

LETTER  
FROM THE  
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,  
TRANSMITTING

*Copy of report, dated 15th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and accompanying papers, in response to Senate resolution of March 13, 1882, "requesting list of all Indian reservations upon which troops are stationed; also such information as may be on file in that department touching the destruction and inordinate consumption of timber by the troops upon such reservations," &c.*

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APRIL 19, 1882.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
Washington, April 17, 1882.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Senate resolution, dated March 13, 1882:

That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he is hereby, directed to transmit to the Senate a list of all Indian reservations upon which troops are stationed; also, such information as may be on file in his department touching the destruction and inordinate consumption, of timber by the troops upon such reservations, with a statement of his opinion as to the necessity of the continuance of the military thereon, respectively.

In reply, I transmit copy of report, dated 15th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and accompanying papers therein referred to.

Very respectfully,

A. BELL,  
Acting Secretary.

The PRESIDENT *pro tempore* of the Senate.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
Washington, April 15, 1882.

SIR: I have the honor to be in receipt by department reference, for report, of a Senate resolution dated 13th ultimo directing the Secretary of the Interior "to transmit to the Senate a list of all Indian reservations upon which troops are stationed; also, such information as may be on file in his department touching the destruction and inordinate consumption of timber by the troops upon such reservations, with a statement of his opinion as to the necessity for the continuance of the military thereon, respectively," and respectfully submit herewith a list of Indian reservations on which troops are stationed, showing also the number of troops at each of such military posts, prepared from the

latest official reports. This list (marked A) embraces only posts which are located *on* Indian reservations. I inclose, also, a list (marked B) of military reservations declared by executive orders and located within Indian reservations.

I have not the data at hand to show the amount of timber consumed at *all* of the military posts situated on reservations, but respectfully call attention to the fact that all, or nearly all, of those embraced in list A are located in prairie countries, where timber is not plentiful and is found only in limited quantities and in the immediate vicinity of water-courses; inviting special attention to the posts on the Missouri River, at Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, and near Crow Creek Agencies, the military posts at those points being known as Fort Yates, Fort Bennett, and Fort Hale, respectively.

The consumption of wood at Fort Yates has been the subject of extended correspondence in the last three or four years between this and the War Department, and as showing the necessity for some action to remove the troops and stop the indiscriminate destruction of timber at military posts on Indian reservations I inclose herewith copies of the following correspondence:

1. Reports of this office dated July 8 and November 11, 1881, together with the letter dated November 2, 1881, from James McLaughlin, United States Indian agent, referred to in the report of November 11.

2. Letter dated February 17, 1882, from the Hon. Secretary of War, and accompanying documents.

Attention is also invited to the annual report of this office for 1881, on this subject, found on page 29 of said report. After the transfer of the Sitting Bull Indians to Standing Rock Agency, in July of last year, it was deemed advisable that the troops be continued at Fort Yates for a time, but the greater part of those Indians have been distributed to the other Sioux Indian reservations at Cheyenne River, Pine Ridge, and Rosebud Agencies, and the necessity for troops at Standing Rock Agency no longer exists, so far as the preservation of peace among the Indians is concerned.

I inclose also a copy of a letter dated March 31, last, from the United States Indian agent at Cheyenne River Agency, Dakota, near Fort Bennett, in which he reports that the "military has made such extravagant use of the wood that there is no wood to be found within a radius of 20 miles of this agency," and that he "can see no necessity for continuing the troops at this point."

In regard to the influence of soldiers upon Indian women and the necessity of continuing the troops at Fort Bennett, General Howard, one of the Indian inspectors, recently reported as follows:

Soldiers exert a bad influence upon the women; their presence is corrupting to the families, injurious to the young men and other Indians, who see them living in so much idleness. It is bad for the Indians to be under a sort of military restraint. They should become accustomed to civil ways and restraints. The agent should learn to govern them without recourse to the military. In no other way can they grow up to habits of self-government.

