

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

COMMUNICATING

A copy of a letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in relation to the clerical force in his office.

FEBRUARY 6, 1879.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, February 5, 1879.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith a copy of a letter addressed to me on the 1st instant, by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in relation to the clerical force of his office. The work devolving upon the Office of Indian Affairs, considered either as to its responsibility, its importance to the country, the care and judgment required for its proper execution, or the magnitude of the interests involved, is second to none in this department. The present salaries of the chief clerk and chiefs of division are not commensurate with the character of the duties which they perform. Their duties are arduous, responsible, and complex, and their salaries, as compared with the salaries paid to chiefs of division in other departments of the government, are inadequately small. The improved methods of business introduced in the Indian Office by the present Commissioner, and the large and increasing responsibilities devolving upon the bureau, imperatively require that the force of the office, never large, should be made sufficient to properly guard the interests of the public service. The work in some divisions is in arrears, and if the present force be not augmented it must fall still further in arrears, to the great inconvenience of all having business with the office, and to the positive disadvantage of the government. The absolute necessity of dispatch in the delivery of supplies, in the settlement of accounts, and in many other items of the business relating to Indian affairs, cannot be overstated. To avoid frauds and impositions every matter of detail must be carefully scrutinized; but if the clerical force be inadequate this labor will be imperfectly done or not done at all, and both the Indians and the government must suffer. If contractors know that their accounts will be promptly settled and their money promptly paid, lower bids and a corresponding pecuniary advantage to the government will result; but a prompt settlement of such accounts, or of any accounts, will be impossible if the clerical force of the bureau be not reasonably increased. The inclosure herewith, marked "Appendix E," sets forth the items of increase estimated for the Office of Indian Affairs for the year 1879-'80, and I cannot too strongly recommend their appropriation and urge upon Congress the necessity for placing the Indian Bureau

upon a footing which will enable it to transact its widely extended business promptly and efficiently.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

C. SCHURZ,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, February 1, 1879.

SIR: Referring to the estimates of appropriation for payment of the salaries of the clerical force of the Indian Bureau for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1880, I desire to say, that upon assuming charge of the bureau I instituted new methods of purchasing goods, supplies, &c., requiring greater care in the drawing of contracts, and of all papers issuing from the office, and inaugurated a more rigid and complete system of accounting for public funds and property on the part of agents and other officers of the department, and additional safeguards were also thrown around the purchase, selection, and inspection of supplies for the Indian service at the annual letting of contracts. The work of the office was by this means largely increased, hence it is absolutely necessary that an increased amount be appropriated to engage the required force to carry out the method and system of conducting business now in vogue.

The intricate questions to be settled by the land division of this bureau, matters of land titles, surveys, allotments, patents, &c., require legal training, research, and sufficient time to make the examination of the same exhaustive. The records of this division having, in years past, been allowed to fall into confusion, the inadequacy of a force of competent clerks has resulted in retarding the work, so as to leave it at the present time very much in arrears.

The general work throughout the bureau is of such a character as to require a high degree of capacity and ability, which qualities demand a fair remuneration, and I therefore respectfully submit that it is essential to the efficient administration of Indian Affairs that the increase of appropriation and number of clerks asked for in appendix E (copy herewith inclosed) to estimate of appropriation for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1880, be provided by Congress. I am compelled to say that the necessity for an increase of force is imperative, the business of this office cannot be conducted with a less number of clerks than is embraced in the appendix referred to, and a reduction in the number of higher grade clerks cannot be compensated by an increase in the lower grades. The business qualifications, legal education and training required to conduct the more important desks in this office cannot be found in persons willing to accept a salary of \$900 or \$1,000 per annum. I also desire to impress upon you the fact that the increased demands of the service, of which you are cognizant, cannot be more than met if every clerk asked for be granted and selected for his pre-eminent fitness for the position he may be called upon to fill.

