

University of Oklahoma College of Law

University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

1-9-1884

Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting letters of Indian Agent Armstrong and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, relative to the condition and necessities of the Crow Indians, and urging that the amount specified in the annual estimate for flour, meat, &c., be increased to \$90,000

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indigenous, Indian, and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

S. Exec. Doc. No. 42, 48th Cong., 1st Sess. (1884)

This Senate Executive Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu.

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

Letters of Indian Agent Armstrong and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, relative to the condition and necessities of the Crow Indians, and urging that the amount specified in the annual estimate for flour, meat, &c., be increased to \$90,000.

JANUARY 9, 1884.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 7, 1884.

SIR: I transmit herewith a communication of 5th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with inclosure from Agent Armstrong, of the Crow Agency, Montana, in relation to the condition and necessities of the Crow Indians in Montana, and urging that the amount specified in the annual estimate for the purpose of furnishing flour, meat, &c., for the ensuing fiscal year may be increased from \$65,000, the sum mentioned therein, to \$90,000.

The Commissioner states that the present appropriation for the objects indicated is far less now, when the game is entirely driven from their reservation, than it was when the prairies supplied them with all they needed, and that if more liberal appropriation is not made they will be forced to kill their stock cattle to prevent starvation, and thereby deprive themselves of means of future subsistence and prosperity.

Under date of 19th ultimo the President presented to the Congress a deficiency estimate providing for subsistence of these Indians for the balance of the current fiscal year, and presented communications from Inspector Howard and Agent Armstrong distinctly setting forth the deplorable condition of these Indians, which correspondence will be found in S. Ex. Doc. No. 17 of the current session.

The removal of the Crows to their new location will greatly interfere with farming endeavors on their part during the coming season; and their present condition, in consideration of their friendly conduct toward the whites, appeals strongly for relief.

I earnestly urge that the matter may receive the favorable action of the Congress.

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

H. M. TELLER,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, January 5, 1884.

SIR: I have the honor to ask that the appropriation committees of the Senate and House of Representatives be requested to increase the amount specified in the annual estimate for the purpose of furnishing flour and meat and such other articles as may be needed by the Crow Indians of Montana, from \$65,000 to \$90,000.

The reasons for the necessity of this increased appropriation are set forth in a letter received from Agent Armstrong of the Crow Agency, Montana, under date of the 20th ultimo, in which he compares the former condition of these Indians, when the prairies supplied them with everything they needed and appropriations for their support were quite large, to their present condition, with an entire absence of game on the reservation, and their sustenance wholly dependent upon supplies furnished by the Government, under greatly reduced appropriation.

Their need of aid during the coming year will be further augmented in view of their proposed removal from their present location to that part of the reservation which is to be their permanent home, thereby precluding the possibility of obtaining any subsistence by their own efforts; and unless the present inadequate allowance is increased it will be impossible to keep them from killing all the stock cattle that may be issued to them from time to time, to avoid starvation; which, while affording temporary relief, would deprive them of one great source of future means of supporting themselves, or to prevent them leaving the reservation and committing depredations on cattle and other property in the surrounding country.

Very respectfully,

H. PRICE, *Commissioner.*

HON. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

CROW AGENCY, December 20, 1883.

SIR: I have the honor to forward herewith my annual estimate for annuity goods and supplies required for the service at this agency for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1885.

It will be seen that my estimate for general supplies is moderate, but I am compelled to estimate for a much larger amount of subsistence supplies than we have been allowed for several years last past.

The reasons for this are plain to those on the ground, and who are familiar with the situation—to all men, I may say, residing in the vicinity of this reservation. In the early days when the prairies supplied the Crow people with everything they needed, and there was really no necessity for the Government to have given them anything, excepting, perhaps, a few trinkets occasionally to keep them in good humor, the appropriations were quite large. Even so lately as two years ago the Indians might have supported themselves entirely by hunting. But now the situation is changed. The game is gone, these people have nothing to live on, and the allowance of supplies is cut down. They must live in some way, and unless they are allowed a much larger quantity of subsistence supplies there will be trouble. The supplies allowed for the past three or four years would not have supported them more than one-fourth or one-third those years if the entire tribe had remained at the agency all the year round, and the only way the agent has been able to get through these years was to allow (he could not have prevented it if he had wished to) *all* his Indians to go away from the agency and reservation hunting during the greater portion of the years. I sympathize fully with both objects in reducing the appropriations for this agency, namely, to economize in this branch of the service and to compel the Indians to labor for their own support; but it will hardly do for the Government to say to them you must go to work or starve until it has performed its duty to them in the matter of removing and locating them upon that part of the reservation that is to be their permanent home.

