

LETTER  
FROM THE  
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,  
TRANSMITTING

*Duplicate copies of two letters received by the Indian Office from Agents Miles and Hunt, of the Indian Territory, relating to the deficiency estimate transmitted on the 21st ultimo.*

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FEBRUARY 4, 1881.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Washington, February 3, 1881.*

SIR: Herewith I transmit duplicate copies of two letters received by the Indian Office from Agents Miles and Hunt, of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe, and Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita agencies, Indian Territory, respectively, for your information in connection with the deficiency estimate transmitted in my letter of the 21st ultimo, wherein an appropriation of \$50,000 was asked to purchase supplies for issue to the Indians of said agencies during the remainder of the current fiscal year.

Very respectfully,

C. SCHURZ,  
*Secretary of the Interior.*

The PRESIDENT of the Senate.

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UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE,  
CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHOE AGENCY,  
*Indian Territory, January 17, 1881.*

SIR: I gave the honor to acknowledge the receipt, on the 12th instant, of your communication of the 6th instant concerning the amount of funds available for the purchase of subsistence of Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Kiowas, &c., during the balance of fiscal year.

The conclusions arrived at by your office as to the amounts of beef and flour due under contracts of W. C. Oburn and A. A. Newman, respectively, are correct. The number of Indians to whom subsistence is issued, placed at 5,852 on weekly supply report, is correct, and does not include the children in school, who have been taken off the ration checks given their parents. It is likewise true that a weekly overissue of nearly 17,000 pounds of beef has occurred. This is due to the fact that, with all the efforts possible being made to increase the number of persons in beef bands to a number sufficient to entitle them to the actual amount of beef issued them, it has been impossible to get them into bands of over an average of forty persons, which would only entitle them to a beef weighing 840 pounds, whereas the beeves received since July 1, 1880, have averaged 895 pounds, entailing a loss on every beef issued of 55 pounds. Still this loss could be, and, in part, will be, made up by the fact that from now until April 15 next the cattle will fall as much below 840 pounds average as they

have since July 1 last exceeded it. But 4,500,000 pounds of beef was contracted for for the agency. The estimate upon which it was supposed the contract would be based called for 6,077,250 pounds, made on the established Indian ration, leaving an inevitable deficiency of 1,577,250 pounds. The ration as established is in none of its component parts too large, while it is too small in most.

To have attempted a reduction of rations at any time during the present fiscal year would have created trouble, which would have in the end cost the government one hundred times the value of the rations which must now be provided.

From the start a discordant element has existed among the Cheyennes. No positive measures could be taken with them. In the few instances where an attempt has been made to increase the number of persons to whom a beef should be issued, the opposition has been so determined that policy has dictated the wisdom of abandoning it. The best disposed Indians, seeing the results, have likewise resisted all attempts to reduce the beef, and, as Stone Calf remarked, the general impression prevails that it would be better to die fighting than to live on less than they now receive. Little Chief, Black Wolf, Living Bear, Standing Elk, and other leaders of the Northern Cheyennes would see in such an attempt an excellent ground for starting north, where, as they are continually asserting, game abounds in great plenty, and the privations and hunger which they now contend with are unknown. While we can and do assure them the ration is the same everywhere, we cannot controvert the fact that this country is absolutely barren of game.

The annuities this year, owing to the increased prices of all lines of goods, were scarcely more than one-half as much as last year. Fewer articles were given of each kind, and fewer kinds than formerly; and so insignificant did the issue seem to the Northern Cheyennes that both Little Chief and Black Wolf have sent word they do not want any, although the latter will probably take them. From these facts it is evident that the temper of these Indians is not in such a peaceable condition as to warrant the reduction of the beef ration to such an extent as will enable a six weeks' supply to last five and one-half months, which would be equivalent to a reduction of three pounds to three-fourths of a pound, nearly. So far as the other rations are concerned, a material reduction can, and will, be made. While flour, sugar, and coffee are great requisites, they are not, like beef, imperatively and absolutely necessary. Corn could be entirely dispensed with, without any great fear of complaint, but when you interfere with the present allowance of beef it would be well to be prepared for trouble.

