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Letter from the acting Secretary of the Interior, to the Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, accompanying a copy of a report of Inspector E. C. Kemble in relation to the condition of the Indians of the Siletz Agency in Oregon

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LETTER

FROM

THE ACTING SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TO THE

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,

ACCOMPANYING

A copy of a report of Inspector E. C. Kemble in relation to the condition of the Indians of the Siletz agency in Oregon.

FEBRUARY 17, 1874.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C., February 14, 1874.

SIR: I have the honor to present herewith, for the consideration of Congress and such legislation as may be deemed expedient, a copy of a report, dated the 7th instant, made by Inspector E. C. Kemble, in relation to the condition of the Indians of the Siletz agency, in Oregon, together with a copy of the proceedings of a council held with them, in which their wants are stated.

A copy of a letter dated the 6th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, communicating the papers to this Department, is also herewith transmitted, containing the recommendations of that officer in the premises, to which the attention of Congress is respectfully invited.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

B. R. COWEN,
Acting Secretary.

Hon. WM. A. BUCKINGHAM,
Chairman Committee Indian Affairs, U. S. Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., February 6, 1874.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith, for the action of Congress, a copy of a report from United States Indian Inspector E. C. Kemble, dated the 7th instant, in relation to the condition of the Indians of the Siletz agency in Oregon, together with a copy of the proceedings of a council held with them, in which their wants are stated.

On the 11th August, 1855, a treaty was concluded with said Indians, providing for the establishment of a reservation, and the appropriation

of certain funds for the erection of buildings, fencing, and opening farms; the purchase of teams, farming implements, tools, and seeds; for the erection of saw-mills, school-houses, blacksmith-shops, &c., with a view to their advancement in the arts of civilization.

This treaty, however, failed of ratification, leaving the Indians without a desirable title to their reservation, and depriving them of the funds necessary for the purchase of the articles above referred to, in view of which, it will be observed, the Indians bitterly complain.

I have, therefore, respectfully to recommend that Congress be requested to pass such an act as will carry out, to some extent at least, the intention of the Government toward said Indians when such treaty was negotiated.

For this purpose it is respectfully recommended that provision be made for the confirmation of the title in said Indians of the lands now occupied by them. These lands were secured for their use and occupation by an Executive order, issued in 1855, shortly after the date of the unratified treaty. In 1865, however, an Executive order was issued for the restoration to the public domain of a strip taken from the center of said reservation, which now leaves it in two distinct parts, which parts are designated as the Alsea and Siletz reservations. These reservations are described as follows, viz:

ALSEA.

Beginning on the shore of the Pacific Ocean, at the mouth of a small stream, about midway between Umpqua and Sinslow Rivers; thence easterly to the ridge dividing the waters of the streams, and along said ridge and highland to the western boundary of the eighth range of townships west of the Willamette meridian; thence north, on said boundary, till it intersects the Alsea River; thence down the Alsea River to the Pacific Ocean; thence southerly, along the shore of the Pacific Ocean, to the place of beginning.

SILETZ.

Commencing at a point two miles south of the Siletz agency; thence easterly to the western boundary of the eighth range of townships west of the Willamette meridian; thence north, on said boundary, to a point due east of Cape Lookout; thence west to the Pacific Ocean, and thence southerly, along the coast, to a point due west of the place of beginning; thence east to the place of beginning.

I also respectfully recommend that provision be made for allotments to such Indians as may desire them, and that the issue of patents therefor be authorized, on the condition, however, that the land shall not be sold, leased, or otherwise disposed of until further legislation by Congress. Also, that an appropriation of \$50,000 be made for the purchase of agricultural implements, &c., as hereinbefore recited.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

EDW. P. SMITH,
Commissioner.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

SAN FRANCISCO, January 7, 1874.

SIR: In accordance with office letter of instructions, dated November 5, accompanying copy of letter of 18th October from Agent Fairchild, requiring me to ascertain the complaints referred to by him, and their causes, and also the desires and necessities of the Indians on the Siletz reservation, respecting the tenure of their lands,

I convened the members of the several tribes at Siletz on the occasion of my recent visit, and obtained a complete expression of their views, as also those of white persons living in their vicinity; concerning which I have the honor to report.

The Indians assembled to the number of one hundred and thirty-five, comprising the principal men and representing all the tribes on the reservation. The agent and teacher were present.

It was not necessary for me to invite the expression of their wishes in regard to their lands, for they had long been waiting an opportunity to make them known to "Washington," and were very eager to talk.