This is a matter that is purely a Governmental affair, in which the Government should take the initiative and exercise its power; and the well-disposed party among the Crows has actually been held back by the long time it has taken to accomplish the thing. The Government has actually done this well-disposed party a wrong in this matter. Iron Bull, the most noted and progressive Crow chief, had selected and staked out his homestead on the Big Horn a year before I began writing (a year and a half ago) to get this agency removed.

(I am very sorry to say that no houses have been built on the Big Horn during the past season for those Indians who are the most deserving and who wish to make that valley their home.)

I blame the delay in the matter of removing to the permanent home of the Crows upon my predecessor, who ought to have pushed it through some three or four years ago. Even after we shall have removed to the new location we shall need a larger allowance of supplies for the first year or two to give out to those Indians who actually labor, supposing that nothing, or almost nothing, is given to those who will not work.

But this need not increase the appropriations after this year. My own idea is that it is a detriment to the Crows to spread out the \$750,000 which the Government owes them in twenty-five annual installments, which are so small as to be of little use, either in subsisting the Indians or in establishing them upon their homes. I think a new agreement ought to be made with the Crows, so that the \$750,000 could be expended in five or six years in assisting them to build houses, irrigating canals, and in the purchase of agricultural implements and stock, with the distinct understanding, which ought to be impressed upon the Indians on every occasion, that when the moneys due them are paid out they will receive no more aid from Government. I would recommend this for the two reasons that it will give us a fund that we may accomplish something with, and, second, because it is an injury to the Indians, as has already been demonstrated in the case of all other Indian tribes, to have them depending upon an annual payment of moneys for a long term of years.

The fact remains, after all has been said, that we shall have to have a more liberal allowance of subsistence supplies during the next two or three years, or we shall have trouble with the Indians. It will be impossible to keep them from killing all the stock cattle that may be issued to them from time to time if they are to be starved at the beginning.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. J. ARMSTRONG,
United States Indian Agent.

Hon. H. PRICE,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

[Senate Ex. Doc. No. 17, Forty-eighth Congress, first session.]

Message from the President of the United States, transmitting a letter from the Secretary of the Interior, inclosing a copy of a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, setting forth the necessity of a deficiency appropriation of \$78,110 for the purchase of supplies for the Crow Indians.

DECEMBER 19, 1883.—Read and referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives :

I transmit herewith a letter from the Secretary of the Interior, inclosing a copy of a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, setting forth the necessity of a deficiency appropriation of \$78,110 for the purchase of supplies for the balance of the present fiscal year for the Crow Indians.

CHESTER A. ARTHUR.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
December 19, 1883.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, December 15, 1883.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith a copy of a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, setting forth the necessity of a deficiency appropriation of \$78,110 for the purchase of supplies for the balance of the present fiscal year for the Crow Indians, and beg to recommend that the same be forwarded to Congress for its favorable consideration.

Very respectfully,

H. M. TELLER,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, December 15, 1883.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith deficiency estimate, in triplicate, for the sum of \$78,110, required for the purchase of bacon, beef, and flour for the support of the Crow Indians in Montana for the balance of the fiscal year 1884.

In explanation of this estimate I inclose herewith copy of a report of Inspector Howard, dated December 6, 1883; also copy of a letter of Agent Armstrong, at the Crow Agency. There are now at this agency 3,226 Indians, who require subsistence to keep them from starving. During the fiscal years 1877 and 1878 the amount appropriated by Congress for the purchase of food for the Crows was \$100,000 per annum; for the fiscal year 1879 \$75,000 were furnished; for 1880, 1881, and 1882 \$65,000 per annum were appropriated; for 1883 \$50,000, and for the present fiscal year \$48,000 were furnished, \$10,000 of which were to be used for the removal of the Crows to the Little Big Horn, leaving only \$38,000 for the purchase of food.

It will thus be seen that while the buffalo, which to a large extent furnished food to the Crows in former years, has almost disappeared, the appropriation for their support has been decreased during the last eight years, from \$100,000 in 1877 to \$38,000 for the current year, although the price of beef and other supplies has increased.

There is now on the books of this office, to the credit of the Crows, the sum of \$35,000, including the \$25,000 paid by the Northern Pacific Railroad for right of way through the Crow Reservation, and which amount the Indians expect to be paid to them in cash.

