

CREE INDIANS, MONTANA.

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LETTER

FROM THE

ACTING SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

*An estimate from the Acting Secretary of the Interior of an appropriation for the relief of certain renegade British Cree Indians in Montana, and to prevent their starvation.*

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MAY 10, 1886.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

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TREASURY DEPARTMENT, May 7, 1886.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the consideration of Congress, copy of letter of the Secretary of the Interior of the 3d instant, submitting an estimate of appropriation by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for \$5,000, "to enable the Secretary of the Interior to furnish such relief to certain renegade British Cree Indians, now on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana, as will prevent starvation among them."

Respectfully, yours,

C. S. FAIRCHILD,  
*Acting Secretary.*

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
Washington, May 3, 1886.

SIR: In accordance with the provisions of section 4 of the act of July 4, 1884 (23 Stat., 254), I have the honor to transmit herewith, for presentation to Congress, copy of a letter of the 30th ultimo from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, inclosing an item of appropriation in the sum of \$5,000, required to enable this Department "to furnish such relief to

certain renegade British Cree Indians, now on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana, as will prevent starvation among them."

The matter has the approval of this Department.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

H. L. MULDROW,  
*Acting Secretary.*

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, April 30, 1886.*

SIR: Agreeably with instructions contained in your indorsement returning my report of the 24th instant upon the subject, I have the honor to submit the following statement of facts concerning the British Cree Indians, now upon the Blackfeet Reservation, in Montana Territory.

The first information this office had of the presence of these Indians on this side of the international line, was received through Agent Lincoln, of the Fort Belknap Agency, in a report dated September 16, 1885. He had just then discovered their presence, and found that the Assinnaboines were dividing their rations with them.

On the 18th of September, two days afterward, the agent reported that he had investigated the cause of their presence on the American side, and found that several of them had been leaders in many of the outrages committed in the British Possessions during the Riel rebellion of last summer. He learned that they had been offering for sale women's garments—dresses and underclothing—of which they had a considerable quantity, besides other plunder. Little Poplar, Lucky Man, and two sons of Big Bear, all notoriously bad Indians, were of the number.

A sergeant of the Dominion police arrived at the agency on the 16th of September, intending, if possible, to capture the renegades and take them back over the line, but Agent Lincoln did not feel that he would be justified either in assisting or conniving at their arrest.

On October 6 following, copies of Agent Lincoln's reports were transmitted to the Department, with the recommendation that the subject be referred to the Department of State, with request that arrangements be made with the Dominion authorities for the return of the fugitives to the British territory.

On the 13th, same month, the honorable Secretary of State replied in a letter addressed to yourself as follows:

\* \* \* On the state of facts shown by your letter and its inclosures, I beg to say that unless there should be a specific demand from the Dominion authorities, such demand being good under the extradition treaty and followed by a warrant of surrender, the Indians in question cannot be returned by us to Canada, nor can the United States authorities, military or civil, properly connive at their being kidnapped and sent over the line. If, however, there is satisfactory proof that a demand is coming in due form, they can be arrested to await such demand. If they are guilty of offenses within the jurisdiction of the United States, they can be proceeded against for such offenses; but they cannot be prosecuted in our courts or before our military tribunals for offenses committed in the Dominion of Canada.

A few days after the receipt of the foregoing, viz: October 19, a telegram was received from Indian Inspector Thomas, as follows:

There are a number of Cree Indians recently come upon this reservation, refugees from the British Possessions, having in their possession silverware, female wearing apparel, &c., evidently the result of their outrages and depredations. They should be put back across the lines at once, by the military. Refer to letters of Agent Lincoln to Commissioner, September 16 and 18.

On the same day telegram was referred to this office with your indorsement, as follows:

\* \* \* The proper agent should be instructed to remove the Indians herein referred to as at Fort Belknap Agency, from the limits of the Blackfeet reservation; and on the 24th of October, Agent Lincoln was instructed accordingly.

It appears that before these instructions reached him, the Indians had left in a body for Fort Assinaboine, which is a military post on a military reservation within the Blackfeet Reservation, west, and not very far distant from the Fort Belknap Agency.

The next that was heard from the renegades was through the War Department.

On December 11, General Schofield reported the contents of a telegram received from General Terry to the effect that they had crossed the Missouri River *en route* to Judith Basin, to winter; that they were in a very destitute condition, and it was feared they might commit depredations upon the settlers.

Upon the strength of that information I suggested that they be fed by the War Department in pursuance of the act of March 3, 1885, making provision for "prisoners of war, including Indians, for the subsistence of whom no other appropriation is made." Report to Department, dated December 16, 1885.

On January 4, following, the honorable Secretary of War inquired whether relief could not be afforded these Indians by the Interior Department from the \$50,000 appropriated by the act of March 3, 1885, for supplying food and other necessities of life in cases of distress among Indians not having treaty funds. The question having been referred to this office, I replied that I did not consider the funds in question applicable to that use, and that I could not recommend the expenditure of any part of it for the purpose stated.

Nothing further was heard regarding the renegades until the 5th of last month, when Special Agent Dickson reported from Fort Belknap (report dated February 23) that while on a visit to Fort Assinaboine Colonel Otis, the post commander, called his attention to their case, and informed him that they had been fed all winter from the military supplies, but that peremptory orders had been received to issued them no more rations. Four days' rations were issued to them on the 23d of February, with the understanding that it was to be the last they would receive from the military. It appears that after the renegades crossed the Missouri they were intercepted by the military from Fort Meginnis and turned back. They returned to Fort Assinaboine, where they remained until about the 1st of the present month, when they were ordered away and recommended to go to Fort Belknap Agency.

On April 13, instant, Agent Lincoln reported their presence at said agency, and asked for specific instructions in regard to them. He states that he informed them upon their return that he could not and would not feed them unless specially directed to do so; that they are encamped near the agency and are "terribly poor." He endeavored to induce them to go back across the line where they belong, but they resolutely refused to listen to him.

They number about 100 souls.

In closing his report, Agent Lincoln, after showing his utter inability to get rid of them, says:

There is no place to remove them to, and having gotten here there is no way that I can see but to let them remain. I do not for a moment suppose that this Govern-

ment, although having these Indians on its hands, by no wish or act is ready to say that they may starve, for that is the practical result unless assisted, for they are on the verge of starvation, so that I can see no other way than to recommend that they be taken up and rations issued to them the same as to our own Indians. For my own part I would much rather have nothing to do with them, but in the interests of mercy I have to make the above recommendation.

Agreeably with your directions, I have prepared, and herewith transmit a draft of an item for an appropriation to supply the wants of these Indians, to be submitted to Congress for legislative action.

A copy of this report is also inclosed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. D. C. ATKINS,  
*Commissioner.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

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To enable the Secretary of the Interior to furnish such relief to certain renegade British Cree Indians, now on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana, as will prevent starvation among them, \$5,000.

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