In view of the above facts, I have the honor to request that this matter be laid before Congress with your favorable recommendation.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. A. HAYT,
Commissioner.

To the Hon. The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

APPENDIX E.

Explaining estimates for salaries, office Commissioner of Indian Affairs. (See page 46.)

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., September 30, 1878.

SIR: In connection with the "estimates" for the Indian service for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1880, I have the honor to submit the following explanations relative to such items as ask for an increase of appropriation over amounts appropriated for the current fiscal year.

Salaries, office of Indian Affairs.—Salary of Commissioner, estimate submitted, \$5,000; increase, \$2,000.

The large and increasing amount of routine business connected with the administration of Indian affairs, renders the position of Commissioner at all times laborious, and for services so exacting and responsible not less than the amount estimated should be allowed.

Salary of chief clerk, estimate submitted.—\$2,500; increase, \$500.

In the absence of the Commissioner, the whole administration of the business of the bureau, devolves by law upon the chief clerk. For reasons stated above, the salary of chief clerk should not be less than \$2,500 per annum.

Solicitor for the Indian Bureau.—Estimated, \$3,000.

The numerous contracts and bonds, and other instruments relating to the disbursement of the large sums of money intrusted to this office for expenditure, should be made under the careful scrutiny of an able lawyer. Inaccurate drawing of papers by clerks who are deficient in legal training is certain to result in financial loss to the office and the Indians. Questions growing out of the relations between Indians and citizens, both of civil and criminal nature, are continually arising in respect to which this office must advise and direct agents. Defaulting and fraudulent contractors escape the law for want of a competent solicitor in the bureau to follow them up. Large sums of money could be saved to the government annually, compared with which the salary of a solicitor would be a trifle. In short, nearly every imaginable question in civil and criminal law, from a simple contract to the construction of treaties, from a mere assault to homicide, and from a simple deed of transfer to the adjustment of the gravest complications in land matters, this office is called upon for decision, opinion, or recommendation. Unsettled matters of great importance are still pending in the office. To properly protect the large public interests thus involved, pertaining to both whites and Indians, will require all the time of an able officer, whose services, to be commensurate with the labor and responsibility involved, should not be rated at less than the salary recommended.

Three chiefs of division.—Estimate submitted, \$2,250 for one, and \$2,100 each for two; increase, \$450 for one, and \$300 each for two, equals \$1,050.

Chiefs of division in the Indian Bureau are under great responsibility, while on their executive ability mainly depends the efficiency of the clerical force of the office which is placed under their immediate direction. Services of a like character in the Treasury Department are paid for at the rate of \$2,250 and \$2,500.

Bookkeeper, Finance division.—Estimate submitted, \$1,800; increase, \$200.

The salary of the bookkeeper of the Indian Office is not fixed by law, and is at present but \$1,600 per annum. It is hardly necessary to state that this sum is inadequate compensation to procure the services of an experienced accountant, who is expected to keep a strict account ready of reference, under the many heads and subheads of appropriations of the receipts and disbursements by this office, and its seventy-six agents and superintendents, of six million dollars annually.

Clerks of class three.—Estimate submitted, \$12,800; increase, \$1,600.

Clerks of class two.—Estimate submitted, \$19,800; increase, \$4,200.

Clerks of class one.—Estimate submitted, \$15,600; increase, \$3,600.

Clerks at \$1,000.—Estimate submitted, \$9,000; increase, \$3,000.

The large and increasing amount of business in the Indian Bureau, occasioned by legislation of Congress, and improved methods adopted by the bureau in the settlement of claims and accounts, render an increase of the force absolutely necessary.

One messenger.—Estimate submitted, \$840.

The law provides for only two assistant messengers and one laborer. This force is not sufficient to prepare fuel, attend fires, and keep in order twelve rooms, besides performing the strictly messenger service required to carry on the business of the office.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. A. HAYT, *Commissioner.*

To the Hon. the SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.