I endeavored to elicit independent views and to ascertain if there existed contrary opinions to those generally expressed.

I find these Indians desirous, to a man, to retain their reservation and to obtain a title from the Government to the lands they occupy. The accompanying synopsis of their remarks at the council will show the desires of the Siletz Indians respecting their reservation.

From such inquiry as I was able to make among white men on and in the vicinity of the reservation, I was led to the conclusion that the amount of land available for purposes of agriculture is very small; probably does not exceed 2,400 acres. It is nearly all comprised in the body of level land lying along and within the great bend of the Siletz River. The remainder of the reservation is mountainous and only fit for grazing purposes and for the timber which abounds in many places. On account of the severity of the weather and the state of the roads, I was not able to visit personally different parts of the reservation.

After obtaining the views of the Indians respecting their lands, I left the agency, and on my way to Alsea subagency, having occasion to visit Newport, the principal white settlement and business place in this region, I stopped several hours, for the purpose of hearing what the citizens had to say on the subject of the removal of these Indians.

Newport is a summer watering-place; contains two hotels, three stores, and a dozen dwelling-houses, only half of them occupied at this season. I saw the merchants and principal hotel-keeper, and a few other leading men. I could hear of no offense committed by the Siletz Indians more serious than "*grabbing* a few hills of potatoes;" nor could the men with whom I conversed assign any reason why they should be removed save that their occupancy of the land was an impediment to the growth of the country and prejudicial to the interests of white men in that section.

Judging from the number of white men that are living with squaws in this part of the country, there may be some justice in the latter of these two propositions.

Candor also compels me to observe that the condition of some of the white families along the Yaquina is rather below that of many of the Indians in thrift, cleanliness, and intelligence, and a comparison between this class and the industrious portion of the Indians would be rather unfavorable to the former, which may be another reason why the red men should be removed.

The intelligent settlers with whom I conversed were either averse to the scheme of removal or indifferent to the whole subject, and I could find but two or three men of any class who appeared disposed to favor an immediate ejection of the Indians from the reservation.

Indeed, since the petitions moving Congress to open the Siletz country to white men were signed, the agitation of the subject has died away; and now that business of every kind along the Yaquina is at a stand-still, few possess the hardihood to advocate the banishment of about the only remaining source of income which this part of the country now enjoys.

The simple facts are: The call for the removal of the Siletz Indians was started by a handful of speculators two years ago, as a part of a scheme to invite settlement and capital into this part of Benton County, it being represented that the Yaquina Valley was a natural highway to the sea.

A railroad has been projected, and great efforts have been made to attract settlers here. White men living along the river were easily induced to sign petitions for the removal of the Indians in order to widen the area for settlement, and put away everything that could constitute an objection to residence in this section. The Modoc war gave a fresh impetus to the demand; and ever since, until within a few months, the Indians have been kept in a state of anxiety by the mutterings of white men that they would soon be dispossessed of their lands.

There is now no agitation of the subject. The sensible portion of the little white community on the Yaquina, abating from the enthusiasm of last year, are disposed to regard the reservation rather as a help than as a hindrance to their operations, and nothing can be more true than that but for the Siletz reservation the roads in this part of the country would not have been built. I was credibly informed that the Indians had put one thousand days' work on the roads in the vicinity of their reservation.

Under all the circumstances, I can but advise the dismissal of the complaints against these Indians, and express the hope that the present Congress will not adjourn without

confirming their right to the lands they now occupy, and providing them with the necessities for which they have so long asked and waited.

They are peaceably and industriously disposed, and, if assigned their several lots of land, would soon, with a little aid and instruction, place themselves beyond the condition of dependents on Government bounty. Their removal is not necessary, in my opinion, to the interests of the white community in their vicinity. It would be, at the present time, a positive disadvantage.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

EDWD. C. KEMBLE,
Inspector Indian Affairs.

Hon. E. P. SMITH,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

Minutes of council held at Siletz agency, Oregon, December 15, 1873, with the chiefs of the confederated tribes.

The council was called to order by the agent, J. H. Fairchild, who made some remarks, and was followed by Inspector E. C. Kemble, who announced the wishes of the Government with respect to their remaining upon and cultivating the lands of the reservation.

