

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

ON THE

MANAGEMENT OF THE GAUVREAU EXPEDITION.

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VICTORIA, B.C., 4th April, 1894.

To the Honourable the Speaker, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia:

SIR,—The Select Committee appointed to enquire into the management of the Gauvreau Expedition in the north-western portion of the Province in the year 1892, the cost of the Expedition, the work accomplished, and all other matters connected with the same, have the honour to report as follows:—

(1.) Management of the Expedition. The Committee is of opinion that the management of the Expedition was in the usual way that all similar expeditions are conducted.

(2.) The cost of the expedition. The total cost of the expedition is found to have been five thousand six hundred and fourteen dollars ninety-seven cents (\$5,614.97).

(3.) The work accomplished. It is found from evidence that the expedition started from Victoria on May 13th, 1892, proceeding to Wrangel, Alaska, and from thence up the Sticking River to Telegraph Creek, the head of navigation, a distance of one hundred and forty miles from the sea. From Telegraph Creek the expedition proceeded by pack train along the Tahltan River to Egnall's Flat, sixty-two miles from Telegraph Creek, where a base camp was for a time made. Smaller exploring parties were sent out from this point over the adjacent country, and the Inklin River, the Nahlin, Nakonake, and Nahkina Rivers were also explored, the party being again got together at the junction of the Forks of the Taku. From the junction the expedition went down the Taku River to Juneau City and up to Taiya Inlet, entering the country from there and surveying the Chilcoot and White Passes, on down to Taku Lake, up to Atlin Lake, and returned. The expedition reached Victoria October 17th, 1892, being absent one hundred and fifty-seven days.

In the matter of the several charges brought by Captain Moore against Mr. Gauvreau, viz.:—(a) taking a roundabout route, (b) lying in and around camp, (c) shooting at an Indian, (d) bridge timber burning, (e) supplying liquor to Indians and debauching their women, and (f) selling provisions, the Committee find as follows:—

(a.) Taking a roundabout route. Although the instructions furnished by the Department to Mr. Gauvreau were not followed by him to the letter, yet he maintains the same end was accomplished by taking the route he did, and that he also saved both time and money in so doing. From evidence received at the enquiry the Committee is of opinion, and it is self-evident, that when a party is sent out to explore an unknown section of the country much must be left to the discretion of the person in charge of that party. In making this charge Captain Moore lays particular stress upon the fact that when the expedition was at the Forks of the Taku River they did not pack their supplies over the mountains to Atlin Lake as he recommended, but chose instead to go down the Taku River to Juneau, and on to the lake by Taiya Inlet. Mr. Gauvreau's reply to this is that the Indians refused to pack his supplies over the range for less than thirty dollars a hundredweight, which he considered exorbitant. He, therefore, used the water way of reaching Atlin Lake, and claims to have accomplished his object in a much cheaper way and without undue time being wasted. The evidence is of a contradictory character, but the Committee does not think Mr. Gauvreau can be censured for taking the course he did.

(b.) Lying in and around camp. The Committee finds, and it has been admitted, there were some delays in camp, but it has been maintained by Mr. Gauvreau, owing to his illness, he was unable to do any travelling for some time. Although we are of opinion that Mr. Gauvreau was sick and required medical attendance, we consider that some undue delay was incurred.

(c.) Shooting at an Indian. Although shots were fired, yet from the evidence we have received it cannot be directly stated these were fired at an Indian. This Committee would recommend, when instructions are being given to survey parties, they be impressed with the fact that the Indians must be treated with fairness and consideration, as a reverse conduct tends to imperil the lives of other members of expeditions that come after. The Committee is of opinion that this shooting should have been mentioned by Mr. Gauvreau in his report to the Department.

(d.) Bridge timber burning. Although some evidence was produced showing that a few pieces of timber was used by the Indians for firewood, the Committee is of opinion that the quantity was so small that no serious complaint could be made against the party.

(e.) Supplying liquor to Indians and debauching their women. This charge was withdrawn.

(f.) Selling provisions. In reference to this charge, it is admitted by Mr. Gauvreau that he did sell some provisions. We find, however, it is the custom, and has been by the Government, to allow the sum of sixty cents a day to each man in the expedition, and at the end, if there is anything in the shape of supplies over, the provisions being owned by the party in charge can be sold by him. At the same time, we recommend that a full return of such sales should be handed in to the Government for the reason that it might lead to an expedition of this character laying in a larger amount of supplies than are really necessary, in order that a profit might be obtained from them. For the fact is, the Government paying the freight on these goods, they become more valuable the farther they go into the country. Such being the case, necessarily any profit that might arise from the selling of these goods should go into the Public Treasury.

C. C. MCKENZIE,

Chairman of Committee.

VICTORIA, B. C.:

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