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Message from the President of the United States, transmitting a letter from the Secretary of the Interior, with a draft of bill for compensating the Crow Indians for certain lands

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MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A letter from the Secretary of the Interior, with a draft of bill for compensating the Crow Indians for certain lands.

JANUARY 26, 1891.—Read, referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives :

I transmit herewith a letter of the Secretary of the Interior, accompanied by a letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, who transmits a draft of a bill for compensating the Indians of the Crow Creek Reservation for the loss sustained by them by reason of their receiving less land per capita in their diminished reservations than is to be received by Indians occupying other diminished reservations.

The matter is presented for the early consideration of the Congress.

BENJ. HARRISON.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
January 26, 1891.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 24, 1891.

The PRESIDENT :

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in a letter to this Department, dated January 17, 1891, recommended the approval by the President of Senate bill 3271, to carry out in part the provisions of the Sioux act of March 2, 1889 (25 Stats., 888), and called attention to the fact that no provision was made therein for compensating the Indians of the Crow Creek Reservation for the loss sustained by them by reason of their receiving less land per capita in their diminished reservations than is to be received by Indians occupying other diminished reservations. The compensation recommended was \$189,037, this to be made a part of the permanent fund of the Crow Creek Indians.

On the same date I requested the commissioner to prepare a separate letter setting forth the fact of this omission, and urging the special reasons why an appropriation was asked for to compensate the Indians for such loss, and directing him to transmit a draft of a bill making the desired appropriation, to be submitted to Congress. The reasons for this compensation are fully set forth by the Commissioner in a letter dated the 21st instant, copies of which are herewith transmitted.

Deeming that this omission by Congress is most unjust to these Indians, and that under the existing troubles among the Sioux further legislation should be made without delay, I submit for such action as you may deem best a form of a bill prepared in the Indian Office, with my earnest recommendation that it receive your favorable consideration.

Yours, most respectfully,

JOHN W. NOBLE,
Secretary.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 21, 1891.

SIR: In my letter to the Department, dated January 17, 1891, recommending the approval, by the President, of S. 3271, to carry out in part the provisions of the Sioux act of March 2, 1889, (25 Stats., 888,) I called your attention to the fact that no provision was made therein for compensating the Indians of the Crow Creek Reservation for the loss sustained by them by reason of their receiving less land per capita in their diminished reservation than is received by the Indians occupying other diminished reservations.

I am now in receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, requesting me to prepare a separate letter, setting forth the fact of this omission and urging the special reasons why an appropriation was asked for to compensate said Indians for such loss, and to transmit therewith a draft of a bill making the desired appropriation, to be submitted to Congress.

Agreeably with your request I have the honor to state that the matter of compensating the Crow Creek Indians was one of the several important measures recommended by the late Sioux Commission, and is, I believe the only one involving legislation for which no provision has been made by Congress.

Regarding this particular subject the commissioners, in their final report, said:

On July 5 the Commission proceeded to Crow Creek Agency. At this agency two well-organized parties were found, one in favor of signing the bill and the other in opposition. The opposing party was represented by the two most prominent chiefs, White Ghost, the leader of the unprogressive element, and Drifting Goose, who is probably the most advanced. The opposition was ostensibly based on the fact that the portion of the Great Sioux Reservation set apart by section 6 as the separate reservation of the Indians at Crow Creek would scarcely afford sufficient agricultural or grazing lands for the allotments provided in section 8. Attention was also called to disparity in size between their proposed reservation and that of the Indians at the other agencies, and they asked that several adjoining townships be added. This complaint and the subsequent request of the Indians were both reasonable, but the Commissioners were without authority to make any change in the conditions contained in the act of Congress. They, however, promised to call attention to the matter in their report, and to recommend such action as would be equitable to them.

* * * * *

We are without information as to the reasons for the great inequality in the per capita size of the several diminished and separate reservations.

The per capita amount of land in the entire Great Sioux Reservation is about 906 acres. Yet in the division we find that the per capita allowed to Pine Ridge is about 563 acres; to Rosebud, about 550 acres; to Standing Rock, about 665 acres; to Cheyenne River, about 972 acres; to Lower Brule, about 422 acres; and to Crow Creek, about 260 acres.

