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Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting letter of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs relative to the employment of matrons at agencies

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

Letter of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs relative to the employment of matrons at agencies.

MAY 7, 1888.—Ordered to be printed and referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, May 3, 1888.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a communication of the 18th ultimo from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, together with the draught of an item which he recommends for insertion in the Indian appropriation bill, providing for the employment of five matrons at a compensation of \$720 per annum each, whose duty it shall be to reside at such Indian agencies as may be designated by the Department for the purpose of visiting Indian women at their homes and instructing them in domestic affairs.

As the work of making allotments of land to the Indians progresses many of the adult women of the families who have already taken or who may hereafter take up their abode in the habitations of civilization will need instruction in the proper management of household affairs, and those who still hesitate will require the kindly persuasion, influence, and intelligent direction of competent and discreet persons to encourage them to break away from their habits and customs of barbarism.

I think good work can and will be accomplished by the employment of such persons, and therefore respectfully recommend that the small appropriation requested for the purpose may be made.

Very respectfully,

WM. F. VILAS,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, April 18, 1888.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith a letter from L. K. Brown, of Pennsylvania, received through Hon. Smedley Darlington.

Mr. Brown is a member of and secretary for the Society of Friends in his locality, who are interested in efforts to promote Indian civilization.

He calls attention to the fact that while the male portion of a tribe may, through the assistance of the Government, be rapidly advancing in intelligence, mechanical skill, and general fitness for industrial and agricultural pursuits, and for taking advantage of their opportunities to reach a higher plane in life, the females, except a few of the younger ones who may have attended some Indian industrial training-school, are left to plod on in ignorance of even the lesser essential acquirements of the mother of a home, such as cleanliness, good management, and the advantages and comforts of the household methods of civilization.

This state of affairs is well known to this office and to all who are familiar with Indian affairs, and I consider that it is a great hinderance to the present prosperity and permanent advancement of nearly all Indian tribes; and as the character of the rising generation depends almost entirely on the example, teaching, and general influence for good of the mother, some effort should be made to reach the children in this way, and thus commence the work of civilization as early in life as possible.

I therefore, as Mr. Brown says, highly approve of his suggestion that matrons be appointed to teach the Indian women in their homes, encouraging and instructing them in their domestic duties, showing them how to keep their houses neat and clean, to make bread, cut and make their own garments, etc., and to rescue them as far as possible from the life of mental and physical drudgery to which they have been hitherto held by the customs of their people.

I have been unable so far to accomplish this for want of funds applicable, and therefore now respectfully recommend that Congress be asked to provide in the act making appropriations for the Indian Department for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1889, for the employment of five matrons, at a salary each of \$720 per annum, in all \$3,600; said matrons to reside at such agencies as you may designate, and devote their entire time to visiting the Indian women at their homes and instructing them as above indicated; and, as it is probable that the act referred to may already have been fully considered and prepared by Congress, I inclose herewith a draught of an item to be inserted therein, and suggest that, if it meets with your approval, it be submitted to the Committee of the Senate on Indian Affairs, together with my reasons for believing that it deserves the favorable consideration of Congress.

Respectfully,

J. D. C. ATKINS,
Commissioner.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

ITEM.

To enable the Secretary of the Interior to employ five matrons, at a rate of compensation not to exceed seven hundred and twenty dollars per annum, whose duty it shall be to reside at such Indian agencies as he may designate, and visit Indian women at their homes to instruct them in domestic affairs, three thousand six hundred dollars.

GOSHEN, LANCASTER COUNTY, PA., *Fourth month 9, 1888.*

ESTEEMED FRIEND: When in Washington early in the first month attending the annual meeting of the Board of Indian Commissioners I called at thy seat in the House, but Congress was not then in session. I fully expected to have visited Washington again ere this, but for nearly a month past have been too unwell to leave home or to attend to my correspondence.

There no doubt is aware our society, composed of seven Yearly Meetings, has been laboring earnestly in behalf of the Indians, although the Government has sadly hampered us to such an extent that we have had to give up all the agencies except one—the combined Santee Sioux, Flandreau, and Ponca, in Nebraska and Dakota.

As secretary of the convention of the seven Yearly Meetings, representing the society on Indian affairs, it has been my pleasure to visit this agency three different times and to witness the rapid progress these people are making in civilization and the art of agriculture. While the men are availing themselves of the allotments made to them in severalty and are rapidly improving their homes—all having comfortable houses, wagons, farm implements, horses, and cattle—the women as a class are far behind the men.

For two years past we have been endeavoring to get the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to allow us a sufficient sum to employ a matron, at a salary of \$600 or \$800, whose duty it will be to reside on the agency and visit the Indian women in their homes, encourage and instruct them in their domestic duties—how to keep their houses neat and clean, to bake bread, and how to cut and make their own garments, etc.

This movement the Commissioner has highly approved, but has expressed his regret that no appropriations heretofore made could be diverted to the employment of such a personage. I learn with pleasure that there is a member of the House Indian Committee, and my object in this writing is to ask thy aid and influence in getting an appropriation inserted in the annual Indian appropriation bill for the pay of a matron such as I alluded to.

If health permits I will be glad to accompany a committee of our society to Washington shortly, and will be glad to have an interview with your committee.

With this I will mail thee a copy of the minutes of our late convention, also a report of a visit of my friend Joseph J. Janney and myself to the agency two years ago.

With kind regards, I am, thy assured friend,

L. K. BROWN.
Per A.

Hon. SMEDLEY DARLINGTON.

P. S.—I will be glad to have a copy of the Congressional Directory or a list of the committees of the House.