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Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting, in answer to a Senate resolution of December 8, 1876, information in relation to a removal of the Sioux Indians from their treaty reservation to the Indian Territory

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING,

In answer to a Senate resolution of December 8, 1876, information in relation to a removal of the Sioux Indians from their treaty reservation to the Indian Territory.

DECEMBER 14, 1876.—Ordered to lie on the table and be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, December 12, 1876.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the following resolution passed by the Senate, December 8, 1876:

“Resolved, That the Secretary of the Interior be requested to report immediately to the Senate what efforts have been made to remove the Sioux Indians from their treaty reservation to the Indian Territory, and what negotiations are now pending between the Government and said Indians, together with the object and purpose thereof.”

In answer to said resolution, I have the honor to transmit herewith copy of report, dated the 11th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. CHANDLER,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., December 11, 1876.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt, by Department reference, of Senate resolution dated the 8th instant:

That the Secretary of the Interior be requested to report immediately to the Senate what efforts have been made to remove the Sioux Indians from their treaty reservation to the Indian Territory, and what negotiations are now pending between the Government and said Indians, together with the object and purpose thereof.

And in accordance with your directions submit the following report:

In the act of Congress approved August 15, 1876, making appropriations for the Indian Department, among the various provisions thereof, it is provided that hereafter there shall no further appropriation be made for the subsistence of the different tribes of Sioux Indians, unless they shall agree—

1. To relinquish all rights and claim to any country outside of the boundaries of the permanent reservation secured to them by their treaty of 1868;
2. To relinquish a portion of said reservation lying west of the one hundred and third meridian of longitude;
3. To grant the right of way for several roads over the reservation, from points on the Missouri River to the part that may be thus relinquished;
4. To receive their supplies for subsistence at such suitable places in the vicinity of the Missouri as the President may designate; and
5. To enter into some stipulation, agreement, or arrangement calculated and designed to enable them to become self-supporting; and for these purposes \$20,000 are appropriated.

With a view to effect the objects of this provision of the law, the President, soon after its passage, appointed a commission composed of the following gentlemen: Hon. George W. Manypenny, H. C. Bulis, esq., Newton Edmunds, esq., Right Rev. H. B. Whipple, A. G. Boone, esq., Hon. A. S. Gaylord, and J. W. Daniels, esq.; and these commissioners, under full instructions furnished by this office, bearing date the 24th of August last, shortly proceeded to the discharge of the duty devolved upon them.

No official report of their doings has yet been communicated to the Department or this office by that commission. Their first council was held with the Indians at the Red Cloud agency early in September, when propositions in consonance with the conditions stated in the law referred to were presented to the Indians, and finally accepted by them. Subsequently other Sioux agencies were visited, and councils held, and the same propositions submitted with like result.

Although not officially so advised, it is understood by this office that the commission having finished their work some time since, agreed to convene in this city on the 9th instant to report the result of their proceedings, and it is thought that most, if not all, of them are present at this date.

In regard to one of the subjects of negotiation, that relating to an arrangement to enable the Indians to become self-supporting, it was deemed that an arrangement or agreement best calculated to subserve the end desired would be one providing for the removal of these Indians at an early day to the Indian Territory, for the obvious reason that their main dependence must ultimately be derived from the cultivation of the soil, not practicable in their own country, which is so unsuited for such purposes; and it was held that the better climate and superior soil of the Indian Territory, and the fact of that Territory being forever secured to the Indian people, should be inducements for them to enter into a measure of the kind indicated.

The commissioners were accordingly authorized to enter into an agreement with the Indians for such a removal; but if it could not be accomplished without first affording them an opportunity to visit the Indian Territory, and the commissioners should be of the opinion that the visit would probably secure their assent to the proposition, the commissioners were further authorized to send, under careful and competent direction, or to take, a delegation of the most influential chiefs and headmen to the said Indian Territory. Under that authority, a subcommittee, Messrs. Boone and Daniels, with E. A. Howard as disbursing-agent, accompanied by about ninety Indians, visited the Territory in question; and they lately returned therefrom, the Indians being favorably im-

pressed with what they saw, as I am informed by the subcommittee, who reached this city on the 9th instant.

It may be proper to remark that the Indians were given to understand that any agreement entered into with them would not be binding on either of the parties thereto until approved by the President and Congress.

The commission will, doubtless, in a short time submit a full report, which, when received, will be forwarded immediately to the Department.

I herewith return the resolution of the Senate referred by the Department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. Q. SMITH,
Commissioner.

The Hon. the SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.