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INDIAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION,
1305 ARCH STREET,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

JANUARY, 1900.

**THE URGENT NEED OF NEW LEGISLATION TO
PROTECT THE TIMBER INTERESTS OF THE
CHIPPEWA INDIANS IN MINNESOTA.**

During the winter of 1898 and 1899 deep interest was manifested in the outcome of efforts to relieve the oppression and wrong to which the Chippewa Indians of Minnesota had been subjected since the passage of the act of January 14, 1889, providing for the "relief and civilization of the Chippewa Indians of the State of Minnesota." Contrary to the apparent intention of the measure, it proved to be, under the manipulation of politicians, an act for the robbery of the Chippewas. This culminated during the autumn of 1898 in an attack made by the Indians upon the soldiery who were preparing to enforce compliance with the order of a Minnesota court to effect the arrest of certain Indians who had been goaded to desperation through oppression.

The friends of the Indians were rallied during the past winter in support of legislation to remedy the evils of existing law. It being the short session of Congress, a general act could not be secured for want of time; but efforts put forth succeeded in securing the enactment of the following statute, which was incorporated in the Indian Appropriation act:

"The Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized and directed to cause an investigation by an Indian inspector and a special Indian agent of the alleged cutting of green timber under contracts for cutting 'dead and down,' on the Chippewa ceded and diminished reservations in the State of Minnesota, and also whether the present plan of estimating and examining timber on said lands and sale thereof is the best that can be devised for protection of the interests of said Indians; and also in his dis-

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cretion to suspend the further estimating, appraising, examining, and cutting of timber and the sale of the same, and also suspend the sale of the lands in said reservation."

The Secretary of the Interior, under the authority given him, suspended the further cutting of "dead and down" timber, canceled all orders looking toward the sale of the lands the timber upon which had been estimated, and discharged many of the employees who had been engaged in "estimating" the timber for years, and otherwise reduced the expenses chargeable to the Indians' fund.

Two capable officers were designated to make the investigation authorized by said act, and spent over three months in their work. The first attention of these officers was given to the cut of "dead and down" timber, which system had proved to be so conducive to fraud,—over \$266,000 of tribal funds having been expended in paying the salaries of these "estimators," as compiled two months before the work was suspended. By prompt action before the cut was removed from the landings it was discovered that a large per cent. of green timber had been included under cover of "dead and down," and the sum of \$55,700 was collected in cash, and an estimated value of logs not yet settled for of \$2000. These collections were in addition to the regular prices agreed to be paid for the timber, on a very conservative estimate of its value. This effected a saving to the Indians on a portion of one season's cut of "dead and down" timber.

The investigators found the system of selling the pine timber upon "estimates" altogether impracticable. It is highly susceptible to fraud, and is not used by the successful timber men of the pine belt. Likewise the "dead and down" timber law was found to be used in defrauding the Indians and that they enjoyed but slight benefit compared with the value of timber taken.

The action of the Secretary in suspending the sale of the pine, and discharging useless employees formerly engaged in the work, evidently has not pleased the politicians of Minnesota, and we find Senator Nelson, of that State (the author of the present law for the civilization of the Chippewas, of January 14, 1889), arrayed in opposition to his action. The Senator

has introduced a bill in the body of which he is a member providing for the repeal of the clause authorizing the Secretary to suspend the further estimating and sale of the pine and the "dead and down" timber act. Another bill of the Senator's seeks to continue the Chippewa Commission that has already cost the tribe over \$225,000.

Several of the discharged employees have already hurried to the National Capital, hoping, no doubt, through political influence to secure a continuance of the positions. The powerful lumber firms and other interests of Minnesota are pressing for the repeal of the authority given the Secretary of the Interior under which he suspended the further estimating and sale of the timber.

The Indian delegation that visited Washington the past winter were content with what was secured in the way of legislation, feeling that the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Hon. W. A. Jones, who has always been friendly to their interests, and the Secretary of the Interior would see to it that a careful investigation was had under the law.

While the Chippewas have no immediate cause to complain of the present management of their interests, it should be remembered that the law under which such grievous wrongs have been committed upon the tribe in the past is only suspended by the Secretary of the Interior, and could at any time be made operative by withdrawing the order of suspension, which may be done under the succeeding administration of that office.

It is highly important that new legislation should be secured to supplant the existing statute at as early a date as possible. This should provide :

(a) For the abolition of the Chippewa Commission.

(b) That all timber shall be measured after it has been cut by what is known as the "Bank Scale" system.

(c) For the adoption of a combination plan for the disposal of the logs similar to that carried on at La Pointe and Menominee, Wisconsin.

(d) For the erection of saw mills wherever practicable for the manufacture of lumber. These should be operated almost entirely by the Indians.

(e) For the adoption of the Menominee plan of cutting and banking logs in isolated districts.

We solicit your interest in the cause at this juncture, hoping that you will do all possible to arouse public attention to the need of such legislation as herein outlined in the interests of the Chippewas of Minnesota. Letters should be sent to Hon. John M. Thurston, Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate; Hon. James S. Sherman, Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, House of Representatives, in addition to the Senator and Representative from your district in Congress. The press can render valuable aid by letting the facts be known and by recommending the action suggested.

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