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Report : Mr. Sebastian

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IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JANUARY 24, 1853.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. SEBASTIAN made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the President's message of the 18th January, 1853, in relation to the Seminole Indians in Florida, and their refusal to abide by the treaty for their removal west of the Mississippi, beg leave to report:

That, by a treaty made at Payne's Landing, in 1832, with the Seminole Indians and the United States, and subsequently confirmed by a delegation of their chiefs at Fort Gibson, who were sent to the west for purposes of examination, they agreed to emigrate from Florida and take up their new homes without unnecessary delay; that various causes were assigned by them from time to time, by which they procrastinated that event; and that the government, intending to enforce their removal in the latter part of 1835, were anticipated by the Indians, who commenced hostilities by murdering the agent and several others at Camp King, and the total destruction of two companies of artillery under Major Dade. Simultaneously with these attacks, others were made on every plantation or isolated dwelling, murdering their occupants and giving their dwellings to the flame, until, in the spring of 1836, the country was without an inhabitant, and the almost entire population were grouped in pickets and block-houses. It is unnecessary to enter into detail of the various conflicts and skirmishes which have been had with them from General Clinch, then in command of that military district, down to the period when General Worth assigned them a temporary reservation of land, or recur to the continued loss of life which, for a long period of years, was continually sacrificed to their hate. It is sufficient for the committee to know that the peace as effected by General Worth, in allowing them a continued residence in Florida, failed in securing what he doubtless hoped for; and that, so far from keeping within the limits assigned them, with ample ranges for their cattle, rivers abundantly supplied with fish, and the hammock, pine-barren, and prairie, teeming with game, they sought the settlements in 1849, and commenced anew the work of murder and destruction of property. Again were troops ordered into Florida, and again were the Indians allowed to remain; and now, although a deputation of their chiefs were at the seat of government last September, and entered into a written agreement, by which their removal would be immediate and final, they now refuse to go, and insist, to the great and vital detriment of the interests of Florida, to remain within her limits.

The committee, in thus briefly advertng to a condition of events as they exist in Florida, are not a little surprised at that tardy policy of the government which has sought to remove the Indian, under the full force of a mutual obligation, and yet has allowed him all the advantages of delay, and the protraction of an event which the safety and prosperity of the State demand. Treaties are not new to the Seminoles; they have enjoyed their benefit, and that of armistices, at various intervals since 1835, and they have full knowledge that their removal from the State is a part of the policy of the government, and that it is the inevitable destiny which awaits them. On the assignment of land by General Worth, it was conditioned that two regiments of United States troops should be kept in Florida, to serve as a *cordon* to keep the Indians within their limits, and thus give a little security to the advancing settlements and farmers of the interior.

How far this feature of General Worth's arrangement has been fulfilled, the committee are not instructed; but if it was undertaken as contemplated, the murders perpetrated in 1849 prove it not to have answered the ends designed. But the committee, looking to this assignment as one of a temporary nature, and recognised as such by the government, cannot but believe that the United States are bound to complete what in 1835 they so unsuccessfully began, and which, for a period of eighteen years, has allowed within the borders of a sovereign State a band of persons hostile to her inhabitants, their security and prosperity.

The committee are in some doubt as to the best mode to pursue to effect the end sought—the speedy and unconditional removal of the Indians from the State. Experience has demonstrated that they enjoy no immunities over the white man in their endurance of fatigue, and that they are susceptible of all the influences which break down repose by quick marches and night attacks on their camping-grounds; that, whenever these courses have been pursued by a military force, they have been invariably followed by success.

Simultaneous with this force, it has occurred to the committee that the troops be accompanied by surveyors, and each day's march would thus place in possession of government a knowledge of its territory, and subject to such laws of entry as exist elsewhere. These operations would more than ever convince the Indian that the government were earnest in their removal. The survey of lands, and bringing them into market, would assure him that his further trifling, delay, and "temporary occupation" were near a close, and that the time was not distant when the white man would follow, and in the sound of his axe be heard his final triumph.

At this late period of delay and faithlessness on the part of the Seminoles, the committee would urge prompt and decisive measures to be pursued to rid the country of a struggle too long waged, and to give to a sovereign State that peace and quietude which for so many years she has sought in vain. To attain this desired result, the Indian must be removed, in fulfilment of treaty stipulations, alike for his own security and that of the white man; and with no hostile foot within her borders, her rich lands and healthful climate will invite emigration,

developing resources which shall make her eminently prosperous and her people happy. To attain this object, the committee recommend the passage of the amendment which they have inserted into the Indian appropriation bill for this object.