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Indian disturbances in Oregon and Washington.
Message from the President of the United States,
transmitting a communication from the Secretary
of the Interior, in relation to Indian disturbances in
the Territories of Oregon and Washington

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INDIAN DISTURBANCES IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON.

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A communication from the Secretary of the Interior, in relation to Indian disturbances in the Territories of Oregon and Washington.

MARCH 10, 1856 — Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE, March 5, 1856.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:

I present herewith a communication from the Secretary of the Interior, in relation to Indian disturbances in the Territories of Oregon and Washington, and recommending an immediate appropriation of three hundred thousand dollars.

I commend this subject to your early consideration.

FRANKLIN PIERCE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, March 4, 1856.

SIR: I have the honor to lay before you a communication of this date, with accompanying papers from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, relative to the Indian disturbances in Washington and Oregon Territories, and to recommend that an immediate appropriation of three hundred thousand dollars be asked of Congress, to be expended under your direction, in restoring and maintaining the peaceable disposition of the Indian tribes on the Pacific.

I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,

R. McCLELLAND,

Secretary.

To the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office of Indian Affairs, March 4, 1856.

SIR: I transmit herewith a copy of a letter from Governor Stevens, of Washington Territory, dated December 22, 1855; also a copy of a letter from that officer dated January 29, 1856, both of which have reference to the present condition of our Indian relations in that Territory, and the exigencies and requirements of the public service there.

Governor Stevens has deemed the condition of things arising out of the Indian disturbances in the Territory of such moment as to cause him to transmit these papers by a special messenger, and they were delivered in this office yesterday by Mr. Mason, the secretary of the Territory, who was deputed by the governor for that purpose.

I have despatched a communication by to-day's mail to Governor Stevens, authorizing him to draw on this office for the sum of \$27,000, which may be properly applied from funds now under the control of the department for the Indian service of Washington Territory; but there are no other moneys now subject to draft that can, in my opinion, be used for the purpose.

It will be observed that the governor states that he has now collected and is subsisting by rations daily some five thousand friendly Indians, and asks that he be permitted to draw on the department for the sum of fifteen thousand dollars per month, for an indefinite period, commencing the first of November last. I have advised him that the authority could not be granted, but that his communications would be transmitted to you with a recommendation that an appropriation be asked for immediately for the Indian service on the Pacific coast.

I deem it proper also to transmit herewith a copy of my report to you, dated the 1st December last, in relation to our Indian affairs in Oregon Territory, together with a copy of my instructions to the superintendent of Indian affairs in the latter Territory, dated fourth of that month, in which, in view of the exigency that had arisen there, he was authorized to draw on the department for a sum not exceeding \$100,000, to be judiciously expended in all proper endeavors to avert the horrors of a general Indian war, which appeared to be impending.

It is my opinion that an urgent necessity exists for an application to Congress for an immediate appropriation of money to be applied, under the directions of the department, for the preservation of peace among the Indian tribes of Oregon and Washington Territories, and, so far as is pertinent to the Indian department, to allay existing hostilities.

I therefore recommend that a sum not exceeding \$300,000 be asked for, to be expended for the objects above stated, under the direction of the President of the United States.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. W. MANYPENNY,
Commissioner.

HON. R. McCLELLAND,
Secretary of the Interior.

HEADQUARTERS WASHINGTON TERRITORY VOLUNTEERS,
Wallah-Wallah Valley, December, 22, 1855.

SIR: I reached this point on the 20th instant, after a very successful crossing of the mountains, and without the slightest interruption, either from the elements or the Indians, except the indispensable delays required to recruit and replace exhausted animals, and to confer with Indians to prevent their taking part in the existing hostilities.