The total amount (\$35,000) will be required to erect agency buildings, school-house, hospital, &c., at the new agency, and unless the amount estimated for by this office is furnished, these Indians will starve or commit depredations on the settlers in Montana.

I have therefore the honor to request that the inclosed estimate be forwarded to the President, to be sent by him to Congress with a request for an early appropriation.

Very respectfully,

H. PRICE,
Commissioner.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

Special estimates of appropriations required for the service of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1884, by the Indian Office.

Detailed objects of expenditure, and explanations.	Total amount to be appropriated under each head of appropriation.	Amount appropriated for the current fiscal year ending June 30, 1884.
SUPPORT OF CROWS.		
This amount for the purchase of bacon, beef, and flour, for the Crow Indians in Montana, being a deficiency for the fiscal year, 1884. Appropriated, 22 Stat., p. 437.....	\$78,110 00	\$105,000 00

INSPECTOR'S OFFICE, CROW AGENCY, MONTANA,
December 6, 1883.

SIR: The urgent want of food for the Crow Indians for the winter is so great, I forward at once this special report.

By the inclosed table, which I have had made (Exhibit A), you will see that the beef at the present rate of issue (not a full ration) will be all gone by December 29th, instant. The bacon will be gone at the same date. The flour will last to February 16th proximo.

The honorable Commissioner has suggested that the stock cattle (heifers and cows) brought here the past fall may be killed if needed for food. This would be most deplorable. These cows are just what these Indians have long desired and just what they need to start them towards self support. If the entire herd of stock-cattle should be slaughtered it would only afford relief for ten weeks additional. It seems Congress must be asked to take action at any rate. Why not provide all that are wanted of beeves and spare the cows? It is not easy to get a herd wonted to the range and accli-

matized. These Indians are to be moved to their new location and begin farming in good earnest in the spring. Other cows could not be brought here in season for that. These would be here and ready for issue at that time.

I find that in Wyoming, not very far from this agency, 500 or more beeves can be bought. The agent has learned of at least two parties who can supply them this winter. These parties do not have their herds in large associations and running on an extensive range with cattle belonging to other owners; hence there would not be the difficulty or to round up that there would be in most parts of Montana. It is therefore possible to supply these Indians with beef by December 29, and not sacrifice the stock herd, if the Department can act promptly and by telegraph. I do not hesitate to urge that this be done.

Never before have the buffalo been entirely wanting for these Indians; and just now when that resource is gone the supply of beef is reduced rather than increased. There will be suffering and serious trouble if this crisis is not promptly and adequately met.

There is no question as to the accuracy of the census which has been taken the past year with great care. The number of these Indians is 3,226.

I trust that what I have written, with the table, will afford the honorable Secretary with all needed data.

Very respectfully,

Hon. H. M. TELLER,
Secretary of the Interior.

C. H. HOWARD,
United States Indian Inspector.

CROW AGENCY, June 18, 1883.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular dated June 5, relating to supplies purchased for the subsistence of the Crows during the fiscal year 1884.

I consider it my duty to say in reply that the quantities purchased will not subsist my Indians more than one-fourth of the year. These people must live in some way; there is no more game on their own country, and very little on the surrounding territory, and they ought not to be permitted to go outside of their reservation again after game. For several years they have been subsisting themselves during nearly three-fourths of each year by hunting, principally outside the limits of their own country, but they can subsist themselves in that way no longer. They will have to remain at their agency all winter, and will either starve to death or go over the line into Wyoming, where there are thousands of cattle, and help themselves from the herds belonging to their white neighbors. Of course they will not starve to death; they will do the other thing unless the Government supports them.

Instead of the half million pounds of beef purchased we shall need 1,500,000 pounds; instead of the 160,000 pounds of flour we shall need not less than 400,000 pounds; and we shall have to have that much in some way or other to enable us to get through the year. We have here a nation of Indians that has never done the whites any wrong worth speaking of, not even so much as the whites do to each other. Their only sin is that they have not learned the white man's life, and for this they are not entirely to be blamed. They have had no opportunity to locate on their own separate homes, and the surrounding country has filled up with such surprising rapidity that their means of support is taken away from them.

To undertake to starve these people now before any effort has been made to locate them will be very likely to create some disturbance and endanger the cattle in the surrounding territory very much.

Very respectfully,

H. J. ARMSTRONG,
United States Indian Agent.

Hon. H. PRICE,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

S. EX. 42—2