These conditions, together with all the evils mentioned as accruing from the presence of the military trader, make it clear that the post had better be removed.

In regard to the military post at Fort Hale, which is on the west bank of the Missouri River, on the Sioux reservation, and nearly midway between Crow Creek Agency and Lower Brulé Agency, I inclose extracts from a report, dated 27th ultimo, by the United States Indian agent at Lower Brulé Agency, showing that during the past fiscal year the amount of wood consumed by the military and disposed of by the military post-trader "will not be far below 1,200 cords," and I am relia-

bly informed that unless measures are promptly taken to stop the destruction of timber at this point, only a very few years will elapse until there will not be a tree left for fire-wood, and then other fuel will have to be supplied for the Indians or they must be removed. The Indian agents at the agencies named are of the opinion that with their Indian police force they are abundantly able to maintain order among their Indians without the presence of troops, and the correctness of this opinion is sustained by the fact that at Pine Ridge Agency, which is at the least 40 miles, and Rosebud Agency, which is 140 miles from a military post, no difficulty is experienced in preserving order and maintaining discipline among the Indians by the use of the Indian police force alone. The agents at both of these agencies have now nearly twice as many Indians to control as are at Standing Rock Agency, and the Indians are precisely of the same class, and I know of no reason why the agencies on the Missouri River, with not nearly so many Indians, cannot be kept in order without troops as well as those at Pine Ridge and Rosebud.

In my opinion there is no necessity for any troops at Fort Yates; those at Fort Bennett should be removed to Fort Sully, a few miles farther down, and on the opposite side of the Missouri River, and the post at Fort Hale is utterly unnecessary for any good purpose.

The Senate resolution is herewith returned.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. PRICE,  
Commissioner.

Hon. S. J. KIRKWOOD,  
Secretary of the Interior.

A.

*List of military posts established on Indian reservations.*

State or Territory.	Military post.	Indian Reservation.	Occupying force.
Dakota .....	Fort Bennett .....	Sioux Reserve .....	43
Do .....	Fort Hale .....	do .....	100
Do .....	Fort Yates .....	do .....	259
Indian Territory .....	Cantonment on North Fork Canadian.	Cheyenne and Arapaho .....	181
Do .....	Fort Reno .....	do .....	287
Do .....	Fort Supply .....	Unoccupied land .....	135
Montana .....	Fort Custer .....	Crow Reserve .....	368
Do .....	Camp Poplar River .....	Blackfeet .....	59
Do .....	Rocky Point .....	do .....	23
Wyoming .....	Fort Washakie .....	Wind River Reserve .....	99

B.

*List of military reservations declared by Executive orders within Indian reservations.*

State or Territory.	Military post.	Indian reservation.	Occupying force.
Arizona .....	Fort Apache .....	San Carlos .....	201
California .....	Fort Gaston .....	Hoopa Valley .....	46
Dakota .....	Fort Randall .....	Sioux .....	233
Do .....	Fort Totten .....	Devil's Lake .....	168
Idaho .....	Fort Hall .....	Fort Hall .....	46
Indian Territory .....	Fort Gibson .....	Cherokee Nation .....	91
Do .....	Fort Sill .....	Kiowa and Comanche .....	231
Montana .....	Fort Assiniboine .....	Blackfeet .....	429
Do .....	Fort Buford * .....	do .....	211

\* A small part of this military reservation is within Blackfeet Indian Reserve.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
Washington, July 8, 1881.

SIR: Under date of May 11, 1880, this office forwarded to the department a copy of a petition by four of the leading chiefs at Standing Rock Agency, complaining of the extravagant use and waste of the wood and timber on the reservation by the troops stationed at Fort Yates. Attention was called to the occasion for the call, in December, 1874, by agent Palmer, for the temporary presence of a company of troops to enable him to enroll the Indians, to which they were strongly opposed, when a detachment of sixty men and three commissioned officers were furnished from Fort Lincoln, that number being stated by the department commander to be "amply sufficient to meet the wants of the situation," to the unnecessary and unsought increase in the number of troops stationed there from time to time, until a force has been accumulated sufficient to keep in check the whole Sioux Nation, while the force at Fort Lincoln, less than 60 miles above Standing Rock, could be readily made available in any emergency likely to arise; and to the report of Inspector Vandevver, in the fall of 1875, that "twelve or fifteen soldiers is all that need be stationed here."

