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Message from the President of the United States, recommending a renewal of the appropriation of ten thousand dollars heretofore made for defraying the expenses of the Board of Indian Commissioners.

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M E S S A G E

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

RECOMMENDING

A renewal of the appropriation of ten thousand dollars heretofore made for defraying the expenses of the Board of Indian Commissioners.

JANUARY 18, 1882.—Read, referred to the Committee on Appropriations, and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives :

I transmit herewith a communication from the Secretary of the Interior, and accompanying letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, recommending a renewal of the appropriation of \$10,000 heretofore made for defraying the expenses of the Board of Indian Commissioners.

The subject is commended to the consideration of Congress.

CHESTER A. ARTHUR.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
January 18, 1882.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 12, 1882.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith, for your consideration, a copy of letter of the 7th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, recommending that Congress be asked to renew the appropriation heretofore made for defraying the expenses of the Board of Indian Commissioners—the amount required for that purpose being stated as \$10,000.

Concurring in the views of the Commissioner, I respectfully request that the measure may, if it meets your approval, be commended to the consideration of Congress.

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

A. BELL,
Acting Secretary.

The PRESIDENT.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, January 7, 1882.

SIR: I have the honor to invite your attention to the following:

The law under which the Board of Indian Commissioners owes its origin and present existence especially stipulates that they shall serve without compensation (section 2039 Rev. Stats.).

Section 2040 of the Revised Statutes provides as follows:

"The Board of Commissioners mentioned in the preceding section shall have power to appoint one of their number as secretary, who shall be entitled to such reasonable compensation as the board may designate, payable from any moneys appropriated for the expenses of the board."

Section 2041 further provides:

"The board of commissioners mentioned in section two thousand and thirty-nine shall supervise all expenditures of money appropriated for the benefit of Indians within the limits of the United States; and shall inspect all goods purchased for Indians, in connection with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, whose duty it shall be to consult the commission in making purchases of goods."

As is well known, this organization is composed of gentlemen distinguished for their intelligence and philanthropy, and prominent as men of large business experience.

These qualifications enable them, in their official capacity, to render the most valuable aid to the government by their constant oversight of the business of this bureau.

The work required of them is exacting and laborious. All bids received for furnishing supplies and annuity goods undergo careful examination by them, and no contracts are awarded without first receiving their approval. They supervise all expenditures of money appropriated for the benefit of Indians within the limits of the United States. They also render valuable assistance in the purchase of goods and supplies, in the inspection of these, and in all the various details connected therewith. Very much of their valuable time is given in this way.

By visiting the various agencies in person the members of the board acquire a practical knowledge of the wants of the Indians; at the same time an inspection of the supplies on hand enables them to determine correctly whether they are of the character and grade of excellence purchased.

At the New York warehouse the board keep a complete and independent record of all goods received, inspected, and shipped, and having access at all times to the records of this bureau a double supervision is thus afforded.

This very close and extensive oversight of affairs connected with the Indian service involves a great deal of skilled clerical labor and much expensive traveling; it necessitates the renting of an office in this city, where the secretary of the board, an officer authorized by law, keeps the records of the doings of the board, being constantly employed thereat.

The law contemplates compensation for the necessary expenses of the board (see sec. 2040, Rev. Stats.), and hitherto such expenses have been met by annual appropriations. However, Congress at its last session failed to make the usual appropriation for that purpose, and, consequently, the board have been left, since the end of the last fiscal year, without the means which has heretofore enabled them to render the important aid so cheerfully although gratuitously given.

In view of which, I have the honor to recommend that the matter be called to the attention of Congress, with a view to securing the usual appropriation (\$10,000 annually) for defraying the necessary expenses of the board.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. PRICE,
Commissioner.

The honorable the SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.