

SIoux INDIANS AT DEVIL'S LAKE AGENCY, N. DAK.

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING,

With accompanying papers, a letter from the Secretary of the Interior, recommending an appropriation of \$25,000 for the immediate relief of Sioux Indians at Devil's Lake Agency, N. Dak.

JANUARY 20, 1890.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,

January 17, 1890.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the consideration of Congress, copy of a communication from the Secretary of the Interior of the 15th instant, and accompanying papers, in relation to an appropriation of \$25,000 for the immediate relief of the Sioux Indians of Devil's Lake Agency, N. Dak.

Respectfully yours,

W. WINDOM,
Secretary.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

Washington, January 15, 1890.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a communication received from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated the 14th instant, relative to the impoverished condition of the Sioux Indians of Devil's Lake Agency, N. Dak., and in which he recommends an appropriation by Congress of the sum of \$25,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary for their immediate relief.

I concur in the recommendation of the Commissioner, and request that the letter and inclosures be forwarded to Congress for the favorable action of that body.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

GEO. CHANDLER,
Acting Secretary.

The SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., January 14, 1890.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith, in duplicate, a copy of a report made by Arthur M. Tinker, U. S. Indian inspector, in accordance with Department instructions of the 21st of October, 1889, relative to the condition and necessities of the Sioux Indians located at Devil's Lake Agency, N. Dak.

The inspector states that the Devil's Lake Sioux are farmers; that they live upon their own individual farms, ranging from 40 to over 100 acres each; that the land is very fertile and usually produces fine crops of wheat, oats, and vegetables, and that they have always had a surplus to sell until the seasons of 1888 and 1889. He also states that they are fairly well supplied with farming tools and machinery, and take fair care of them, as good as the average white farmer; that the records of the agency show that during the season of 1887, the Indians cultivated 4,000 acres, and the crop raised was 75,000 bushels of wheat, 25,000 bushels of oats, 8,000 bushels of vegetables, and 2,500 tons of hay, being the largest crop ever produced upon the reservation.

For the season of 1888 about the same amount of land was under cultivation, but owing to frost the yield was about a two-thirds crop, viz, 55,000 bushels of wheat, 25,000 bushels of oats and barley, and about 3,000 tons of hay.

In the season of 1889 the Indians made a start to raise the largest crop ever produced on the reservation, thereby hoping to pay all their outstanding indebtedness and have a surplus fund to carry them through this winter. Every person plowed and planted more than ever before, and the amount of land under cultivation was, it is said, 5,500 acres. In the spring and early part of the season the crops promised a large yield, but no rain fell and in June hot winds came which blasted the entire crop of that country. It served all alike, white men and Indians residing on and about the reservation and vicinity. The inspector states that at a large council called by him to ascertain the condition of these people and hear their troubles, he could hear of but one person who had made a crop and got back as much seed as was planted.

The inspector concludes his report with the statement that these Indians are now very poor; that many are now suffering and that all will be before next harvest time; that they want rations, clothing, and seed to plant the coming spring to start them again, and that, in his opinion, they must receive help from some source or they will perish.

In view of the fact that this office has no funds at its disposal applicable to the relief of these people, and, concurring in the views expressed by the inspector as to the help needed at this time, I have caused a form of a bill to be prepared for the relief of the Devil's Lake Sioux appropriating the sum of \$35,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, with the recommendation that the same be transmitted to the honorable the Secretary of the Treasury, to be forwarded to the Congress for favorable action.

Very respectfully,

T. J. MORGAN,
Commissioner.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, October 21, 1889.

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR:

SIR: I have the honor to state that on the 15th of August last, George W. Gordon, special United States Indian agent, was directed by this office, after the completion of certain other duties to proceed to Devil's Lake Agency, Dak., and there make a full examination in regard to the failure of the crops of the Indians and the alleged necessity for furnishing all of them with full rations of flour and meat and with clothing, and also to investigate other agency matters.

So far his other duties have not permitted him to make the investigation desired. I therefore respectfully request that an inspector be sent out at once, if practicable, to perform the duties assigned to Special Agent Gordon by the letter from this office already referred to, a copy of which is herewith inclosed.