These Indians being entitled to a ration of 3 pounds gross daily of beef, they should receive every ounce thereof, and no more; and while the class of cattle received this fiscal year has rendered it impossible to give them merely the established allowance, yet I am convinced that if furnished with the balance estimated for, viz, 1,577,250 pounds, it will be sufficient to feed them until the close of the present fiscal year. I imply from the fact that an average of over 750 pounds cannot be maintained from now until May 1 next, if so great, and yet if the average is above the amount specified the balance asked for will be still insufficient. That estimate was based on a total of 5,550 Indians, whereas we are now issuing to 352 more people, an equivalent of 9 beeves weekly.

While we have continually appreciated the fact that we were overissuing weekly, the Indians have been clamorous for a reduction in the number of persons to whom a beef should be given, and it is evident when the present tickets have expired that only the most strenuous efforts will enable a reissue at the same average.

The department has for years been endeavoring to increase the size of cattle for issue to Indians, disregarding the recommendations of this and other agencies that a smaller class of cattle were better adapted. Only a few years ago thirty to thirty-five persons were entitled to a beef under the then average. The Indian cannot appreciate the fact of the cattle being larger, better, and calculated to be in better winter condition. He only sees that with a less number he gets a hide oftener, and is perfectly willing to receive the smaller animal, although, of course, he will choose the best among them. Given, however, the choice between an 800 pound cow and a 1,000 pound steer, he will, nine times out of ten, take the cow; though Texas cattle, to weigh the average of 850 pounds, prescribed in Millet's and Hunter's contracts, must be of such large frames as to furnish a disproportionately large percentage of taw.

I have been thus minute that the department may fully realize the situation here, and how powerless I have been in the past to remedy what I knew to be a growing deficiency. Yet I only ask for the amounts to which the number of Indians attached to this agency are entitled.

If it be necessary to ask for a deficiency appropriation to meet this deficiency, surely only those are to blame who, having had the situation thoroughly explained, refuse to incorporate sufficient in the annual appropriation, that a deficiency bill is made necessary. One fact is very evident: these Indians must be fed or fought. If no appropriation can be had to give them merely what has been promised, the War Department should be requested to provide for an outbreak, for as surely as the subsistence is not

furnished by the government, so surely will depredations on herds held in the Territory, on the Cherokee strip and adjoining lands, commence with inevitable retaliations—breeders of a general war.

None of the bacon received has yet been issued, having held it for issue until the beef-cattle were poor, as they inevitably are in February, March, and April. Given then it will do a great deal more good than at any other time. For the same reason the issue of beans has been withheld until now.

To prevent a recurrence of such troubles, it is suggested a limit be made to the maximum as well as to the minimum weights of cattle. Of course, all this difficulty could have been avoided by issuing from the block, had it been possible to do so, but they will resist such an issue to the last, simply because the beef-hide enters prominently into the matter, and they will have the disposition of it and its proceeds, unhindered by any one.

While I may have erred in the conclusions herein presented, I am certain the premises are correct and the conclusions are dictated by an experience of nine years with these people. While I shall in the future, as in the past, labor with the whole of my ability to second the efforts of the department in an economical administration of affairs, it will be impossible for me to maintain peace and advance the civilization of these Indians if the most essential means are denied. In all ages and in all places hunger has caused trouble, and human nature is the same in the red as in the white man.

I am, very respectfully,

JNO. D. MILES,  
*United States Indian Agent.*

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

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UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE,  
KIOWA, COMANCHE, AND WICHITA AGENCY,  
*Anadarko, Ind. T., January 21, 1881.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 7, calling my attention to the propriety of reducing the beef issue at this agency to the minimum, so that the amount yet due on contract will last to or near July 1. There is perhaps nothing that I can say in reply that will add to your stock of information as to the necessity of a continuous regular issue of the full ration of beef, until such time as the Indians now receiving beef may be able to supply any deficiency from their own herds without detriment to their capacity for breeding purposes, and it is only because of the probable want of needed legislation by Congress, imposing on the department the unpleasant duty of assuming great and grave responsibilities, that I feel warranted in presenting a repetition of facts already well known.

