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Stockbridge and Munsee Indians. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, in answer to resolution of the House of the 12th ultimo, transmitting information as to the present condition of the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians

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STOCKBRIDGE AND MUNSEE INDIANS.

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

IN ANSWER TO

*Resolution of the House of the 12th ultimo, transmitting information as to the present condition of the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians.*

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FEBRUARY 10, 1863.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

*February 9, 1863.*

SIR: I transmit herewith a letter, dated the 3d instant, addressed to this department by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, communicating his views in answer to the accompanying resolution of the House of Representatives of the 12th ultimo, calling upon that officer for "such information as he may possess as to the present situation of the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians in Wisconsin, the reason for dissatisfaction with their present reservation, and also his views as to the propriety and expediency of making a new treaty with said Indians, with a view to the change of their present location, if desired by them."

I also enclose a copy of a report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated the 2d instant, upon a memorial from the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians, referred to this department by the chairman of the House Committee on Indian Affairs, complaining of the sterility of their present reservation as a home, their dissatisfaction, &c., and praying that a new treaty be entered into with them. A copy of this memorial is also enclosed.

In his report the Commissioner of Indian Affairs informs this department that he finds the statements of the memorialists substantially true.

Under these circumstances, as they are represented to me, I recommend that, with a view to the relief of the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians, a joint resolution be passed by Congress authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to negotiate a new treaty with these tribes, stipulating for their removal from their present reservation, and their location upon another to be selected for them, and that an appropriation not exceeding one thousand dollars be made to defray the expenses incident to the execution of such a treaty.

I have the honor to be, respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. P. USHER, *Secretary.*

Hon. GALUSHA A. GROW,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

THIRTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS, THIRD SESSION.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

January 12, 1863.

On motion of Mr. Potter,

*Resolved*, That the Commissioner of Indian Affairs be, and he is hereby, directed to communicate to the House such information as he may possess as to the present situation of the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians in Wisconsin, the reason for their dissatisfaction with their present reservation, and also his views as to the propriety and expediency of making a new treaty with said Indians, with a view to the change of their present location if desired by them.

Attest:

EM. ETHERIDGE, *Clerk*.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

*Office of Indian Affairs, February 3, 1863.*

SIR: I herewith transmit a resolution of inquiry adopted by the House of Representatives on the 12th ultimo, calling upon the undersigned for information in relation to the present condition of the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians of Wisconsin, the causes of their dissatisfaction with their present reservation, and the propriety and expediency of making a new treaty with said Indians.

On the 26th ultimo a memorial addressed by said Indians to the Senate and House of Representatives (copy enclosed) was by you referred to this office for a report. This memorial has a direct reference to the subject of inquiry embraced in the resolution above mentioned; and having compared the same with the facts in relation to said Indians, as exhibited by the records and files of this office, I have thought proper, in replying to said resolution, to state that, in my judgment, the statements contained in said memorial are substantially correct.

I have no doubt that the condition and wants of said Indians are such as to render the negotiation of a new treaty not only expedient, but also highly desirable and essential, as a means of ameliorating their situation and promoting their welfare. I respectfully request that this communication, together with its accompanying papers, may be transmitted to the House of Representatives, in response to the resolution herein mentioned.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. P. DOLE, *Commissioner*.

Hon. J. P. USHER,

*Secretary of the Interior.*

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

*Office of Indian Affairs, February 2, 1863.*

SIR: A communication from the honorable C. Aldrich, chairman of the House Committee on Indian Affairs, enclosing memorial of chiefs and principal men of the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians for a new treaty, has been referred by you to this office, with a request to report whether the petitioners did complain, as

they allege, and if, in my opinion, the petition should be granted. Said communication and memorial are herewith returned.

Upon an examination of the files of this office, I find that the statements of the memorialists are substantially true, as stated in said memorial, and I have no hesitancy in recommending that the prayer thereof should be granted.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. P. DOLE, *Commissioner.*

HON. JOHN P. USHER,

*Secretary of the Interior.*

*To the honorable Senate and House of Representatives in Congress convened:*

The chief and principal men of the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians, residing in Shawano county, State of Wisconsin, respectfully show :

A treaty was made, in the year 1856, between the general government and the Stockbridge and Munsee Indians, in which the latter relinquished moneys and valuable claims to lands in Wisconsin, together with seventy-two sections on the west side of the Mississippi river, receiving in lieu thereof certain sums of money and a tract of land "near the southern boundary of the Menomonee Indian reserve," in the State of Wisconsin; but the tract upon which we were located was not the one promised, nor the one for which the treaty was signed. By repeated and fair assurances on the part of Francis Huebschman, commissioner on the part of the United States, as may be shown by ample evidence, we were to select any two out of four townships on the south side of Lake Shawano. This had been explored by us, and had we obtained the location, we would have been satisfied and probably never have troubled the government again. But when the selection came to be made, we found, to our surprise, that we had been caught in a snare; the commissioner had said one thing and meant another. The wording of the treaty, "near the southern boundary of the Menomonee Indian reserve," had been cunningly devised, which might be construed to mean on the north as well as the south side of said line. The commissioner made use of the former, and after obtaining a tract by purchase from the Menomonee Indians, he thrust us upon our present home, which was as far from our expectations as if we had been transferred to some other planet.

Being dissatisfied with our home and the manner we had been treated, we at once commenced representing our case to our Great Father and to Congress, but up to this day we have obtained no redress. We have for six years patiently borne with the wrong, hoping that some future change would bring the desired relief. We have been upon our homes, making improvements in buildings and opening farms, and have made thorough and repeated trials at raising enough for subsistence; but we have found that even our most able and industrious ones have scarcely produced enough to last six months. The location is too far north, where early and late frosts will not suffer our crops to mature; the soil is sand, and weak; the timber is pine, hemlock, and cedar, interspersed with scattered strips of hard timber. It would do for a lumbering community, but not for us, who are just emerging from the Indian state, to become an agricultural people. We have been able to remain thus long, supported by the means stipulated in our last treaty; but these are now exhausted, and as the soil promises so little, we look forward with dismal prospects. Owing to the inhospitable nature of our home, more than half of our people have been compelled to seek a living elsewhere, and unless something can be done for us soon, we see no other alternative than that the whole tribe must leave and scatter. We appeal to the magnanimity and generous regard of your honorable bodies for the too often and long-abused red man. Our fathers were your allies in the achievement of American

freedom; and even now, in your present struggles, we have been no indifferent spectators. We have, out of our feeble numbers, given some twenty or twenty-five of our young men, who are suffering and bleeding with your armies to quell the present rebellion. All we ask is a good home, located in a more southern latitude. We are few in number, and want but little, which we trust will not be denied us, from the unoccupied territories of this great government. The tribe is one in asking for a new treaty, to sell our present location and obtain a new and better home.

Your memorialists, therefore, pray your honorable bodies to take some speedy action for our relief, and we, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Done and signed in general council at Red Spring, Shawano county, State of Wisconsin, January 6, 1863.

Signed by John P. Hendricks, sachem, and eighty-three others.