In that letter the following language was used:

"In regard to the wood and timber cut by the military, the Indians have just cause of complaint. The attention of the office has frequently been called to the subject, and I refer to office report of March 10, 1877, which will afford important information relative to the large amount of wood and timber on the reservation, cut and used under the direction and authority of the military, the contracts awarded by military officers to the post-trader and other persons for supplying steamers with wood, without consulting the agent or this office, and the large amount of timber or logs cut to erect barracks, buildings, &c. The honorable Secretary of War, on the recommendation of this office, was requested to cause the necessary order to be issued to restrain the officers at this and other military posts from cutting any timber except such as was absolutely necessary for the use of their respective posts.

"But so far as Standing Rock is concerned, there has been but little change for the better, and there are just and grave apprehensions that if the present large military force is continued at the agency, and the wood disappears as it has for the past five years (at the rate of about 4,000 cords of wood per annum), the Indians in a short time will be entirely destitute of fuel and timber for building purposes, and thus a needless and heavy expense will be entailed upon the government for the necessary supplies."

This letter having been forwarded to the War Department, and having, as appears, been referred to the General of the Army, that officer reported that it would give him "great pleasure," and would enable him "to use the troops elsewhere, to call off the entire garrison at Standing Rock," if he could have "some assurance that the agent" would "not again call for them at a time when they" could "not be had."

In office letter of June 3, to the department, my immediate predecessor said: "I can without hesitation give the assurance that, in case they [the troops] are withdrawn, they will not be called for again unless in some extraordinary emergency," and recommend that the honorable Secretary of War be requested to cause the necessary orders to be issued for the withdrawal of the garrison at Standing Rock Agency, as indicated by the General of the Army.

On the 23d of the same month this office again drew attention to the matter, and renewed the recommendation for the removal of the troops, transmitting, at the same time, a copy of a letter from Agent Stephan on the subject, showing that the necessity for troops at this point had passed, and that action should be taken for their removal.

Again, on the 30th of August, 1880, this office, in response to the departmental reference of a letter dated June 30, 1880, from the honorable Secretary of War, inclosing a communication from the president of the Northern Pacific Railroad, in which the necessity for the continuance of the garrison at Fort Yates was urged as a protection to those engaged in the construction of that road and to settlers in its vicinity, forwarded a copy of a report of the agent at Standing Rock Agency, showing that there was no good ground for apprehension of trouble to the road or settlers, and that even if there were, Fort Lincoln and other posts along the line of the road would be amply able to afford all necessary protection. This office fully concurred in the opinion expressed by the agent that the rapid consumption of wood, timber, and hay, by the garrison at Fort Yates, would soon so deplete the sources of supply as, at no distant day, to necessitate the removal of the troops or the Indians, or both.

I deem it proper again to invite the attention of the department to the matter, and respectfully to recommend that the honorable Secretary of War be urged to cause the necessary steps to be taken to reduce the garrison at that fort to not more than one company. The presence of that force temporarily may be advisable in view of the fact that the recently surrendered followers of Sitting Bull are now there, and will probably remain a short time; but of the whole number recently sent there from Forts Buford and Keogh, only about 500 belong to Standing Rock Agency, the remainder

belonging to Cheyenne River, Pine Ridge, and possibly other agencies, and it is believed that one company of troops would be ample for any emergency likely to arise.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. PRICE,  
*Commissioner.*

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, November 11, 1881.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith copy of a letter dated 2d instant from United States Agent McLaughlin, of the Standing Rock Agency, Dakota, in which he calls attention to the large consumption of wood and hay by the military on the reservation; that this is a source of continual complaint on the part of the Indians, and of very serious embarrassment to the agent.