Should the department fail to provide the amount of beef required to continue the issue of full rations of beef at this agency, making a reduction as indicated, the least but nevertheless a deplorable evil growing out of this circumstance would be the impairment of the hard-earned confidence and the loss in a few months of many of the beneficent results of past efforts, that required as many years to accomplish.

You are pleased to refer to my supply of flour on hand as being sufficient, at the present rate of issue, to last until July 1; and that this is true is owing entirely to the liberal and judicious policy of the department in the past, aiding the Indians to open farms by breaking land, building houses, &c., who are now partially supplied with bread from the product of their farms, and to the extent of the present saving to the government of the flour ration (about 200,000 pounds, or \$7,000 in value) they have become self-supporting. This saving, however, has not been accomplished without my first having made careful inquiry and by close observation obtained a thorough knowledge of their resources, and then causing the issue of flour, as I have every part of the ration, to conform strictly to their actual wants; encouraged to take a vigilant personal supervision of this part of the service, in the well-grounded hope that no interruption to their present progress in making farms and localizing families would be forced upon these people by withholding needed subsistence, or by any other sudden change in the administration of their affairs, at a time reasonably near the full fruition of some of the work so auspiciously begun, and when each succeeding year gave evidence of increased and more gratifying results. But as regards the meat ration, well known to be the main reliance of the Indian, there has not yet been sufficient time to have realized any of the benefits expected to be derived from the distribution of the 1,100 head of young cattle, intended as a nucleus for the purpose of stock-raising, and to provide them with means for their future subsistence. At the proper time, however, I feel assured the wisdom and forethought in providing and distributing these cattle for such purposes will be heartily acknowledged, by practically demonstrating greater

saving and better results than those arising from any expenditure heretofore made for purely agricultural objects.

Two years have scarcely elapsed since the Apaches, Kiowas, and Comanches, and some of the affiliated bands have been able to procure a more or less bountiful supply of buffalo, and when thus supplied a temporary reduction of the meat ration was not an object of very great solicitation or concern, but that source of food supply has been cut off, and their sole dependence since for meat is on that furnished by the government. A failure now to continue the regular issue of full rations of beef by a reduction such as your letter indicates, extending over five months out of the twelve, or at any time until their small herds of cattle are increased or sufficiently well established in growth and numbers to supply a deficiency in the ration without detriment to their herds, would be an experiment too appalling to contemplate in the possible consequences, and too hazardous as a measure of public economy.

If the reduction is made, long before the 1st of July, in obedience to that higher law of self-preservation, recognized as a common heritage of all races and condition of men, higher and stronger than imperial edicts or legislative enactments, the 1,100 head of young cattle distributed among these Indians will have been slaughtered for food to supply the deficiency caused by the reduction of the ration and to feed the half-fed and famishing multitude. Even with the full ration regularly issued it is only by constant watchfulness and care that these cattle are preserved from slaughter; and no vigilance, however well directed, would be sufficient to prevent it if once these people are impelled by the promptings of hunger. After, and perhaps before, all these young cattle will have disappeared depredations will begin more or less indiscriminately upon the cattle belonging to and held here by the contractor, affording him an opportunity and plausible excuse to cover all his losses from every other cause aggregating hundreds of head, by fixing them upon one or other of the predatory bands, sustained by testimony that cannot be easily shaken or successfully rebutted, and for every head alleged to be lost in this way the department will be called upon to pay in round damages. These depredations will not be confined to such narrow limits, but the less civilized tribes will make inroads upon the small herds of cattle belonging to the more civilized bands adjacent—the Caddoes, Wichitas, and others—until they, too, are depleted or destroyed, while the more daring and resolute will be impelled by the same law to forage upon citizens living near the line of the reservation in the adjoining State, and in the Chickasaw Nation, and perhaps resort to deeds of greater violence in procuring food.