The first of the Indians to speak was GEORGE HARNEY, (Rogue River Indian, head chief of the confederated tribes:)

I am glad to see the inspector; glad he has come to see my people. They are very poor, and always have been poor since they have been here. We all want to improve and be like the whites, but have no means of doing so. How can we improve and raise our own food if we have no tools or teams? We have not had any one to teach us in past times, and the President's money did not reach us. Since Mr. Fairchild and the men that are now with him have been here things have been much better. They are good men. I want the President to help these Indians to improve. A long time ago the whites defeated the Indians in battle and brought them here. They are still troubling us. They have taken a part of our reservation, and now want the rest. A year ago last fourth of July they killed one of our chiefs, and now want to drive us from our homes. The President believes in God; so do you, and so do I, and I would like the President to help Indians, and we want you to help us. We are much better off than before our present agent and employes came, and the Indians are taking their advice.

Agents have often promised many things but never performed their promises. I want the President to give us a mill. I want the whites to stop troubling us about our land and about removing us. What have we done? We believe in God. We are trying to do good. Why should they want to drive us away? All that is sorry in my heart I tell you. I want you to tell President that the Indians desire to remain here. We do not want to be driven away. We were driven here, and now this is our home, and we want to stay. The most of our people have never been paid for their lands. Now they want to be paid. We want schools for our children. *We do not want blankets and tobacco and shirts sent here.* We can buy such things. We want teams, tools, wagons, &c., sent here—something to work with. We want ploughs, harness, &c., instead of tobacco, blankets, shirts, and such other goods as are sent here.

All our people want to work, but we must have things to work with. Suppose we raise wheat. How can we grind it? We have no mill. We want this talk about removing us stopped. All the Siletz Indians have good hearts. Whites outside say Siletz Indians don't know anything. Why? We have nothing to work with. How should we know how to take care of ourselves when we have no teams and tools to work with?

One word more. All the Rogue River Indians at the Grand Ronde agency are my people, and belong here. I am their chief, and they all should be brought here.

OLD JOE, (chief of Klamaths, Chastas, Scotons, and Umpquas.) I am glad to see thee, Tye, (chief.) You come to see us. Long time ago you gave us this land. I have a good heart. You see this land. You gave us this land, and I am glad you have come to see it. I have heard what you said; it is good. I am glad to see you. Our old people are all dead. Of all the chiefs that were here when the President gave us this land I am the only one left. I want to speak about this land. I do not like the talk of the whites about taking the land away. I am afraid of that, and so I tell you. How can you take away this land, when you gave it to us and we want to keep it? Many of our people have died here. That is the reason my heart is so sore about this matter. If you should say "You must leave it," I should believe you. I want to tell you one thing: All the Indians want to work, but have no teams and tools, implements, &c. Our agent wants us to work, but we have nothing to work with. We want wagons, harness, tools, &c., and would like some cows; am sorry we have no teams, &c.; that is all we want. Would like a mill; both saw and flouring mill. They have them at

Grande Ronde, and why should we not have them? If we had mills we would be all right. My people are all good. When the whites killed some of us we did not fight, but took the word of the white chief. All our people want good hearts. Most of our people have died. We do not want any more killed."

[NOTE.—The speaker is a chief, noted for friendship to the whites, and has on one or two occasions, with his people, guarded the whites at the agency from massacre by some of the other tribes.]

SIXES MACK. Our chief, Harney, has told the truth. We want to be civilized. You find us poor. We don't like to be poor; neither do whites. We don't want the whites at Yaquina to trouble us about removing us. We want a saw-mill, flour-mill, harness, wagons, teams, &c. We don't want tobacco, calico, blankets, &c., sent us; we can't work our land with them. We want something to work with, so that we can learn to take care of ourselves. I am an Indian; so was my father; but I want to be like the whites. We want the land divided; then when we die our children will get it; that is the way the whites do.

OLD UNCLE BILL, (an old Rogue River, formerly a noted war-chief, now not chief.) I am not a chief, but a very old man; am a Rogue River. I suppose you have heard of my brother, Tyee George. I heard you were coming and came down to see you. We all want to see you because you are from Washington. Am now nearly ready to die, and want you to listen to me. Some time ago our people sent a letter to Washington. There is money due my people, and we want it. Our chief, my brother, told us to get it. It has often been promised but never paid. I never saw it. How is the President going to fix this people? I want to know where is my money. Agents tell me not to go to the valley, [the white settlements,] but what can I live on? We have nothing to cultivate our land with, and how can we raise crops? Agents have killed more than ten of our people, and yet we are good. I now want to talk about something else. For two or three years I have had no blankets. I want blankets.

