

3-28-1868

Appropriations for destitute Indians. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting report relative to removing certain destitute Cherokee Indians, scattered through the Indian territory, to their homes in the Cherokee country, with estimates of the appropriations needed therefor

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Recommended Citation

H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 236, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1868)

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APPROPRIATIONS FOR DESTITUTE INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

Report relative to removing certain destitute Cherokee Indians, scattered through the Indian territory, to their homes in the Cherokee country, with estimates of the appropriations needed therefor.

MARCH 28, 1868.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

Washington, D. C., March 27, 1868.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated the 10th instant, with accompanying papers, in relation to removing certain destitute Cherokee Indians, now scattered through the Indian territory, to their homes in the Cherokee country, together with a statement and estimate of the probable cost of removing said Indians, and of subsisting them for three months after they reach their home.

The attention of Congress is respectfully invited to the favorable consideration of the subject.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

O. H. BROWNING,

Secretary of the Interior.

Hon. SCHUYLER COLFAX,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,

Washington, D. C., March 10, 1868.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith copies of a letter from the principal chief and chairman of the delegation of Cherokees, dated the 28th ultimo, enclosing a copy of a communication from late Superintendent Byers, relative to the removal of certain destitute Cherokees, scattered through the Indian territory, to their homes in the Cherokee country, making a statement in regard to the matter, and submitting an estimate of the probable cost of such removal and the subsistence of the persons who are removed for three months after their arrival home.

The fact that there are many of the Cherokees who left their homes during the late war and have since been unable to return from the want of means and assistance, has long been known to this office. It has been impossible for the department to afford any help to these destitute persons, owing to there being no funds at its disposal that could be used either for removing or subsisting them.

It is the opinion of this office that some steps should be taken to have the Indians in question returned to their homes at the earliest day practicable. To do this it will be necessary to have Congress appropriate the necessary funds. The estimate submitted by the principal chief of the nation and the chairman of the delegation is considered too high. It is thought that \$75,000 will be sufficient for the purpose, and also that the removal of the Indians and disbursement of the funds should be made under the directions of your department instead of the nation.

If you coincide with me in the views herein expressed, I respectfully request that the matter be laid before Congress for such action as in its wisdom may be deemed necessary and proper.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

N. G. TAYLOR, *Commissioner.*

Hon. O. H. BROWNING,
Secretary of the Interior.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *February 29, 1868.*

SIR: The undersigned, representatives of the Cherokee nation, have the honor herewith to lay before you a copy of a communication from the Hon. William Byers, late superintendent of Indian affairs, marked "A," under date of January 10, 1867, asking for the removal and relief of certain absentee destitute Cherokees, who have been left, by the operation of the late war, in the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek nations, as also in the States of Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas, and elsewhere, and who desire to return to their homes in the Cherokee nation, but are unable to do so on account of their extreme destitution.

We are advised that this important matter has, from time to time, been brought to the attention of both the Interior and War Departments, since the communication of the superintendent referred to above was presented by a delegation of Cherokees, consisting of Messrs. Fields, Adair, and Scales, but without any satisfactory results. From time to time, since the war, our nation and citizens have moved a portion of these people, but, after repeated efforts, they find it impossible to effect anything further in regard to their removal, not having any means so to do; so that there are yet away from their homes, according to the best of our information, not less than one thousand Cherokees, chiefly helpless women and children. As before intimated, these people are not confined to any particular class, but are scattered from Kansas to Texas, and over different portions of the Indian territory, and are now entirely helpless, and have no effective source but the magnanimity of the government to which to appeal as their guardian and protector. The average distance over which they will have to be removed will be about 175 miles to reach their homes. During their removal they will have to be subsisted, and, after they reach their homes, they should be sustained a short season—say three months, until by their own labor they may be able to sustain themselves. We herewith submit a statement, marked "B," showing the probable costs and expenses in removing and subsisting these people, and would respectfully request that an estimate be made and submitted, by the Department of the Interior, for their removal and subsistence, to Congress, as we are informed has been recently done for the Creek Indians; and that the necessary appropriation be asked for, and turned

over to our principal chief—to speedily restore all of our absentee Cherokees to their homes. Trusting that the government of the United States, as the protector of the Cherokees, in its kindness, will extend to our distressed absentee people the hand of humanity and compassion, we take great pleasure in assuring the government that the Cherokee people are now more united in sentiment and brotherly feeling towards each other than they have been for the last forty years, and it is our earnest hope that our *whole* people soon may be gathered together in their own country, that they may strive to promote their happiness and prosperity, and to elevate themselves in the scale of civilization, refinement and religion, with other enlightened people, and to cultivate peaceful relations with the government of the United States.

We have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servants,

LEWIS DOWNING,

Principal Chief Cherokee Nation.

H. D. REESE,

Chairman, Cherokee Delegation.

Hon. N. G. TAYLOR,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

A.

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT INDIAN AFFAIRS,

Fort Smith, Arkansas, January 10, 1867.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit to you a copy of a communication from J. P. Davis, assistant and acting chief of the southern Cherokee Indians, upon the subject of removing the destitute southern Cherokees, who now are in the State of Texas and in the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations, to their homes in the Canadian district in the Cherokee nation.

Prior to the receipt of this communication I had heard that these people were in a very helpless and destitute condition—many of them women and children, without any means of subsistence or transportation. I have conversed with intelligent Choctaws and Chickasaws, and others, who profess to be well acquainted with their condition, and they all give substantially the same statement. I am advised that there are delegates from the southern Cherokees and from the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations, now in Washington, who, no doubt, could give you satisfactory information on this subject. I am informed that these destitute people are located at different points in the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations, and in Rusk county, Texas; that there are about four hundred in Texas, who are destitute and unable to move themselves; and that it is about four hundred miles from there to their homes in the Cherokee nation; that there are about fifteen hundred of these destitute people in the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations, and that it would average about one hundred and seventy-five miles from where they now are to their homes in the Cherokee nation. It is represented to me that the most convenient point at which these people could be delivered, in order to reach their homes, would be at or near Webber's Falls, Canadian district, in the Cherokee nation, on the Arkansas river. These people are so widely scattered, it would take time and trouble to collect them together and remove them to their own country, and their deplorably destitute and suffering condition requires that whatever the government will do in the premises should be done as soon as practicable. I do not feel at liberty to act in the matter, either as to furnishing them subsistence or removing them; I therefore submit the subject to your consideration and advisement.

Your obedient servant,

W. BYERS,

Superintendent Indian Affairs.

Hon. LEWIS BOGY,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

B.

Statement showing the number of absentee Cherokees to be removed to their homes in the Cherokee nation, and subsisted; also probable cost of the same.

Estimated number to be removed and subsisted	1,000
“ “ miles to be travelled in removal	175
“ “ days required to remove them	60
“ “ wagons and teams required to remove them, allowing ten persons to one wagon	100
“ “ days during which they should be subsisted after reaching home	100

COSTS AND EXPENSES.

For hire of one hundred (100) wagons, at five dollars (\$5) per day for sixty (60) days, the time required for removal	\$30,000
For commutation of rations during the period of removal, sixty (60) days, for one thousand (1,000) persons, at 40 cents per day each ...	24,000
For commutation of rations for one thousand (1,000) persons, at 40 cents each per day, for one hundred (100) days, as the time during which these Cherokees should be subsisted after reaching home ..	40,000
Total amount required	94,000