In my communication of the 22d October I notified the department that I should move camp the next day on my return, and, if practicable, make treaties, on my way, with the lower Pend d'Oreilles, Cœur d'Alénes, Spokanes, Covilles, and O'Kanies-Kanies. The camp was broken up accordingly; I left Fort Benton on the 28th October, and after getting into camp on the Titon, on the 29th, some thirty miles from Fort Benton, my express man, Pearson, reached me, seventeen days from the Dalles, with the alarming information that the Yakimas were in open war; that Major Haller had been defeated and obliged to return to the Dalles; and that there was but little doubt that the Cayuses, Wallah-Wallahs, and Umatillas were hostile. A general Indian war was apprehended. The agent of the Yakimas, Bolon, had been most foully and treacherously killed. I had known, previous to this, from the letters of the Jesuit missionaries and Angus McDonald, esq., in charge of the Hudson's Bay post, at Fort Colville, that the tribes with whom I proposed to treat were in an excitable state, and that a little matter might cause them to join in the general combination.

My plans were immediately made. The train was stopped, and my secretary, James Doty, esq., was despatched to Fort Benton to get arms, ammunition, and animals. A small train of wagons, for the service of the Flathead agent, was turned back, and the party joined with the main body, and I pushed forward, in person, with two men, to the Bitter Root valley, to bring to Hellgate men, animals, ammunition, and arms, and to make, at that point, a treaty with the lower Pend d'Oreilles, if they could be brought to that point in season.

I made the distance from the Titon to Fort Owen, some 225 miles, in four and a half days, and on the second day afterwards was encamped on Hellgate, with the advanced parties in charge of agent Lansdale and special agent Adams, who, previous to the arrival of Pearson, had been despatched to the valley to facilitate my operations there in treating with Indians and collecting animals and supplies for the journey home.

Here I called into council the Nez Percés delegation to the Black-foot council, and made arrangements that we should travel together as far as the Cœur d'Alénes mission.

Mr. Doty was detained five days in performing the duty assigned to him—the fifth day the whole train resting in consequence of the sickness of one of the men; and in eight days he reached my camp, a distance of two hundred miles. The weather was intensely cold east of the Rocky mountains, and there was about one foot of snow on the divide.

The plan formed on the Titon was now deemed by me to be entirely practicable, which was, to push over the Cœur d'Aléne trail to the

Spokane, call into council the tribes in that vicinity, soothe and quiet their excitement, making treaties for the sale of their lands, if they were prepared for it, and then push to the Nez Percés country; call that tribe into council; strengthen them in their determination to abide by their plighted faith, and, with their aid, to force my way through the hostile tribes to the settlements below.

The lower Pend d'Oreilles could not be collected in season, and I left with Dr. Lansdale, the programme of the treaty to be entered into with them at the earliest practicable moment.

We started from Hellgate on the 14th of November; crossed the divide in two and a half to three feet of snow on the 20th of November; reached the Cœur d'Alénes mission on the 24th; the train one day behind.

Here I paused two days, the animals absolutely requiring one day's rest; collected information, and soothed the spirits of the Cœur d'Alénes. They talked well, but their statements in regard to the war were somewhat uncertain.

From the Cœur d'Alénes, I despatched my Nez Percés interpreter, William Craig, with the Spotted Eagle and a portion of the chiefs to the Nez Percés country, with instructions to call the tribe into council; send information below of their intentions, and have everything in readiness for my reception there.

The Looking Glass and four other men of note accompanied me to the Spokane. We arrived there November 28th, a distance of nearly sixty miles, in two days.

On my arrival, I despatched expresses to Colville, and to the Indians at the mouth of the Spokane, calling them into council. Every chief of the Cœur d'Alénes, Spokanes, and Colvilles came. We were in council parts of three days. They were excited. Their minds were poisoned by all the artful stories and tricks of the hostile tribes. They talked freely; I urged them to talk boldly, saying I should talk friendly and boldly in return. In my address, I refuted the thousand lies which had been spread among them; admonished them wherein their duty lay; avowed my determination to protect Indians who were friendly. It seemed to change the whole current of their feelings. They were apparently soothed and satisfied, and they pledged themselves to protect all white men in their country, and to take no part in the war.

I did not deem it expedient to enter into a treaty for the purchase of their lands, though I expressed to them my willingness to do so, if they were prepared for it; and accordingly agreed with them that a council should be held for that purpose as early in the spring as practicable.