MCALLEN, (Rogue River.) I am glad to see you. You see the Indians all the same as your children. Look at your children; they are very poor. Am glad to have you come here to see this people. A long time ago they made a treaty with my people. Now all the chiefs who made the treaty are dead. Whites told us we should have wagons; where are they? Where is the money the President was to give us? White men tell me General Palmer stole the money. When Biddle was agent he gave us blankets, &c., and people said he stole the money. Where is the mill we were to have? After General Palmer came here he gave me a harness; but since this chief has been here I have got nothing. We want the land divided; that is the way the whites have. Outside I see the whites have farms, and we want the same. Tell the President to divide the land, then we can raise crops and live like the whites. We can sell our crops and buy what we want. We want a mill. I told our new agent to that effect, and he wrote to Washington.

DEPOT CHARLIE, (A Joshua, one of the most influential Indians on the reservation.) Have heard many things I am not going to tell. You told us not to speak about anything except great things. I am sorry for one thing; I am sorry to have you leave to-day in this storm; I would like you to stay here to-day; will tell you one thing, and I want you to put it in your heart. I don't want them to take this land from us; want you to keep this in your heart. You have a good heart; so have I. I think now we are beginning to do better. Church-members have come here and taught us, and now we are all trying to be good. Do you think it would be well for these bad white men to come and drive off good men both white and Indian? That is all I want to say. One thing more; we want a saw and flour mill. You see this old building; we would like a saw-mill to build a good church. I want you to put what I say in your heart; we want a flour-mill, then we can raise our own wheat and make our own flour and sell it and get money. Now we have no wagons; we want wagons. I am not chief, but will talk to you. I want these old people to have wagons. I don't want to see the old women pack wood on their backs. Government has but few wagons and the Indians but few. One thing more: do you intend the goods that are coming to be given to us, or to be sold us? [The speaker said he was satisfied with either way.] I want to talk about great things. I want all my people to hold up their hands. [A number here held up their hands.] All these people belong to the church and believe in God; God sees you. I am talking to my brother; that is what I call you; I think I have talked straight to you.

JESSE, (chief of the Euchres.) I do not want to talk long. I am sorry you have to go to-day, but I cannot help it. Am very poor; so are my people. Think nearly all are here; we want to talk about one thing. All of us have one heart; you see our agent, we all have one heart; I am getting very old. Do not want you to forget what I say. I am glad you came; will only talk about our work. If I can get things to work with I will be glad. If we had a mill I would always be good. All these people who stood up have given their hearts to you. I want horses. If you would give me a wagon it would be good. I don't want white men to talk about removing us. This country was given us long ago, and we don't want to leave. I want to be good.

CAPTAIN, (A-miltswot-na.) I am very glad to see you. Long time my heart has been sorry when I thought of my people. I do not know how to write, and can't send letters to Washington. Now I am glad to see and talk with you. We are all poor. Why does Government give us worthless things like tobacco, calico, &c.? We want wagons, teams, mills, tools, &c. We want something we can work with. I want you to tell the President this. I am sorry because the Yaquina whites trouble us. Government brought us here and gave us this land. All these people are church-members. We are all good. I don't want bad white men to drive us off our land. I want the Government to divide this land. For a long time we were asleep; now we are beginning to wake up.

WILLIAM STRONG, (Too-toot-na, chief.) I am glad to see you. Don't know but you visit all the Indians. You come here last. The people are few. I am very poor and have no house. Since I was a little boy I saw many whites. Many agents have been here before; Mr. Fairchild is a good man. I am proud and glad to see you. Have been waiting for you. Our agent told us you were coming. Am sorry you have to go away. It is a bad, stormy day. Was glad to hear you speak yesterday at church. Am glad you want to help the Indians. One thing I want to say: A year ago last 4th July my chief was killed by a white man at Yaquina. I saw it. Our present agent and employes are good people. There are bad people at Yaquina. I do not think General Palmer wrote to Washington about the murder of our chief. I was standing close by him. Now I want to be good. We want to hold this land. We all want it. After my chief was killed we did not try to get revenge. Now we don't want to leave. They may send soldiers, but I will not go. If they want to hang me they can do so, but I will not leave. Our agent is glad to have us join the church. He is a good man. We want teams and wagons. I want the land divided. When will they give us the land? I want to work and earn my living, and I want the land divided and teams, &c., given us, so that we can do something.

