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Indians on White Earth Reservation. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, relative to aid and encouragement to Indians on the White Earth Reservation, in Minnesota

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Recommended Citation

H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 130, 42nd Cong., 2nd Sess. (1872)

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INDIANS ON WHITE EARTH RESERVATION.

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

RELATIVE TO

Aid and encouragement to Indians on the White Earth reservation, in Minnesota.

FEBRUARY 13, 1872.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C., February 9, 1872.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a report from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, inclosing an estimate of appropriation of \$25,000, "required to aid and encourage the Indians on the White Earth reservation, in Minnesota, in their efforts to sustain themselves by the pursuits of civilized life," together with a copy of a communication from Agent E. P. Smith, in relation to matters concerning the Chippewa agency, &c., in said State.

The report of the Commissioner fully explains the necessity of legislation for the object named.

I concur in the recommendation that there be appropriated the sum of \$25,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, to enable the Secretary of the Interior to carry into effect the measures for the improvement of said Indians, and I respectfully submit the subject for the favorable consideration of Congress.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
B. R. COWEN,
Acting Secretary.

The SPEAKER of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., February 7, 1872.

SIR: I have the honor herewith to transmit copies in duplicate of a letter from Agent E. P. Smith, of the 16th ultimo, presenting various

suggestions and recommendations in connection with the removal of scattering bands of Chippewa Indians in Minnesota to the reservation near White Earth, referred to in a report from this office of the 19th ultimo.

In his letter on this subject, the agent makes special reference to the Pillager band of Chippewa Indians, parties to the treaty of May 7, 1864, (Stats., vol. 13, p. 693.) Of this band there are now, according to the agent's statement, three hundred and seventy-five persons located in Otter Tail County, who have been persistent in their refusal to go on the reservation provided for them by the second article of said treaty. They are willing, however, the agent reports, to be removed to the White Earth reservation, provided for the Chippewas of the Mississippi, where the fertility of the soil and many local advantages will enable them, if aided and encouraged by the Government, to engage in agricultural pursuits with fair prospects of success. They have no right whatever to the soil now occupied by them, but are a constant source of annoyance and irritation to the citizens of that locality, who are making urgent appeals to the executive of the State to have them removed by force.

As their establishment upon some reservation is desirable, and as the White Earth reservation is eminently adapted to afford them the means of self-support, and of advancement in the arts of civilization, while at the same time the Chippewas of the Mississippi are under no obligation to receive them at the White Earth, but will unquestionably do so if certain improvements, desirable to themselves, shall be conditioned on their receiving the Otter Tail Pillagers in equal terms. I therefore respectfully recommend, as calculated to afford the most advantageous solution of a difficulty that has long been of great annoyance to the people of Minnesota, that Congress be asked to appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars, to be used at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior, for such improvements on the White Earth reservation in Minnesota as he shall deem most expedient, such appropriation to be conditioned upon the assent of the Mississippi band of Chippewas to the settlement of the Otter Tail band of Pillagers upon the White Earth reservation, with equal rights in respect to the lands embraced within the boundaries of said reservation.

An estimate in duplicate, for the sum referred to, is herewith inclosed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

F. A. WALKER,
Commissioner.

Hon. C. DELANO,
Secretary of the Interior.

Estimate of appropriation required to aid and encourage the Indians on the White Earth reservation in Minnesota in their efforts to sustain themselves by the pursuits of civilized life.

For this amount, or so much thereof as may be necessary, to enable the Secretary of the Interior to carry on the work of aiding and instructing the Indians on the White Earth reservation in Minnesota in the arts of civilization, with a view to their self-support, conditioned upon the assent of the Mississippi band of Chippewas to the settlement of the Otter Tail band of Pillagers upon the White Earth reservation, with equal rights in respect to the lands within its boundaries..... \$25,000 00

OFFICE UNITED STATES INDIAN AGENT,
Chippewa Agency, Minnesota, January 16, 1872.

SIR: I desire to invite the attention of the Commissioner to the necessity for a special appropriation for this agency, which seems to me to be very urgent.