Very respectfully,

T. J. MORGAN,
Commissioner.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, August 15, 1889.

SIR: This office is in receipt of several letters from Agent Cramsie, of the Devil's Lake Agency, Dak., stating that on account of the almost entire failure of all crops on the reservation, it will be necessary to purchase, for all the Indians of the reservation, full rations of pork and flour and some clothing during the current fiscal year and until the crops of next year are available.

He submits an estimate for 328,500 pounds of flour and 164,200 pounds of pork, also for a large amount of dry goods, blankets, boots, and shoes, bed comforts, hats, caps, notions, etc., amounting in all to over \$30,000.

These Indians have, for a number of years, been entirely self-supporting. During the year 1887, they raised 75,000 bushels of wheat, 25,000 bushels of oats, and 8,000 bushels of vegetables, also cut 2,500 tons of hay; during 1888, when there was a partial failure of crops, they raised 55,000 bushels of wheat, 25,000 bushels of oats and barley, and also cut 3,000 tons of hay. This office is unable to understand how Indians, who for a number of years were self-supporting, can in one year, on account of failure of crops, become again so dependent as to require to be supplied, every man, woman, and child, for a whole year, with full rations of meat and flour and also with clothing, bedding, etc.

There is no treaty with these Indians requiring the United States to furnish them with anything; Congress appropriates annually \$6,000 as a gift, which amount is used for the payment of necessary agency employés and for furnishing destitute Indians of the agency with small rations of flour and meat, consequently the supplies asked for by the agent can not be furnished without making an appeal to Congress next winter for an appropriation.

Before deciding to do so, this office desires to be thoroughly convinced that these supplies are absolutely required, and you are directed, after you have completed the duties assigned you at the Santee and Yankton Agencies, to proceed to the Devil's Lake Agency and there make a full examination in regard to the failure of the crops of the In-

dians, and the alleged necessity for furnishing *all of them* with full rations of flour and meat, and with clothing, etc. If you should find that the failure of the crops is as complete as reported by the agent, you will inquire whether there are not a number of Indians who are able to support themselves and their families without assistance from the Government; if so, how many; whether others cannot get along with occasional issue of supplies and how many are absolutely destitute and must be entirely supported by the Government. To again feed an entire tribe of Indians, who for years have been self-supporting is a step backward, which this office is not inclined to take without being fully convinced that it is an absolute necessity, and for that reason your examination should be searching and your report full and complete.

While at the agency you are also authorized to examine into the workings of the agency proper, the agent's accounts, his purchases and other expenditures, and to investigate any matter which may be brought to your attention while at the agency.

Very respectfully,

R. V. BELT,
Acting Commissioner.

GEORGE W. GORDON,
Special Indian Agent, Santee Agency, Nebr.

FORT TOTTEN, N. DAK.,
December 12, 1889.

SIR: According to instructions contained in your communication of the 21st October, 1889, inclosing communication of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs of same date, also inclosing instructions to George W. Gordon, special Indian agent, of 15th August, 1889, directing him to proceed to Devil's Lake Agency, N. Dak., and there make a full examination in regard to the failure of the crops of the Indians, and the alleged necessity for furnishing all of them with full rations of flour and meat, and with clothing, etc., the above instructions having been forwarded me to make the examination, and make and forward a special report of same, which report you will please find as follows, viz:

The Indians living on this reservation are farmers, they live on their own individual farms, not in villages and large camps, as is done on most of the other reservations. Some of them have farms of more than 100 acres of plowed land managed by a single individual. Fully one-half of the farms contain from 40 to 60 acres. The balance plow from 5 to 40 acres each. The lands are very fertile, and usually produce fine crops of wheat, oats, and vegetables, same as are generally produced by white farmers in this locality.

Good crops have as a rule always been grown here, and they have always had a surplus to sell until the seasons of 1888 and 1889.

These people are fairly well supplied with farming tools and machinery, and take fair care of them, as good as the average white farmer.

There are now owned on this reservation by the Indians between thirty and forty self-binding harvesting-machines, a large number of mowers, horse-rakes, seed-drills, and other machinery. Many are better provided than the white farmers in this vicinity.