The wood required for fuel purposes at the fort, and contracted for the present year, amount to 3,300 cords, which, together with that used by the post-trader and attachés of the garrison, he says, will approximate 5,000 cords annually. And the large amounts of timber for building purposes, fences, and general repairs at the garrison are not included in this item. The amount of hay cut for garrison purposes will aggregate about 2,000 tons.

The agent also states that the wood and hay are "taken by the contractors whenever and wherever they feel disposed, cutting it from off the claims where Indians have located and settled upon farms, removing it even from their very doors. Their working camps are established among the Indians, on any part of the reservation, without permission from the agent or consent of the Indians," and no part of the reservation is secure from their ruthless operations.

If this destructive work is allowed to continue, the agent says that "all the timber of every description growing on that part of the reservation which lies between the Cannon Ball and Grand Rivers, a distance of 60 miles, will be entirely exhausted" within five years, and this of course will necessitate the removal of the Indians, or the purchase of wood and lumber for their use at enormous rates.

The attention of the department, within the past three years, has repeatedly been called to this subject, and the War Department has as often been requested to reduce the garrison; but instead of regarding the reasonable requests of this department, and the solemn obligations of the government to these Indians, there seems to be a persistent determination to make Fort Yates a great central point for military operations on the Missouri (as indicated in a recent report of General Terry); to have full supervision of the Standing Rock Reservation, irrespective of any interests or rights that the Indians may have in the matter, or any action taken by this office for their protection. If it is determined to keep this large number of troops (six companies) at said fort, where they have been quartered without consultation with or request from this department, I respectfully recommend that the War Department be requested to issue the necessary orders to prohibit the troops from cutting any wood or timber growing upon the reservation "on the west side of the Missouri River, between the Cannon Ball and the Grand Rivers," as indicated in the agent's letter.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. PRICE,  
*Commissioner.*

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

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UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE,  
STANDING ROCK AGENCY, *November 2, 1881.*

SIR: I have the honor to report that the meagerness of hay for subsistence of stock, and wood for building and fuel purposes, at this agency, is fast becoming a serious embarrassment to the agent and the source of continual complaint on the part of the Indians.

The large consumption of both these articles by the military, and the indiscriminate manner in which they are obtained, produces an absolute want upon the part of the Indians; and is the cause of their continual protestation at the discrimination that is made against them.

The quantity of wood required for fuel purposes at the garrison of Fort Yates, for the present year, is contracted for to the amount of 3,300 cords, which, together with the wood for use of officers, post-trader, and attachés of the garrison, will approxi-

mate 5,000 cords annually. This quantity is not included in the timber cut on the reservation for buildings, fences, and general repairs at the garrison.

The hay contract for the Quartermaster's Department during the present year is for 800 tons, which, with hay used by the contractors for supplying hay, wood, and beef for the garrison at Fort Yates, will aggregate about 2,000 tons.

This wood and hay thus used is taken by the contractors whenever and wherever they feel disposed; cutting it from off the claims where Indians have located and settled upon farms, removing it even from their very doors; establishing their working camps among the Indians, on any part of the reservation, without permission from the agent or consent of the Indians, and no part of the reservation is secure from their operations.

The timber on this reservation is confined to a narrow strip or belt along the Missouri flats, and for 10 miles both above and below the agency it has been almost entirely cut away.

With the same ratio of consumption during the next five years, all the timber of every character growing on that part of the reservation which lies between the Cannon Ball and the Grand Rivers, a distance of 60 miles, will be entirely exhausted, which will necessitate either the removal of the Indians or the purchase of fuel and lumber for their use at an enormous expense.