On our arrival at the Spokane, our animals were much exhausted by their long and rapid march, and the delays incident to the council were indispensable to recruit the animals. The horses were almost entirely worn out, and we were obliged by purchase and exchange to renovate our band.

On the Spokane, I found Mr. Bolen's party in good heart and spirits; and on starting my force was augmented by eighteen men from the mines.

At this point no reliable information could be gained of the plan of operations of the campaign. The Yakimas, under Kam-ai-akum, were believed to be on this side of the Columbia, at Priest's rapids, and the Cayuses and Wallah-Wallahs to be hostile.

On the 8th of December we were fairly under way for the Nez Percés country, and in four days reached Craig's, on the Lapuai, a distance of one hundred and eight miles, travelling the whole time in storm, snow, and rain; the snow at times eight to twelve inches deep. At Craig's we found the Nez Percés in council awaiting my arrival.

Whilst we were in council, Indian reports rapidly came in of the four days' battle in the valley between the Oregon volunteers and the Cayuses, Wallah-Wallahs, Umatillas, and the Indians thence to the Dalles, and of the death of Pu-pu-mox-mox. These reports were confirmed on the 14th December, by letters forwarded by special agent B. F. Shaw. The train had already been in motion one and a half hour, and I remained behind for the day to conclude my arrangements. I determined to make no change in the plans which I had made in concert with Lanyer, the head chief of the Nez Percés, which was, to take with me a portion of his people well mounted and well armed, and to leave the larger portion in their own country, in camp at Craig's, at the mouth of the Lapuai and at the mouth of the Clearwater, to drive the hostile Indians out of the Nez Percés country, in case they should invade it from the north side of the Snake.

On my way here I met no hostile Indians. Ume-how-lish, reported to be one of the Cayuse leaders in the war, surrendered an unconditional prisoner. The Indians, in arms, are believed to be on the north side of the Snake southward from its mouth to the Nez Percés country. It is not certainly known whether Kam-ai-akum recrossed the Columbia, but it is believed he is now active in his exertions to combine all the tribes now in arms against the force in this valley. Here I shall remain a few days to make the best arrangements in my power to keep up communications with the friendly tribes, and to organize the settlers for defence. The war has been most treacherous and bloody in its inception, and it must be prosecuted with an iron hand. I state, on my official responsibility, that if strong measures are not urged now, and the enemy be not met and beaten before the spring, that there will be great danger of tribes now peaceable breaking into open war. I will vouch for the Nez Percés. They are staunch and entirely reliable. But all the tribes northward from the Cascades to the Bitter Root are extremely doubtful, and rumors are now reaching me that a portion of the Spokanes have already marched to the aid of Kam-ai-akum.

Bitterly have I regretted the long delay on the waters of the Missouri, incident to the successful issue of the Blackfeet council. I have sought to do my duty there, and I shall do it here. Considering the season, we have made an extraordinary march. The distance by our route has been some six hundred and fifty miles.

The military operations on the other side of the Columbia river have been unfortunate. The Yakima country should have been held and not abandoned. The country is good for a winter campaign. The Indians can and should be struck and punished now.

My plan is to make no treaties whatever with the tribes now in arms; to do away entirely with the reservations guaranteed to them; to make a summary example of all the leading spirits, and to place as a conquered people, under the surveillance of troops, the remains of these tribes on reservations selected by the President, and on such terms as the government in its justice and mercy may vouchsafe to them.

Very respectfully, your most obedient,

ISAAC I. STEVENS,

Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

Hon. GEO. W. MANYPENNY,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT INDIAN AFFAIRS,

Olympia, January 29, 1856.

SIR: I reached this place from the Wallah-Wallah valley on the 19th instant, and have just returned from a visit of the Sound region. The condition of affairs in the Territory is this: Nearly five thousand Indians are now under the charge of ten local agents, and rationed daily.

