

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

A letter of the 16th instant from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, respecting the large sums annually expended for attorneys' fees by different Indian tribes, recommending the appointment of an officer for that purpose.

FEBRUARY 19, 1883.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, February 17, 1883.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit, herewith, copy of a letter of the 16th instant from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, on the subject of the large sums of money annually expended by different tribes of Indians in payment of attorneys' fees for the collection of money due to them by the United States.

I concur in the recommendation of the Commissioner for the passage of a law by Congress authorizing the appointment of an officer to be designated "Solicitor of the Indian Bureau," or otherwise, at a compensation of \$4,000 per annum, whose duty it shall be to attend, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, to all cases where Indians have claims against the government; and, after the appointment of such officer, that no further contracts by Indians with attorneys for prosecution of their claims against the United States be recognized.

The matter is presented for the favorable consideration of Congress.

Very respectfully,

H. M. TELLER,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE UNITED STATES SENATE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, February 17, 1883.

SIR: I deem it my duty to call your attention, and through you, the attention of Congress, to the fact that large sums of money are annually expended by the different tribes of Indians in payment of attorneys' fees for the collection of money due to them by the United States.

It seems to me to be without question that if the government is justly indebted to the Indians, they should not be required to pay from 5 to 50 per cent. to outside parties for collecting money honestly due them. Yet such is and has been the case for many years; and it is safe to say that in the last five years not less than one-quarter of one million dollars of money belonging to Indians has been expended in this way.

If the Indians are the wards of the nation, it is the duty of the government, as their guardian, to protect their interests, and not allow \$50,000 of their funds to be expended every year for the accomplishment of an object that can be just as well done for one-tenth of that amount.

I therefore respectfully recommend that Congress be requested to authorize the appointment of an officer to be styled "Solicitor of the Indian Bureau" or "Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs," or any other name that may be deemed proper, whose duty it shall be to attend, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, to all cases where Indians have claims against the government, and whose compensation as such officer shall be \$4,000 per annum; and that after such appointment shall have been made no contract shall be approved by the Secretary of the Interior or the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the collection of money, or the adjustment of accounts, or the settlement of disputed questions involving values of money or property in which the Indians on the one side and the government on the other are the parties.

Very respectfully,

H. PRICE
Commissioner.

Hon. H. M. TELLER,
Secretary of the Interior.