In view of these facts, I respectfully urge upon the honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs that steps be taken at an early date to remedy this evil, and that the military authorities be prohibited in the future from utilizing any wood or hay growing upon this reservation, on the west side of the Missouri River between the Cannon Ball and the Grand Rivers.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES McLAUGHLIN,  
*United States Indian Agent.*

Hon. H. PRICE,

*Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.*

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington City, February 17, 1882.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated November 15, 1881, inclosing copies of letters, dated November 2 and 11, 1881, respectively, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and from United States Indian Agent McLaughlin, of the Standing Rock Agency, Dakota, in relation to the large amount of wood and hay cut from the Indian reservation for the use of the military at Fort Yates.

The Commissioner recommends that orders be issued prohibiting the cutting of any wood or hay by the military from the reservation on the west side of the Missouri River between the Cannon Ball and the Grand Rivers.

In reply, I beg to invite your attention to the inclosed copy of a report on the subject, dated the 7th ultimo, from the commanding general of the Department of Dakota.

I have also to invite your attention to the accompanying copy of an indorsement, dated the 13th instant, of the Quartermaster-General, whose views are approved and will be carried out.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ROBERT T. LINCOLN,  
*Secretary of War.*

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

*Indorsements on copy 6306 A. G. O., 1881.*

[First indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,  
ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
*Washington, November 22, 1881.*

Official copy, respectfully referred, together with the original inclosures, through headquarters Military Division of the Missouri, to the commanding general Department of Dakota for report.

The attention of the department commander is invited to the remarks made by him some years ago, when this subject was under consideration (*vide* indorsements of April 6, 1877, April 9, 1879, &c.), and the Secretary of War desires an expression of his views as to whether the objections then made to a full compliance with the wishes of the Interior Department are not now obviated both by the removal of the military neces-

sity then existing and the discovery and development of the lignite beds along the Northern Pacific Railroad.

To be returned,

By command of General Sherman.

R. C. DRUM,  
*Adjutant-General.*

[Second indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,  
*Chicago, November 28, 1881.*

Respectfully transmitted to the commanding general, Department of Dakota.  
By command of Lieutenant-General Sheridan.

R. WILLIAMS,  
*Assistant Adjutant-General.*

[Third indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA,  
*Fort Snelling, Minn., January 17, 1882.*

Respectfully returned to headquarters Military Division of the Missouri.

I have delayed making the report called for in the first indorsement hereon, in order that I might obtain more accurate information than that which I possessed when I received this paper.

I regret to say that I find the lignite from the "Bly" mine does not fulfill the expectations which at one time were entertained in respect to it. It proves to be of inferior quality as fuel. On exposure to the atmosphere it crumbles into dust and becomes nearly worthless. If Fort Yates should be supplied with it for the year, the result would probably be suffering to the garrison and loss to the government.

I am as strongly of the opinion that no more fuel for Fort Yates should be cut on the treaty reservation as the honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs can be. The wood now there should by all means be left for the use of the Indians, and whatever increase of expenses may result from the purchase of other fuel should be accepted as inevitable.

The only practicable way to supply the post with fuel is, I think, to send anthracite coal to it from Duluth. The Scranton coal, brought to Duluth by water, and carried to Bismarck by rail, can be delivered at the last-named place for a price not exceeding \$11.75 per ton; I think it can be delivered for \$11 per ton. From Bismarck it can be carried to Yates by the steamer Sherman at an insignificant actual outlay.

In the fiscal year ending June 30, 1880, the price of wood at Fort Yates was for 1,000 cords \$2.34 per cord; for the remaining 2,768 cords required, \$2.47 per cord. For the year ending June 30, 1881, the price was \$2.97 per cord. For the current year the contracts for 1,000 cords is \$3.72½ per cord; for the remaining 2,276 cords required, \$3.94.

Thus it will be seen that the price has risen each successive year during the last three years. This results from the increasing scarcity of wood near the post and the consequent increase of the distance over which it must be hauled. Following the law of increase already developed, we can hardly expect to obtain wood this year for less than \$4.50. I think it not at all improbable that we should have to pay \$5 per cord.