The people of the whole Sound region are living in block-houses, or in their immediate vicinity. A band of hostile Indians, numbering, according to various estimates, from two to five hundred, are on White and Green rivers, determined to prosecute the war. They attacked Seattle on the 26th instant, keeping up the attack nearly all day, killing two persons, and driving the families on shipboard. The town was defended by a vessel-of-war and over one hundred citizens. They have devastated the whole of King county, driving the whole population within the line of defences of the town of Seattle.

As the executive of the Territory, I have called out volunteers, and trust that, by a vigorous prosecution of the war, the enemy may be checked, and the Indians now friendly may be prevented joining them.

In such great peril is this whole community, and so important is it that means should be furnished to feed the Indians, and give great efficiency to the Indian service, that it has seemed to me indispensable to send a special messenger to lay our condition before the President and the departments.

The secretary of the Territory, and the acting governor during the first three months of the war, the Hon. C. H. Mason, has been selected by me for this duty, and will proceed without delay to Washington city.

I have to urge that the balance of the several appropriations, including that for Indian hostilities, be remitted without delay; and that, in addition, I be allowed to draw on the department for fifteen thousand dollars per month, beginning the first day of November last.

The Hon. C. H. Mason will lay all the facts before the department,

and will, I doubt not, show the department the extraordinary condition of things in the Territory, and the necessity which has made it indispensable to ration so many Indians, and appoint so many local agents.

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

ISAAC I. STEVENS,

Governor and Supt. Indian Affairs, Washington Territory.

Hon. GEO. W. MANYPENNY,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

Office of Indian Affairs, December 1, 1855.

SIR: I have the honor to submit, herewith, for your information and consideration, and such action in connexion with that which may be deemed proper by the War Department as may be advisable, the original letters, and their respective enclosures, from Joel Palmer, esq., superintendent of Indian affairs in Oregon Territory, of the 9th, 16th, and 19th October last, respectively, which reached this office to-day.

The letter of the 9th October confirms the information of the murder of agent Bolon, communicated to you in my report of the 16th ultimo, and details to a considerable extent the character of the difficulties, and the causes thereof, in the Oregon and Washington Territories.

It also refers to the means necessary to enable the government successfully to meet the existing crisis regarding our Indian relations in those Territories, both as to war and peace measures; and I have respectfully to invite your attention to the suggestions referred to, as well in the letter of the superintendent as the report of agent Geo. H. Ambrose for September, and the letter of agent R. R. Thompson, enclosed therewith.

The letter of the 16th encloses a printed copy of "regulations for the guidance of agents in the Oregon Indian superintendency pending existing hostilities," of the 13th October, which the superintendent has considered it proper to issue for the purposes therein stated. A letter from agent R. R. Thompson, of the 8th October, reporting information of a battle between Major Haller's command and the Indians, his defeat, and other rumors of difficulties, and an extra from the Oregon "Statesman," containing letters and other information relative to an "Indian outbreak in southern Oregon—dwellings burned; and families murdered." In this communication the superintendent suggests the want of funds sufficient for the exigency of the service; details further information as to the rumors of hostilities, and murders of families, and expresses the opinion that a large effective force upon a war footing will be immediately required to meet the existing demand upon the government.

The letter of the 19th October, which appears to have been kept open on the 20th and 21st, and written from Portland, encloses two

letters from agent Thompson, and two from agent Olney, and printed copies of the proclamation of the governor of Oregon, and general orders looking to armament and defence against armed parties, who have combined with the avowed purpose of waging an exterminating war against the Indians in southern Oregon. Also a letter of the 21st October from E. R. Geary, esq., his clerk, giving additional facts and information touching the outbreak, the murders, and the extent of the bloody drama then enacting in that country.

It will be observed by this last letter from superintendent Palmer, that he is apprehensive that any force which may be obtained under the proclamation of Governor Curry, will be insufficient for the service required, and that mounted men only can be depended upon for the successful prosecution of a permanent peace.

Your particular attention is called to the remarks of the superintendent, under date of the 20th October, relative to the wholesale butchery of peaceable and friendly Indians upon their own reservation as prescribed and provided under treaty stipulations.

