now that a more effective plan will be to enlist the commercial trading companies of the North Pacific and Bering Sea to furnish 1,000 or 1,500 head of reindeer per annum for two years. With a view to ascertain whether anything is practicable in this line I had already commenced as early as last November a correspondence with four of the leading commercial companies engaged in trade in that region. Three of them have replied that they were not in a position to take up the work. The fourth company is willing to undertake to deliver 1,500 head a year at such points upon the Alaskan coast as shall be designated at the rate of \$30 per head. This plan would relieve the Bureau of much anxiety and prove as cheap to the Government as the past method. Up to this time the deer have averaged the Bureau from \$20 to \$25 each, but counting in the expenses of the revenue cutter during the four weeks it is employed in the work, the average expense would probably exceed over \$50 per head.

It has been demonstrated that the deer thrive better on the American than on the Siberian side, and that there is pasturage in Alaska for from four to five million head, and as the straits of the natives for sufficient food increases slowly from year to year it is important that the work of providing this new food supply should be hastened as much as possible.

I have the honor therefore to recommend the policy of advertising for bids to deliver reindeer at various points along the Alaskan coast, and that Congress be asked to provide \$45,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, to purchase 1,500 head of reindeer during the year closing June 30, 1897.

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

W. T. HARRIS, *Commissioner.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
February 4, 1896.

Approved and respectfully forwarded through the honorable Secretary of the Treasury for the favorable consideration of Congress.

HOKE SMITH, *Secretary.*