In the absence of a strong military force sufficient to awe and control them it would be idle to say that these Indians should be restrained from committing acts of spoliation and violence. Force alone could do this. Will the General of the Army ignore his formal notice to the department "that in consequence of the removal of the Kiowa Agency from Fort Sill, no troops will be furnished this agency in case of anticipated trouble with Indians, and none need be asked for?" and yield to a public necessity, or will he persist in standing by his notice and refuse to use the only power capable of preserving order and protecting public and private property in an emergency likely to arise? Public sentiment, no less than the higher obligation of duty, will demand of me the exercise of a proper discretion in giving timely warning to the department of any apprehended trouble; and, believing that a reduction of the beef ration will be the occasion of bringing about just such a condition of affairs as I have tried to outline, or even worse, I therefore respectfully make the request now, through your office, for two companies of troops, one of infantry and one of cavalry, to be sent here, which will be sufficient to preserve order and protect the property at and in the immediate vicinity of the agency, but will not enable me to give the necessary protection to cattle belonging to the contractor and others, nor prevent depredations elsewhere, which I apprehend will require two additional companies of cavalry.

There are other important questions however to consider before yielding to a seemingly inevitable necessity and adopting the dangerous expedient of a reduction of the meat ration, in which cost and expenditure are not so largely involved as the success or failure of many of the plans inaugurated by the department to educate and help these people in the way of becoming self-supporting.

It is well known among the Indians at this agency that after July 1 no beef will be provided by the government for the Caddoes and Delawares, and an attempt at this time to reduce the meat ration of all will be viewed by the others with suspicion and fear that it is the design to permanently diminish the ration or with the Caddoes and Delawares, they also are to be deprived of the whole, and any explanation of the reason for the reduction that can be comprehended by them will be received with distrust in the face of the more potential fact to them of the insufficiency of food, and the mysterious ease with which promises to them are violated, thus demoralizing the general efficiency of the service by the loss of confidence in the integrity and purposes of the government and impeding the progress of every beneficent work begun in their behalf.

In conducting the affairs pertaining to the service at this agency by observing with

scrupulous care, the fulfillment of every obligation and promise made to Indians under my charge, even in the most trivial transactions, I feel the consciousness of an increasing influence among all, but more especial with the wilder tribes, Apaches, Kiowas, and Comanches, and what has seemed remarkable to me, is that whatever I have asked them to do in the furtherance of the plans and policy of the department, making farms, houses, &c., has either been done to the full extent of their ability, or attempted with an earnestness of purpose quite foreign to their general character and wholly unlooked for, and I should regret exceedingly to see the good faith and feeling now existing destroyed or in any way interrupted by any failure on the part of the government to properly subsist these people until they are self-supporting or in a condition to meet a reduction of the ration by an equivalent from their own fields and farms.

The proposed reduction considered as a matter of economy and judicious management of the public service, Congress could not devise a more extravagant folly, compared with the aggregate amount involved, than to withhold the means to subsist these Indians three out of twelve months of the year, and if considered on the higher grounds of the preservation of peace, the further successful prosecution of the humanitarian aims of the service, and the protection of person and property, it would be a dereliction amounting to a criminal folly not to be measured by any saving of the people's money, which saving in any event would be only apparent and not real.

It will require about 1,000,000 pounds of beef, over and above that called for by Oburn's contract, to properly provide for Indians now receiving beef at this agency until July 1 and this must be provided in some way, or a sufficient military force sent here to preserve order and protect property while the Indians are undergoing the process of fasting for three months. I can suggest no other alternative and until otherwise ordered I shall continue to issue full rations of beef, well convinced that not to do so would be fraught with danger to the best interests of the Indian service, and while I will not shrink from the performance of any duty required of me nor from assuming, if necessary, extraordinary obligations to meet any exigency forced upon the department by the use of every appliance and resource at my command, I am not willing that this experiment shall be made without thus entering a timely protest, foreshadowing some of the evils which will inevitably follow, so that the responsibility for the unavoidable consequences may fall where it rightfully belongs.

I am, very respectfully,

P. B. HUNT,  
*United States Indian Agent.*

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

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