The records of this agency show that during the season of 1887 the Indians cultivated 4,000 acres, and the crop raised was 75,000 bushels of wheat, 25,000 bushels of oats, 8,000 bushels of vegetables, and cut 2,500 tons of hay. This was the largest crop ever produced on this reservation.

For the season of 1888 about the same amount of land was under cultivation and the crop was about a two-thirds crop.

Wheat, 55,000 bushels, oats and barley, 25,000 bushels, and about 3,000 tons of hay. This year, just before time to harvest the crop, it looked splendidly, and all were sure of a large crop to repay them for their time and labor spent, but a very severe frost came, and for a time all thought the crop ruined, but instead of a total failure, as expected, they received the amount stated; but the quality was only fair, and some of the Indians had a hard time to pay their debts and live through the winter. The only way they did pull through was from the sale of wood, which they cut and sold off the reservation to their white neighbors.

Last spring (season of 1889) the Indians made a start to raise the largest crop ever raised on this reservation, thereby hoping to pay all their outstanding accounts, and have a surplus fund to carry them through this winter. Every person plowed and planted more than ever before, and the amount of land under cultivation was, it is said, 5,500 acres. They worked with a will, and in the spring and early part of the season never did a crop promise a larger yield, but no rain came to moisten the parched earth, and in June the hot winds came, blasted the entire crop of this country. It served all alike, white men and Indians residing on and about the reservation and vicinity. Fields after fields can be seen where no attempt has been made to harvest the crop. There was nothing to harvest. On old land nothing was raised; on some few new wet pieces enough was got to sow next season.

To show how little was produced this season, I know of no better illustration than by showing the time it has taken to thrash the grain for the past three seasons (1887, 1888, 1889). In 1887 two steam thrashing-machines and two 10-horse-power thrashing-machines were constantly at work from the time the grain was fit to thrash until long after snow came, which was about the middle of November.

In 1888 one steam thrashing-machine, two 10-horse-power and four 8-horse-power thrashing-machines were run about the same number of days as the year before.

There was plenty of straw, but little grain, and that of a poor quality.

This season (1889) only one 10-horse-power thrashing-machine was used, and that had but two sittings. Had the grain been all in one place it could have been finished in half a day.

At a large council, called by me to see the condition of these people and hear their troubles, I could learn of but one person who had made a crop and got back as much as was planted, and this is the result: Planted: wheat, 42 bushels; oats, 30 bushels. Crop raised: wheat, 100 bushels; oats, 60 bushels. This was raised on new, low, wet, land.

These people's clothes had at some time been good, and were made of good materials, much better than issue clothing, but it was badly worn and showed age.

I have gathered from the records at the military post (Fort Totten) the rain-fall for the months of January, February, March, April, May, June, July, and August for the years 1887 and 1889, which was as follows: 1887, January, .91 inch; February, .75 inch; March, .82 inch; April, .97 inch; May, 1.49 inches; June, 5.90 inches; July, 5.39 inches; August, 2.41 inches; total, 18.53 inches. The showers of June and July were good soaking rains and were what the crops needed. For the same months of 1889 the rain-fall was as follows: January, .24 inch; February, .64 inch; March, .16 inch; April, .60 inch; May, .62 inch; June, 1.56 inches; July, 2.56 inches; August, 2.69 inches. All the showers were light during June and July.

In June there were six showers; in July nine, two of them being hail, and one of them very severe. A total of 8.56 inches. A difference of almost 10 inches. The ground was very dry in January, 1889, and very little snow came during the winter. The rain that fell in June and July came in such small showers that it did little or no good. Had the rain that came on the 12th of August come thirty days before some of the fields would have been saved. Much of the grain planted never sprouted until after the rain of 12th of August.