The amount of wood required for the garrison, when the companies which compose it are filled to the maximum, is 3,850 cords per annum. The cost of this amount, even at \$4.50 per cord, would be \$16,325. The amount of Scranton coal required under the same conditions would be, in round numbers, 2,000 tons, which at \$11.75 per ton would cost \$23,500, a sum in excess of the cost of the wood required of \$7,150.

I think the importance of the object to be obtained fully justifies this increase of expense, and I recommend that authority be given to advertise for a supply of the Scranton coal to be delivered at Duluth.

In respect to the cutting of hay: If the agent is rightly informed as to the proceeding of the hay contractors (I think that he was not at the time at the agency), those proceedings were indefensible. Had they been brought to my knowledge at the time, I should at once have put a stop to them. It does not, however, follow that no hay for the use of the post should be cut on the reservation. Hay is an annual product, and the cutting of it works no permanent injury. If the Indians need for their own use in any one year all the land near the post they should have it, of course; but I think it will be found that within a reasonable distance of the post there are places from which hay can be cut without detriment to them. This should be made the subject of examination. Unless the place or places where hay may be cut should be first definitely determined, it would be difficult to let a contract, and, therefore, probably the better way would be to authorize the post quartermaster to hire laborers to cut, cure, and stack the hay, government teams being used to haul it.

ALFRED H. TERRY,  
*Brigadier-General, Commanding.*

## TROOPS ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,  
Chicago, June 24, 1882.

Respectfully forwarded to the Adjutant-General of the Army.  
In the absence of the lieutenant-general commanding.

R. WILLIAMS,  
Assistant Adjutant-General.

[Fourth indorsement.]

WAR DEPARTMENT, QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
Washington, February 13, 1882.

Respectfully returned to the honorable the Secretary of War.

There are large coal-fields in Iowa as near or nearer than Duluth. There are others in Illinois that would in the nature of things compete for fuel supplies. There are other railways besides the Northern Pacific that reach the Missouri, notably that of Winona and Saint Peter, at Fort Pierre. A change from wood to coal of any kind requires a change of all cook-stoves, ranges, heating-stoves, and fire-places, or the general fuel plant of the post—a serious expense. For this and other reasons it would seem best to advertise for suitable fuel, coal or wood, for heating and cooking purposes, of an equivalent of the quantity of wood to be delivered at the post, no wood to be taken from the reservation except by consent and agreement with the Interior Department. An invitation for such proposals will give all parties in interest an opportunity to compete, and the cheapest fuel, other things considered, may be determined upon. If coal is limited to one kind or one railway its supply may become, or be construed to be, a monopoly. Its handling and transportation, 78 miles, is an indeterminate quantity as to the cost of expenditure, and an accident to the Sherman would lead to a corner in transfer, possibly at a critical time.

In regard to hay, it is believed that if the agent for the Indians is duly paid on their behalf that matters can be satisfactorily arranged.

S. B. HOLABIRD,  
Captain, Quartermaster-General, United States Army, in charge.

UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE,  
CHEYENNE RIVER AGENCY, DAKOTA,  
March 31, 1882.

SIR: In reply to the questions propounded in office letter of the 16th instant, I have the honor to inform you that the actual number of troops at Fort Bennett is 38 enlisted men and two officers.

The amount of wood consumed annually by the military has been as follows: At this post in 1878 their contract was for 2,200 cords; 1879, 920 cords; 1880, 400 cords; 1881, 162 cords; I believe their contract for this year calls for 175 cords.

The military have made such extravagant use of wood that there is no wood to be found within a radius of 20 miles of this agency.

I can see no necessity for continuing troops at this post; the Indians are quiet and well disposed, and seem anxious to learn the ways of the whites. The more intelligent Indians seem to realize the necessity of becoming self-supporting. They are also desirous of having more domestic comforts, and want better houses, chairs, dishes, cupboards, &c., and so far as the Indians are concerned, I can see no necessity for the troops to remain here.