Thus it will be seen that Cheyenne River has a per capita quantity left, 66 acres greater than it had before nearly one-half of their lands were sold, while the Crow Creek Indians, who in fact have made the greatest advancement, have not enough land allotted to them to cover the amount to which they are entitled under the act, if they should take their allotment in grazing land.

We therefore earnestly urge the importance of placing the Crow Creek Indians on a basis equal to at least the Lower Brules, their nearest neighbors across the Missouri River. This may be done by returning to them some of the lands they have ceded or by giving them a money equivalent therefor. This, in the opinion of the Commission, would be but a simple act of justice. The map of the different reservations furnished the Commission by the Interior Department is herewith attached as an exhibit.

* * * * *

The Indians of this generation should be made to feel that the performance of the nation is equal to its promises. Whatever legislation is needed to carry into effect the provisions of the act of March 2, 1889 (Public, No. 148), should be enacted at an early day. The Indians having ceded their lands they should receive the full consideration promised. The Commission recommends the following legislation:

* * * * *

Fourth. An appropriation of \$187,039 is recommended for the benefit of the Indians residing on the Crow Creek Reservation. The Crow Creek and Lower Brule Indians are given less land per capita than those of any of the other reservations, as is shown in the former part of this report. The number of Indians upon the Crow Creek Reservation is as great as those on the Lower Brule Reservation, yet the former are given 187,039 less acres of land than the latter. Estimating the land at \$1 an acre would give to them the amount asked for. The appropriation, if made, should be added to the "permanent fund" of the Crow Creek Indians, and expended for their benefit, as provided in section 17 of the act of March 2, 1889 (Public, No. 148).

In the draft of a bill prepared by your direction, to accompany the report of the Sioux Commission and the formal acceptance of the Indians to the Sioux act of March 2, 1889, there was a clause appropriating the sum of \$187,039 for compensating the Crow Creek Indians as recommended by the Commission (Senate Ex. Doc. No. 51, Fifty-first Congress, first session, p. 10); and in December last the attention of Congress was again called to the matter, with urgent request that the desired appropriation be made (House Ex. Doc. No. 37, Fifty-first Congress, second session).

As I have said, and it is an extremely gratifying fact, Congress has provided the means for fulfilling the solemn assurances given to the Indians by the Sioux Commissioners, where legislation was required, in every case save one—that of compensating the Crow Creek Indians on account of the inequality in the size of their reservation as compared with the other diminished reservations.

If any of the bands of Sioux Indians are entitled to consideration and generous treatment on the part of the Government the Crow Creek band of all others is. They are doing more for themselves and are further advanced than any of the other Indians, and their peaceful attitude during the recent troubles ought not to be forgotten. Certainly they should not be made to feel that they must break the peace in order to secure their rights or obtain favor from the Government, as some of their neighbors appear to think. The question might well be asked why, if we fulfill the promises made by the Commissioners to the bands that furnished the Indians who recently gave so much trouble, we do not fulfill the assurances made to the loyal band of Crow Creek Indians?

I inclose herewith a draft of a bill making the desired appropriation for the Crow Creek Indians, and again urge favorable action thereon by Congress.

A copy of this report is herewith inclosed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. J. MORGAN,
Commissioner.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

COMPENSATING THE CROW INDIANS.

A BILL to enable the Secretary of the Interior to compensate the Indians of the Crow Creek Reservation, South Dakota, for loss sustained by them on account of the inequality in the size of their reservation as compared with the other diminished Sioux Reservations.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated, to be immediately available, the sum of one hundred and eighty-seven thousand and thirty-nine dollars, to enable the Secretary of the Interior to compensate the Indians of the Crow Creek Reservation, South Dakota, for loss sustained by said Indians in receiving less land per capita in their diminished reservation than is received by the Indians occupying other diminished reservations under the provisions of the act of March second, eighteen hundred and eighty-nine, entitled "An act to divide a portion of the reservation of the Sioux Nation of Indians in Dakota into separate reservations and to secure the relinquishment of the Indian title to the remainder, and for other purposes," said sum to be added to the share of the permanent fund of the said Crow Creek Indians, and to draw interest at the rate of five per centum per annum.

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