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Miami lands – Reduction of price of, &c

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Report No. 434.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

MIAMI LANDS—REDUCTION OF PRICE OF, &c.

MARCH 28, 1848.

Laid upon the table.

Mr. COLLAMER, from the Committee on Public Lands, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Public Lands, to whom was referred House bill No. 86, "to reduce the price of the Miami lands in Indiana," and several petitions in relation thereto, have had the same under consideration, and report:

By treaties with the Miami Indians in 1837, 1839, and 1841, the Indian title was extinguished to a tract of valuable land in Indiana, amounting (deducting what has been granted to Indiana for the construction of the Wabash and Erie canal) to over seven hundred and forty thousand acres. This land not being included in any land district, and being unsurveyed, was not open for sale or subject to settlement by pre-emptors. The land surrounding this tract had been mostly sold and much settled, which rendered this the more valuable. To render it still more valuable, this government granted to the State of Indiana a large amount of land, in alternate sections, for the construction of the Wabash and Erie canal, eighty-six thousand acres of which was on this tract; and the canal was completed and passes through this tract of land. This land has now been attached to land districts, and is surveyed and proclaimed for sale in May next. To extinguish the Indian title, and pay the cost of survey, advertising, &c., this tract of land has cost this government *more than one dollar and fifty cents per acre*. By an act passed by Congress, approved August 3, 1846, this land was opened to pre-emptors at *two dollars per acre*, and large numbers have entered, who must perfect their proof and make payment before the sale day in May next. It is now requested that said pre-emptors be allowed to have said land at the price

of one dollar and twenty-five cents. This, in the opinion of the committee, should not be allowed, under the circumstances already stated. When the grant to Indiana was made for the Wabash and Erie canal, the alternate sections reserved to the government were not raised up in price, as they were in Ohio, and other similar grants. In such grants, it has been generally the reliance of the government to receive their pay for the grant by an advance pay on the reserved sections. In this case, the lands in Miami reservation, being a valuable tract and not then for sale, no such provision was made; but when it was actually opened to pre-emptors, in 1846, then the government made the provision for its indemnity, by allowing the land to be taken at two dollars per acre. This the committee regard as just and reasonable, and consider that those pre-emptors should not have the price reduced.