I would recommend that the Indian police force be increased to 30 members. It gives me pleasure now, after nearly two years' experience with these men, to give it as my opinion that, if well equipped and properly handled and disciplined, an Indian police force can be made a very effective instrument for good.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

LEONARD LOVE,  
United States Indian Agent.

HON. COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
Washington, D. C.

UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE,  
LOWER BRULÉ AGENCY, DAKOTA,  
March 27, 1882.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of letter, bearing date March 16, 1882, propounding inquiries concerning the garrison at Fort Hale, the amount of wood and timber used, &c.



In reply thereto, I would respectfully state as follows, viz:

Fort Hale is a two-company post, and the garrison at the present time numbers about 100 men, having within a short time been re-enforced by recruits.

The annual consumption of fuel has varied from 500 cords in 1881 to 700 cords for this current year. The post trader also consumes from 75 to 100 cords of wood per year; this is also procured from the Indian reservation.

In addition to the amount of wood as stated above, some 300 to 350 cottonwood logs were cut and sawed (at Crow Creek) during the past summer, the lumber used in building stables, corral, &c., either at the post or upon the island, occupied in part by the post, upon the opposite bank of the river. I think I am not above my estimate in stating that in timber and fuel during the fiscal year the sum total will not be far below 1,200 cords.

The wood contractor for this year made no application to cut in any place, but went ahead in his operations, cutting some 100 to 150 cords in a part specially reserved for the Indians, and which was in dispute partially last year between the wood contractor and myself, and which, by the agreement of the officer in command at Fort Hale, was not to be cut for military uses. Not far from 100 cords were cut before the fact was made known to me; upon representation to the commanding officer it was stopped.

The location of Fort Hale is not one that could be defended against a force of fifty men who had a good leader.

The fort is situated on the bottom lands, upon a narrow strip of land, probably 350 to 400 feet from the river, at which point there is a continual wearing, and it is simply a matter of time "how long" there will be any land between the river and the bluffs. The latter rise from 150 to 250 feet directly in the rear, and from their tops and sides 50 well-armed men could bid defiance to all the force that could be brought. There is but one building, besides the trader's store and house, of value; the rest are log houses and barracks, all much decayed, and all needing quite soon large repairs to make them habitable.

The house of the commandant is quite large, new, well built, convenient, and valuable; the rest are of comparatively little value.

From what I have witnessed at Chamberlain, and what has been reported, I can safely say that there is far more need of an armed force in that place than among the Indians. As we are situated about 15 miles from Fort Hale, over a broken country, with no communication but by messenger, any outbreak occurring here would be begun and completed long before any information could be forwarded there, and the march of the troops to this agency, if they were not opposed, could not be made much less than one day.

The settlement of Chamberlain has complicated to some degree the position of the Indians; with the incoming of some who are really of a superior class to those met with ordinarily on the frontier, another class have also appeared who are in no way desirable. From time to time during the past season they have taken possession of the town, and scenes of violence and rioting have been the result; that no lives have been lost is due perhaps more to what is termed by some "luck" than anything else. Some of this class have proposed to visit this side of the river, but have been promptly informed that their presence was not desired and would not be tolerated, and if they came with the intention of making disturbance of any kind they would be arrested and transferred to the fort. Probably this intimation had the desired result. The subject of the quartering of soldiers at Fort Hale was incidentally brought up some time since in a council held at the office, and perhaps the idea of the most enlightened of the Indians is not far from the true idea. One of them, speaking upon the wood and timber question, made the inquiry something like "Why are those soldiers kept in our vicinity? They cut our wood and cut our hay; they pay us nothing for it; they do us no good; we are at peace with the whites; we wish to harm no man; all we want is to live in peace with each other and with the white man."

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. H. PARKHURST,  
*United States Indian Agent.*

Hon. COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, D. C.*

S. Ex. 161—2