Without further reference to the numerous points presented in the papers enclosed, I would respectfully request that, when you shall have duly considered their contents, they be returned to be filed here. Should copies hereafter be required for the use of your department they can be made.

From the importance of the subject, any action that may be concluded upon should, doubtless, be done at once, and in time to be communicated by the steamer that leaves New York on the 5th instant, if possible.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. W. MARYPENNY,

Commissioner.

Hon. R. McCLELLAND,

Secretary of the Interior.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office Indian Affairs, December 4, 1855.

SIR: Your letters of the 9th, 16th, and 19th October, together with their enclosures, all relating to the difficulties then existing in Oregon and Washington Territories among the different Indian tribes, and between the Indians and whites, arrived here on the 1st instant. The subject was promptly laid before the Secretary of the Interior, in order that such action might be taken, in conjunction with the War Department, as should be warranted and proper.

I have now to advise you that it is understood the military arm of the public service on the Pacific coast will be advised by the mail which is expected to leave New York to-morrow concerning their duties in this emergency. You will instruct the agents of this department within your superintendency by all proper means to aid in carrying out whatever measures you may deem necessary to effect peace among the several tribes of Indians, and restore harmony between them and

the whites; and where practicable, you will confer and act in concert with the military on that coast, so as to avoid any seeming clashing of jurisdiction, by which disaffection could take heart and encouragement. But while it may be proper that the measures to be employed shall be vigorous and effective, still they should be tempered with justice and such moderation as shall be wholly free from any charge of vindictiveness. You will, therefore, act with the utmost care and circumspection, avoid undue severity, yet act with such promptitude and energy as to secure respect to your authority. With these general directions, you will adopt such measures as, in conjunction with the authority and means in the hands of the military, shall seem in your judgment to be necessary to secure a permanent peace, a good understanding among all of the parties participating in the difficulties of which your several communications make mention.

There is not now time to send you any funds with this communication; but with the approbation of the Secretary of the Interior, you are authorized to draw upon this department for any expenditure that, in your opinion, the existing exigency absolutely demands, either for agricultural implements for the Indian reserve, provisions, clothing, or otherwise, as estimated in your letter of the 9th of October ultimo, providing, however, that the extent of such drafts does not exceed, in the aggregate, the sum of one hundred thousand dollars. But due notice should, in every instance, be promptly forwarded to this office of the date of the draft, its amount, and object. And in incurring the expenditure for which such drafts may be drawn, particular care will be taken that the utmost practicable economy is practised, consistent with the exigency of the case; and specific vouchers will be procured in all cases, and duly forwarded with all requisite explanations to enable this department and Congress to fully understand and comprehend the reasons and the necessity for the expenditures. You will readily conceive the importance of the observance of these instructions, when you are aware that any largely increased expenditure, for whatever object incurred, elicits the most minute inquiry and criticism.

As regards your statement relative to the propriety of being allowed a greater discretion in the purchase of tools and materials for the various objects of your superintendency, I have also to inform you that, under the circumstances stated by you, any such materials as, in your judgment, are immediately required, will be purchased by you on the Pacific coast, provided the same can be had at reasonable rates. You will, however, observe the same rules as to economy, giving information to this office of purchases made, drafts drawn, and furnishing proper vouchers, as stated in the foregoing paragraph. But on securing the necessary supply to answer the immediate wants of the service, you will report what additional goods or other materials it will be necessary to have sent from the Atlantic markets, and at what time the same will be required. In the mean time nothing will be sent from here until further advices are received from you.

Notwithstanding this allowance of so large a discretion to meet the case in its most alarming phase, it is still hoped that the cause is not really so bad as the representations forwarded by you would seem to

indicate. If, therefore, it should turn out that those representations are not realized by the facts when ascertained, you will be governed by a judicious regard of the real wants and exigencies of the service, and, so far as practicable, curtail the expenditures herein authorized.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. W. MANYPENNY,
Commissioner.

JOEL PALMER, Esq.,
*Superintendent of Indian Affairs,
Dayton, Oregon Territory.*