PISH-WASH, (chief of Klamaths, Chastas, and Scotons.) I am very glad to see you. We are all glad to see you. Now we have little hearts. If the first agents had learned us as we are now learning, we should now have large hearts. Since the new agent and employes came we have got good hearts. We are all glad to see you. All have one heart. Want you to tell the President what we want here. Our young boys ought to go to school. We want a church and school-house, mills, teams, tools, &c. We don't want people to bother us about taking our land; we want it ourselves.

ALECK, (chief of Nult-noot-nus.) I don't want to talk long, as you are in a hurry. Mr. Fairchild told me you were coming, and my heart was glad. I want a shoemaker and one blacksmith at my village. I want a church, and if the Government will give us the lumber, I will build it myself. Whatever you give us we will keep. We want horses, wagons, mills, &c. That is all.

SUTTON, (chief of Sixes.) Yes, we are all glad to see you. We want a mill, horses, wagons, cows, tools, &c. I don't want to talk two ways. There are only four wagons at the agency, and we ought to have more.

GEORGE, (former chief of Sixes.) I have a good heart. I am glad to see you. Now I am awaking. For a long time I have been asleep. I don't want my wife to have to pack wood on her back. I don't want to tell you a lie, and I don't want you to tell me an untruth. Long time ago we were promised a mill. You owe it to us. I don't want to buy nails. Does the Government give them to us? I want to know about that.

JOHN, (chief Chasta Costas.) Long time ago my chief died. I am very poor. I have to eat oats and tie my horse there and eat with him, and I am ashamed when I go outside. I don't want to buy any blankets, shirts, &c. I want money to buy my things. If we don't get help to improve we will become wild. The blankets we used to get were not good. When will we get good articles? I don't want to give up this land. The great chief gave it to us in exchange for our old country, and we don't want to leave it. When money comes for us it is spent in the stores. That is all.

EUCHRE JOHN. I grew in this country. I am not a chief. I will not talk bad. I want to throw away my bad heart. I want a church built at the lower village. Why can't they give us teams, wagons, tools, &c.? At the lower farm we have only two teams. Long time ago my fathers dressed in skins. I want to throw all that away. I want to raise wheat and be like white men.

JOSHUA, (chief of Joshuas.) You want to go soon, and I must not talk long. My mind is the same as the others. We want things as they have said. Am I a bad man? My agent knows me. That is all.

COQUILLE CHARLIE, (chief of Coquilles.) What can I say? For a long time I am ashamed. Long since my chiefs all died. Agents came and promised many things. Others came and promised the same. They have not come yet. That is the reason I am ashamed. I am glad to see you come. I think you have a good heart. Agents write to Washington for things, and I ask them when will the answer come? They say soon, soon. My opinion is the letters are lost, and the Washington chief does not know about us. Do you see all these people? Are they like whites? Do whites live in cellars; in smoke-houses? Are they starved? Our agent says these Indians are

becoming good. That is my opinion, too. I want you to tell the chief about us, and write the answer. Bad white men want our lands. I don't want to give it up. The President gave it to us, and we want it. I want the land divided into farms like the whites, so that we can learn to live like them. I want my agent to look close after us. I want him to come up and see us. Want farmer at upper farm discontinued, so that more tools can be issued us.

GLEES CREEK JIM, (Rogue River.) I have a warm heart. My agent knows me. Long time since a treaty was made, but the word of our chief was thrown away. When will these things promised us come? My agent knows me. If any white man comes on my land I will drive him off. We don't want you to go so soon. It is a very bad storm. When will you make us like whites?

CHETEVE JOHN, (chief of Cheteves.) Our agent said the inspector was coming, and wanted me to wait and see him. I was glad to hear of it, and now I want to see you and tell you about us. The other chiefs said they wanted mills, horses, cattle, wagons, &c., and that is what I want, and I don't want them to take this land. Give us our land in severalty and we are all right. Divide the land, and I will no longer be afraid of their driving us from our country. I only want to work and have things to work with. I like to work. I want horses, wagons, ploughs, &c. I want a saw-mill.

MAC-A-NOOT NA, (Jack chief.) I am glad to hear you and see you. I always like to work, but want tools, &c., to work with. I am poor and want many things. All the people are in need. At Grande Ronde goods are divided among the people. I want the same here. I agree with what the chiefs have said about horses, cattle, wagons, &c.

HARNEY. We are glad to hear what you have said. Are sorry you must leave us, but suppose it is your duty to go. I am young and have much to learn. I want you to tell the President what we have said. I want to go with my agent and minister. We will remember what you have told us.