The steamboat at Leech Lake, without which the agency for the Pillagers cannot be kept up, has been saved daily from sinking by keeping a man at the pumps during the most of the summer. The engine and boiler, in their present condition, cannot make four miles per hour in still water, and in a headwind cannot run; neither can the boat make a trip across the lake with ordinary safety to life. The machinery must be taken to Minneapolis, and the lumber for repairs hauled from Brainerd, 75 miles; one thousand dollars will be required.

The second-hand machinery put into the mill at White Earth has given out. From \$1,000 to \$1,200 is required for its repairs, and then, at its full capacity, it will do only half the work required for the settlement. A grist-mill for flour, a shingle-mill, a planer and matcher, and a boiler and engine with double the power are required. Without this additional power only half the logs contracted to be delivered at the boom in May can be sawed, and the removal of the Gull Lake and Mille Lac bands to White Earth next summer will require the use of all this lumber for building purposes. A new mill, engine, boilers, grist-mill, with bolt and shingle machine, can be procured and, with the help of the employés, set up for \$5,000.

A road should be cut from White Earth to Red Lake—75 miles. The Red Lake Indians are in a very hopeful state. They built 75 houses during the past summer. With the present way of approach to their reservation, it is impossible for the agent to give them the attention and supervision the new state of things among them requires, and a heavy and increasing outlay is required for the transportation of articles that belong even to the beginning of civilized life. By the present route, six days in wagons are required for a trip from the headquarters of the agency at White Earth to Red Lake, and six months in the year the roads are impassable on account of snow or ice or water. Over the proposed road travel is practicable at all seasons, and the journey from White Earth will be accomplished in a day and a half. By the present route supplies are hauled by wagons nearly 200 miles from the nearest railroad. Over the proposed route the distance will be less than 100 miles from the railroad.

To cut this road and put in the bridges will require \$5,000.

By treaty stipulations all employés are required to bring their families upon the reservation. At White Earth there is no house for the Government carpenter nor for the blacksmith, and at Red Lake there is none for the physician or carpenter or farmer. As these employés have no title to the land, and no tenure of office, it would be a hardship to require them to build at their own expense. With such aid as they can render, these houses can be erected at \$800 each; for the five houses, \$4,000.

The 2,000,000 feet of logs in the boom at White Earth next May will cost \$16,000. These logs are of prime necessity to furnish building material for the Gull Lake and Mille Lac Indians, to be removed.

The removal of the Otter Tail band of Pillager Chippewas is necessary for peace between the settlers and the Indians. This band has no rights whatever where they are, and can scarcely pitch a wigwam without trespass upon a settler. The citizens are constantly annoyed and irritated, and have made frequent and urgent appeals to Governor Austin to have the Indians removed by force. Last summer a white man killed two of this band for trespassing on his land. Every interest of the Indians and the public peace seems to require their speedy removal. The Indians are anxious to go where they can begin to live by tilling the soil, and earnestly ask for help in building houses, breaking land, purchase of tools, seeds, and cattle. For their removal and temporary subsistence, and help in beginning to live by farming, \$20,000 will be required. They number 375. At White Earth they can be brought under civilizing influences. The experiment at this point is succeeding beyond a doubt. The Indians already there have gone steadily to work, and are all living in houses, and nearly all dress in a civilized way.

The mill will furnish new branches of industry. They can saw and sell lumber; shingles will be in great demand by the settlers; the flour-mill will take toll from the surrounding country; cabinet furniture, basket-making, and many other mechanical trades can be introduced with this increased power and machinery.

I regard this sum of \$51,000 for these items, viz: \$1,000 for Leech Lake steamboat; \$5,000 for White Earth mill; \$5,000 for Red Lake road; \$4,000 for agency buildings; \$16,000 for logs at the mill, and \$20,000 for the removal of the Otter Tail Indians, as an essential fund for civilizing purposes in this agency during the coming year, and would most earnestly ask that this estimate may receive from the Department such consideration as the exigencies of the case seem to require.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

EDWARD P. SMITH,
United States Indian Agent.

HON. F. A. WALKER,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs.