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INDIAN AFFAIRS IN OREGON.

LETTER

FROM

THE ACTING COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

IN ANSWER TO

A resolution of the House of February 15, in relation to the report of the Indian superintendent upon Indian affairs in Oregon.

FEBRUARY 18, 1870.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., February 17, 1870.

SIR: In compliance with House resolution of 15th instant, I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of "the report of Indian Superintendent A. B. Meacham upon Indian affairs in Oregon, dated January 20, 1870."

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. F. CASEY,
Acting Commissioner.

Hon. J. G. BLAINE,
Speaker House of Representatives.

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Salem, Oregon, January 20, 1870.

SIR: After completion of the Snake expedition, and previous to starting on the Modoc expedition, I held a series of meetings and talks with the Klamaths. I hope you will appreciate my intention in giving you a short history of said meetings. I understand, and have so represented on every occasion, that President Grant *meant* what he said in his inaugural address; (have been expecting a circular requiring superintendents and agents to work accordingly;) that his policy in regard to Indians would be to prepare them by civilization for citizenship. Acting from this principle, so perfectly in accordance with my own judgment, I stepped out of the tracks of all my predecessors, and said to them, "that my first business is to settle the financial affairs of this agency, then to issue such goods as I had provided, and then to deliver a message from Mr. Parker to you; that the government owned me; all I have belongs to you; that I am ready to hear any and all complaints; settle any and all difficulties; decide any and all vexed questions; to tell you about the

white peoples' laws, customs, habits, religion," &c.; and, in a word, I propose to remove the barrier that a condition has held between the different stations in life, and said: Civilization may be yours. Manhood is the American standard of worth; the course is clear and open for you Indian people, and for the whole family of man. For nearly twenty-five years I have been, in my way, a public speaker, addressed nearly every condition and kind of people on various subjects, from temperance to political economy; but I never stood until now before a people just emerging from the chrysalis of savage life, struggling earnestly and manfully to leave behind them the traditions and customs of an ancestry, known only to mankind by the history of bloody acts and deeds of savage heroism and barbarity.

I would that I could portray on paper the scenes these dark forms with long hair; women naturally good looking, but so sadly debauched that virtue makes no pretensions among them; children of every shade, all gathered around a huge fire of pine logs, in a forest of tall trees in mid winter, with the little camp-fires here and there. All combined was photographed on my mind and memory so deeply that time cannot efface. And, notwithstanding the ground was covered with snow, thermometer sometimes to zero, these people would sit and stand for hours, with eyes, ears, and hearts all open to hear, catching with great eagerness the story of my superior in office; that I made all my reports to him, receive instructions from him, who by his innate energy had elevated himself to a level with the greatest men of the age, and that this same Mr. Parker was of *their own race*. They gave one long wild Indian shout, that startled all the sleeping blood, and sent almost a paralytic shock over every man present. And when the Klamath chief, Allen Davie, arose to reply, amid surroundings so characteristic of Indian life, a perfect solemn silence, broken only by his voice, I then heard the notes of natural oratory, coming in wild but well-measured words. I recognized, for the first time fully, that nature does sometimes produce noblemen without the lines of civilized life; then I discovered that mind is colorless, and that logic is not confined to classic halls. If I did not fear that you would feel bored, I would send you a verbatim report of his speech as taken by Dr. McKay, and I will take the risk of sending you some extracts, because I understand we are all trying to solve the problem of civilization for Indians. I am not myself longer skeptical on that subject, but I know that a large proportion of our public men are; and you would not wonder, either, could you visit some reservations and see for yourself the inside workings of moral law. But I assert that the Indians are not to blame; let censure fall where it belongs, *i. e.* on the men who are intrusted with the care and responsibility of *leading* and *protecting* these people, yet wink at and tolerate in subordinates the most demoralizing habits, and maybe in some cases take a hand themselves.

Pardon and I will copy a few sentences from one or two speeches of these much abused men:

ALLEN DAVIE. I see you; all my people see you. I saw you at Sprague River. I watched your mouth. I have seen but one tongue. I have looked into your eyes. I have seen your heart. You have given me another heart. All my people will have white hearts. I have a white heart. When I was a little boy I lived here. I have always lived here. A long time ago a white man told me I could be like him. I said my skin is red; it cannot change; it must be my heart, my brain, that is to be like a white man's. * * * * * You think we are low people. Maybe we are in your eyes. Who made us so? We do not know much; we can learn. Some of the officers at the fort (referring to Fort Klamath, six miles from the agency) have been good men; some of them have been bad. Do you think a good white man will take an Indian wife? A white man that will take an Indian wife is worse blood than an

Indian. These things make our hearts sad. We want you to stop it. * * * * *
 Your ears are larger; your heart is large; you see us. Do not let your heart get sick;
 we can learn to work. * * * * * Take a white man into the woods,
 away from a store; set him down with nothing in his hands, in the woods, and with-
 out a store to get tools from, and what could he do? When you lay down before us
 the axes, the saws, the iron wedges, and mauls you have promised us, and we do not
 take them up, then you can say we are "cultus," (lazy.) * * * * *
 You say your chief is like me; that he is an Indian. I am glad. What can I say that
 is worth writing down? Mr. Parker does not know me. When you do all Mr. Hun-
 tingdon promised in the treaty, we can go to work like white men. Our hearts are
 tired waiting for the saw-mill. When will it be built? Then we can have houses like
 white men. We want the flour-mill. Then we will not live on fish and roots. We
 will help to make the mills. We made the fences on the big farm. We did not get
 tired. * * * * * Give us strong law. We will do what your law says.
 We want strong law. We want to be white men. You say that Mr. Parker does
 not want bad men among our people. Is Barkly a good man? He took Frank's wife.
 Is that good? We do not want such men. Is — a good man? He took C — from
 her husband, Flit-to-chota. Is that right? Applegate told us not to gamble. Captain
 — won thirty-seven horses from us. He says there is no law about gambling. Apple-
 gate said there was. Which was right, Captain — or Applegate? * * *

Mr. Meacham said:

You need not be afraid to talk; keep nothing back. I talk to you as I do to my
 children. I keep nothing back. Your people are under a cloud. I see by their eyes
 that their hearts are sick; they look sorrowful. Open your hearts and I will hear you;
 tell all, that I may know what to do to make your hearts glad.

Allen Davie said:

Yes, I will keep nothing back. I have eyes; I can see that white men have white
 hands. Some white men take our women; they have children; they are not Indian;
 they are not white; they are sham. Some white men take off their children. It makes
 my heart sick. I do not want these things. Indians are Indians. We do not want
 any more sham children. A white man that would take an Indian squaw is no better
 than we are. Our women go to the fort; they make us feel sick; they get goods,
 sometimes greenbacks; we do not want them to go there. They have no store here;
 we want the store here at the agency, then our women will not go the fort. * * * * *
 Last Sunday four soldiers went to Pompey's, (Indian); they talked bad to the women.
 We do not want soldiers among our women. Can you stop this? Our women make
 us ashamed. We may have done wrong. Give us strong law. * * * * *

Jo. Hood, (Indian,) at a talk seven days after, said:

Meacham came here; Parker told him to come. He brought us strong law; it is a
 new soap. It washed my heart all clean, but a little place about as big as my
 thumb nail. Caroline's (his wife) heart may not all be white yet; if it was, mine would
 be white like snow. Parker's law has made us just like we were new married. I tell
 these Indians that this law is like strong soap, it makes all clean. I do not want but
 one wife any more. * * * * *

Allen Davie, same time, said:

You say we are looking into a camp fire; that we can find moonlight. You say there
 is a road that goes toward sunrise. Show me that stone road. I am now on the stone
 road. I will follow you to the top of the mountain. You tell me come on. I can see you
 now. My feet are on the road. I will not leave it. I tell my people, follow me and I
 will stay in the stone road.

At Modoc Point the Klamaths and Modocs met in peace for the
 first time since the treaty in 1864. I arranged the Klamaths in a line,
 the Modocs in a line opposite and about eight feet distant.

Mr. MEACHAM. You are men of one race; all your skins are red. You have been
 enemies; blood is on your hands. Here I will dig a deep hole for you to bury all the
 past bad blood, and everything, so deep that it never can be dug up. * * * * *

I then took an ax, laid it down between them, gave each chief and
 headman a twig of pine, and, taking one myself, said:

I will show you how to bury the hatchet. You will help me, and as you cover the ax
 you will shake hands and be friends. * * * * *

I have seldom witnessed a more serious, solemn, and earnest specta-
 cle, these warrior enemies making friends.

Allen Davie said :

We are no longer bad men ; we wash each others hands. This pine tree may ever stand as a witness that we are friends. May no man ever cut a piece of wood from that tree—may it stand there forever.

“ Captain Jack ” said :

I do not want to talk much—my heart is warm like fire—I have drove a stick into the ground, and tied myself to it. I will not fight any more, we are friends.

I have given you a few extracts that you may judge from their own mouths whether they can be civilized. If Lindsay Applegate and his sons J. D. and Oliver could take wild savage Indians, and, against so much opposition, in the short space of four years, bring them to this status, I know they can be civilized. If good men are appointed to lead and teach them, *not books alone*, but *civilization* with all its means ; men whose hearts are in the work, and that realize as soon as the duties devolve on them that there is a great responsibility ; also, men who have courage to stand squarely between these people and the villains that hang around reservations from the lowest motives imaginable ; men paid \$2,500 per annum for doing duty—not hired at \$1,000 to steal greenbacks—that will not try to civilize these people by “ mixing blood.” Then put in *married men* of character, who will *practice* what they *preach*, and that can live without smuggling whisky on the reservation, and ten years from to-day may find this superintendency self-supporting, and offering to the world seven thousand citizens.

I am conscious that this is strong talk, but it is surely true. I have not overdrawn this side of the case, nor will I attempt to show what *has been done* or will *be done* with superintendents, agents, and employés in charge, placed there as a reward for political service. The past tells the story too plainly to be misapprehended. While I am responsible for the advancement of these people, I beg to show my views and make known the results of observation and experience, and as a subordinate officer of the government have my official acts scrutinized to the last dollar, and respectfully ask that I may be furnished the funds and means to keep faith with a people so little understood, people so much like children, that when they are promised a “ saw-mill ” they go to work cutting logs, and are grieved to see them rotted before the mill is begun, but with logic enough to say “ when you have got us the things you promised, then you may blame us if we don’t do right.”

I have *now* no longer any doubts about President Grant’s “ Quaker policy ” if it is applied to Indians once subjugated. These people have mind, soul, heart, affection, passion, and impulses, and great ambition to become like white men. There are more or less men on each reservation that are already *superior* to many of the white men around them. At Klamath they are working under *civil law*, *trial by jury*, with judges, sheriff, civil marriages and divorce, in fact, are fast assuming the habits of citizens. I spent seven days talking and listening, and making laws, marrying and divorcing, naming babies, settling difficulties, &c., and finally started accompanied on my journey by a large delegation of Klamaths, who insisted that I should come next summer and stay “ one moon,” and make *laws*, and that I would *build the mills*, and tell them about our religion, all of which I promised if possible, but realizing fully and feeling deeply *how much* depended on the man who is in *immediate charge* of these poor struggling people.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. B. MEACHAM,
Superintendent Indian Affairs.

Hon. E. S. PARKER,
Commissioner, &c., Washington, D. C.