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Report of the committee appointed to inquire what amendments are necessary to the Act granting bounties in land and extra pay to certain Canadian volunteers : January 11, 1817, read, and, together with the bill herewith reported, ordered to be printed.

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REPORT

Of the committee appointed to inquire what amendments are necessary to the act granting bounties in land and extra pay to certain Canadian volunteers.

January 11, 1817.

Read and, together with the bill herewith reported, ordered to be printed.

The committee appointed to inquire whether any amendments are necessary to the law of the last session, entitled "An act granting bounties in land and extra pay to certain Canadian volunteers."

REPORT....

That in examining the act it appears that no specific term of service is required to entitle the applicant to the benefit of the bounty; that the law is vague and defective, affording an opportunity for numerous claims upon the government when no essential services have been rendered.

It appears by the documents in the War Department, compared with other evidence, that frauds have been, and are attempted to be practised by officers and soldiers in support of claims, which had occasioned a partial suspension of the execution of the law, as appears by a communication from the Secretary of War, to which reference is had.

The law will admit of an extension to, and embrace cases far beyond what could have been contemplated at the time it was enacted, and such as justice and policy do not demand.

In referring to the muster-rolls of the corps called the "Canadian Volunteers," it appears to have consisted of nearly the full number of field and staff officers for a regiment, with a very small number of privates, not at any time exceeding thirty-eight mustered as present; and that very little service could have been rendered by them to the government.

In pointing out the defects of this act, we would not lose sight of the object intended by it. It has given relief to some brave men who had suffered a total loss of property; and there are still others belonging to various corps in service in the late war, who are equally meritorious, and who have not yet received the intended relief.

Your committee are of opinion, that an amendment is necessary, and have reported a bill for that purpose.

Department of War,
December 26th, 1816.

SIR,

In answer to your letter of the 18th instant, I have the honour to state, that immediately after the passage of the law of the last session, granting bounty land and extra pay to certain Canadian volunteers, rules were adopted prescribing the evidence which was necessary to entitle the parties interested to the benefit of the act.

Under these regulations, warrants were regularly issued, where the evidence was conformable to the rules which had been prescribed, until late in the summer. About that time, information was received from various quarters, stating that frauds had been practised in obtaining evidence in support of several claims which had been allowed.

Claims to a considerable extent were presented from Detroit, and others were understood to have been preparing from Lake Champlain and the St. Lawrence—to the latter of which fraud was also imputed. Under these circumstances, it was determined to postpone the decision of all claims until after the meeting of Congress, except those whose names were found on the muster rolls of colonel Wilcox's corps.

It appears to be necessary, to guard the public against imposition, that the term of service entitling the volunteer to the benefits of the act should be defined. As the law now stands, one week's voluntary service will entitle the party to land bounty and pay, if the engagement was only for that term.

It appears to be impolitic to permit the parties to locate their warrants before the lands have been exposed to public sale. Much inconvenience and

loss to the public has been sustained by omitting that restriction.

I have, also, the honour to enclose copies of communications to this Department, and to the paymaster general, in relation to frauds attempted to be practised in obtaining testimony.

I have the honour to be,
Your most obedient servant,

GEO. GRAHAM,
Acting Secretary of War.

Hon. M. Brooks,
Chairman, &c. &c.



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