There is not the slightest doubt but what these Indians are now poor, very poor, and many are now suffering, and all of them will before next harvest time. Only one man have I been able to find who has seed enough to plant next spring, and he will not have that if he is obliged to eat it. These Indians can't get much if any credit, and those who could have traded their limit. The only means they now have of getting a living is from the sale of wood taken off the reservation and sold to the whites, and that industry does not furnish them much money, as some of the military wood reserve has been thrown open to the suffering white families. They have taken away, so I have been informed by the Army officers in charge, between 4,500 and 5,000 cords. This amount of wood so taken reduces the demand for the Indian's wood, and his market is about gone.

These Indians are improvident and very poor managers, never thinking what their wants may be in the future; when they have enough to eat they are as a rule happy, and since they have been getting their living by farming they have always had crops enough to carry them through until this season. They are good workers in most cases, no one can deny this, and their present trouble does not come from idleness. They have a few horses and cattle, just enough to work their farms. They know nothing about stock-raising as an industry. If they do not get aid from somewhere soon they will be obliged to kill their animals to sustain life. When their stock is gone I do not see how they can make another crop; they will have nothing to do the work. Perhaps there are some few who could pull through with a little help of rations, and not much clothing, but as a rule they are about as near flat as they well can be and live. To put in another crop seed must come from somewhere. They can not purchase it, their money is all gone, and so is their credit. They now owe many people for seed they had to plant last spring, and for supplies to carry them through

the summer until after harvest. Mr. Frank Palmer, the Indian trader here, sold them on credit over 1,000 bushels of seed wheat and has not collected a dollar, and now don't propose to invest any more of his money that way. Others are in the same boat.

These Indians are not worse off than many of their white brothers in two or three of the adjoining counties, and their crops in 1888 were about the same as on this reservation, and this season they are total failures. The auditor of Ramsey County (once a part of this) told me that his county did not begin to raise its seed in ten townships in that county; that the county relief committee had furnished over one hundred families with rations and clothing. It is estimated that five hundred families will have to be aided; two hundred families in part and three hundred families will have to be carried until after next harvest. All of the five hundred families must have more or less clothing furnished the grown members, and all the children must be provided for. Supplies are being sent from the East, almost every day, and are given out twice each week by the committee in charge. Many of these people had been well to do before these two bad seasons. Most all the farms are mortgaged for all they are worth and for more than they can be sold: so is most of the stock and agricultural implements and farming tools. A large number of the farmers had to mortgage the crop they expected to get to get seed to put in last spring.

The legislature of North Dakota has just passed a bill to appropriate \$100,000 to purchase seed for these people next spring.

In addition to the wood these white people have taken from the military reserve, more than 350 tons of coal has been sent from the East and more is expected. Many of the people who got wood from the reserve came a long distance, some as far as 30 to 40 miles, taking in some cases three and four days to make the round trip.

I do not see that the Indians can be expected to be in any better condition than their white neighbors. These Indians, in my opinion, must receive help from some source or they will perish, and that aid can not come too quickly; many of them need it to-day, and will continue to need help until after next harvest, just the same as the white people. They want rations, clothing, and seed to plant in the spring to start them in business again. I do not think all will need full rations, but enough to patch up and carry them through the season; others will require full rations of flour and pork. Most of them need clothing; some a full suit, others only a part; just how much, and to whom, the agent knows best, as he knows every family.

The estimate forwarded by Agent Cramsie to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs was not for a full ration for each Indian upon the reservation; it was only intended to furnish those who were absolutely in need with one pound of flour and half a pound of pork per day. Neither beef or groceries were asked for.

The above estimate, I believe, is not considered a ration at other reservations where rations are regularly issued.

Inclosed please find the communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs of 21st October, 1889, also instructions to George W. Gordon, special Indian agent Devil's Lake Agency, which I return.

I remain, very respectfully,

ARTHUR M. TINKER,
U. S. Indian Inspector.

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

A BILL for the relief of the Sioux Indians at Devil's Lake Agency, North Dakota.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior be and hereby is directed and authorized to purchase, under contract or in open market at his discretion, for the relief of the Sioux Indians located at the Devil's Lake Agency, N. Dak., seeds for planting purposes, subsistence supplies, clothing, and other articles of a beneficial character, to relieve their immediate pressing wants and necessities; and the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated out of any money in the United States Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the purposes above named, to be immediately available.