AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO EXAMINE A CERTAIN SENATE REPORT ON INDIAN TRADERS AND TO TAKE ACTION IN RESPECT THERETO

JUNE 2, 1926.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. HARRELD, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT
[To accompany S. 3363]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3363) authorizing and directing the Secretary of the Interior to examine a certain Senate report on Indian traders and to take certain action in respect thereto, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with the recommendation that the bill do pass with the following amendments:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and substitute in lieu thereof the following:

That the Secretary of the Treasury is authorized and directed to pay to Blanche E. Little, individually and as assignee of Alice T. Johnson and Andrew W. Little, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, the sum of $8,133, being the amount of the losses sustained by her husband, William R. Little, now deceased, as Indian trader at the Sac and Fox Agency, Oklahoma (through no fault of his own) as appears from the report of the Select Committee on Indian Traders of the United States Senate, submitted March 2, 1889.

Amend the title so as to read:

A bill for the relief of Blanche E. Little, individually and as assignee of Alice T. Johnson and Andrew W. Little.

The report of the Secretary of the Interior on this bill, under date of March 30, 1926, is attached hereto and made part of this report. It reads as follows:

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, March 30, 1926.

Hon. J. W. HARRELD,
Chairman Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate.

My Dear Senator Harrell: This will refer further to your letter of March 17 transmitting for report and recommendation a copy of S. 3363 authorizing and directing the Secretary of the Interior to ascertain and certify to the Secretary of
the Treasury the amount of losses sustained by William R. Little, a former Indian trader at the Sac and Fox Agency, in Oklahoma, as shown in Senate Report No. 2707, Fiftieth Congress, second session, and directing the Secretary of the Treasury to pay to Mrs. Little's widow, her heirs or legal representatives, the amount of losses so ascertained plus 5 per cent interest.

An examination of Senate Report No. 2707 indicates that in testimony before the Select Committee on Indian Traders Mr. Little alleged that he sustained a loss of approximately $15,000 during the three years that he held licenses on the Sac and Fox Reservation. His last license expired on September 8, 1885, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in the exercise of the discretion given him by law, for good and sufficient reasons, refused to renew the license. However, in order to afford him opportunity to close out his affairs without serious loss the commissioner agreed to allow him to continue in business there until July 15, 1886, a period of over 10 months. At the expiration of this time, and in order that Mr. Little might have further opportunity to collect his accounts he was notified that he would be permitted to come on the reservation at the time of the next two payments to the Indians to collect the alleged debts, and would be allowed to remain 20 days at each period. Thus it will be seen that he was allowed almost two years to clear up alleged accounts contracted during the three years he was operating under licenses.

During the past several years this department has reported on a number of bills proposing to reimburse Mr. Little for his alleged losses. Without questioning the merits of the allegation that Mr. Little lost considerable money by extending promiscuous credit to the Indians, there would appear to be no reasonable basis for the claim for repayment either from Indian tribal funds or from public funds in the United States Treasury.

It does not appear that Mr. Little exercised careful business judgment in granting such indiscriminate credit to Indians, and it has not been the policy of this department to assist traders in the collection of debts from them. The alleged claims in this instance accrued about 40 years ago, and after a lapse of such a long period it would manifestly be impossible to determine the amount of Mr. Little's losses, or to ascertain the identity of his debtors, even were it thought practicable to enter upon such an undertaking.

A review of the entire matter tends to show that every reasonable opportunity was accorded Mr. Little to adjust his affairs and it is therefore recommended that S. 3363 be not enacted into law. This bill is identical with H. R. 9789 which the Director of the Bureau of the Budget advises is in conflict with the President's financial program.

Very truly yours,

Hubert Work.