

SISSETON AND WAHPETON INDIANS.

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

*A communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, calling attention to the distressed and suffering condition of the Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians, and the necessity for the passage of S. 3216.*

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DECEMBER 17, 1890.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Washington, December 17, 1890.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith copy of a communication of this date from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, calling attention to the distressed and suffering condition of the Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians on the Lake Traverse Reservation, North and South Dakota, and the necessity for the passage of Senate bill No. 3216, ratifying the agreement with these Indians, which was submitted to Congress last April and passed by the Senate May 17, 1890.

This matter has received the consideration of the Committee on Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives, as shown by House Report No. 1356, Fifty-first Congress, first session, and I have the honor to request that it may receive the early and favorable consideration of the House of Representatives.

Very respectfully,

GEO. CHANDLER,  
*Acting Secretary.*

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, December 17, 1890.*

SIR: I am in receipt of the following telegram from Hon. Herbert Welsh, dated Philadelphia, December 15, 1890:

John Robinson, Episcopal missionary, Sisseton Reservation, has just wired me, "Get day for considering Sisseton bill before holiday adjournment. Immediate action should be taken for sake of human life. Urge and insist on this. Sickness increasing on account of hunger and cold. Do not delay a day."

An agreement with the Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians for the sale of their surplus lands in North Dakota and South Dakota was submitted to Congress April 3, 1890, accompanied by a draft of a bill prepared in this office providing for the ratification of said agreement, and for the necessary appropriation to carry the same into effect.

The bill passed the Senate May 17, 1890, and was favorably reported with certain amendments by the House Committee on Indian Affairs June 3, 1890, and referred to the House Calendar.

By the terms of the bill, as passed by the Senate, the sum of \$376,578.37 of the amount appropriated is to be immediately available and distributed among those Indians per capita, being for annuities unjustly withheld from them.

On the 28th of June last I called the attention of the chairman of the House Committee on Indian Affairs to this bill, and transmitted a copy of a letter from Agent McKusick, of the Sisseton Agency, in which he referred to the then destitute condition of these Indians, and urged that something be done for their relief at once.

These Indians in 1862 were friendly to the United States, and many of them (or many of the ancestors of those now living) served as scouts against their brethren during the Sioux outbreak of that year. They have ever since been peaceable, have given the Government no trouble, and are well advanced in civilization. They would be able to sustain themselves by their own efforts were it not for the unfavorable seasons for at least three years in succession, which have rendered the crops in that portion of Dakota occupied by these Indians almost entire failures. Many of them for this reason are now suffering for the actual necessities of life, and have no means of protecting themselves from the inclemency of the present winter.

I think the fact that they are peaceable and quiet should not operate to deprive them of the relief which they so much need, not as an act of charity, but as a matter of right. The money, more than sufficient to relieve their sufferings, has long been due them, and it ought not to be demonstrated that the Indians must go upon the warpath in order to get their just dues.

I have the honor to recommend that the attention of the House of Representatives be called to the urgent necessities of these Indians, with a strong appeal for the early passage of Senate bill No. 3216, above referred to.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. J. MORGAN,  
*Commissioner.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.