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Comanche and other Indians. Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, accompanied by a report relative to the Comanche and other Indians of Texas and the southwestern prairies.

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COMANCHE AND OTHER INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

*from*  
A communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, accompanied by a report relative to the Comanche and other Indians of Texas and the southwestern prairies.

FEBRUARY 24, 1847.

Read, and laid upon the table.

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
February 19, 1847.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit, for the information of the committee, a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with a copy of a report of the agent appointed last fall to treat with the Comanche and other Indians of Texas and the southwestern prairies, for the purpose of counselling them to remain peaceable.

This report contains the latest information as to the present state of our Indian relations in that quarter, and shows the necessity of the appropriation which has been applied for, for the purpose of procuring presents for those Indians.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. L. MARCY,  
Secretary of War.

HON. JACOB THOMPSON,  
Chairman Committee on Indian Affairs,  
House of Representatives.

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Office Indian Affairs, February 19, 1847.

SIR: A report has just been received from the person appointed last fall to meet the Comanche and other Indians of Texas and the southwestern prairies, to explain to them the non-ratification of the treaty negotiated with them by Messrs. Butler and Lewis, the consequent inability of the govern-

ment to proceed to fulfil its stipulations, and to counsel them to remain peaceable. This report contains important information as to the present state of our Indian relations on our southwestern frontier, and shows the necessity for the appropriation recently asked for to enable the government to distribute presents in fulfilment of promises which have been made to them, and to induce them to remain peaceable during our disturbed relations in that quarter.

A copy of the report is herewith submitted, and as questions pertaining to those relations are now before the Committee on Indian Affairs of both houses of Congress, I would respectfully suggest the propriety of sending one to each of those committees for their information.

Very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

W. MEDILL.

HON. W. L. MARCY,  
Secretary of War.

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AUSTIN, (TEXAS,) January 6, 1847.

SIR: Having performed the duty intrusted to me by your order bearing date the 8th October, 1846, I have the honor to report the result of my interviews with the several tribes of Indians.

On my arrival at the trading-house of the Messrs. Torry, I found the whole frontier settlers, both whites and friendly Indians, in great alarm, and all appeared to be apprehensive of an immediate attack from the bands that have assumed a hostile attitude.

Mr. Barnard, the trader at that post, was afraid to risk his goods in that exposed situation, and had determined to abandon his houses until measures were adopted to *pacify* these bands of Indians.

A consultation was held by those best acquainted with the prairie tribes, when it was determined, previous to abandoning their position, to submit the matter to General Houston, and be governed by his advice. That course was pursued. General Houston advised that the Indians should be immediately met in *council*, and a sufficient quantity of presents furnished to them, to pacify them until the action of the government could be had; the particulars of which I presume General H. has laid before the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

It appears that the tribes had sent in deputations on several occasions, to learn at what time the *commissioners* would meet them, and when the government would redeem their promises.

There being no one there authorized by the government to counsel with them, they were told that nothing was known of the matter. They left with expressions of dissatisfaction, and appeared to be under the impression that the government would fail to carry out the *treaty stipulations*.

Such being the state of affairs, I was at a loss what course best to pursue, as it would be impossible to explain to their satisfaction the contents of your communication until they were pacified.

After reading General Houston's letter to the Messrs. Torry, and finding that his "address to the Indian chiefs of Texas" contained explanations similar to yours, I determined to assist Messrs. Torry in carrying out the views of General Houston, as the only means of preserving friendly relations with the Comanche and other tribes, who had shown evidences of disaffection, until the government could act upon the subject.

In accordance with these views, accompanied by Jim Shaw as interpreter, I proceeded to the Comanche village, sent L. H. Williams to the Keechies, Wacoos, &c., and despatched runners to notify the other tribes of our desire to meet them in council.

We succeeded in assembling the following tribes, viz: Comanches; Lipans, Caddoes, Ionies, Amadaicoes, Cherokees, Keechies, Tenkahuas, and the friendly portion of the Wacoos, Wichitas, and Towaconies. Each of the above tribes were well represented, except the last named three, a large portion of each having declared themselves hostile; and, from all I could learn from the chiefs present, it would be useless to use any further exertions to induce them to come into the council.

The council was conducted on the part of the government by myself, L. H. Williams, and George Barnard, there being a number of gentlemen present—among them Cols. Thos. J. Smith and J. C. Neill, formerly Indian commissioner under the late republic of Texas, who gave us a hearty co-operation.

In the council your communication was explained fully to the several chiefs in presence of the tribes, and the address of General Houston read to them and explained by Jim Shaw. All matters of importance to either party were fully discussed, and every exertion on our part was used to secure the confidence of the Indians, and to restore those peaceful and harmonious relations that had heretofore existed.

Messrs. Torry & Co. furnished provisions and distributed presents to the several tribes, in proportion to their numbers, amounting in all to seven thousand one hundred and eighty-three dollars and six cents, (\$7,183 06,) a bill of which will be laid before the government by Messrs. Torry & Co., through General Houston, at an early period.

The presents were given with a distinct understanding that they were given to redeem the promises of the government made them by the late commissioners, Messrs. Butler and Lewis, and by the President when the delegation was at Washington, and that they should wait the action of the government for the fulfilment of the other treaty stipulations, which would be carried into effect as soon as the government could act.

The council resulted in establishing that good understanding which had heretofore existed with these tribes, and removing any thing like disaffection. All present were fully satisfied of the necessity of giving these presents in the name of the government, for without them we could never have induced the Indians to meet us in council and become reconciled; and before the government could have had time to act, our peaceful relations with the Indians (particularly the Comanches) would have ceased.

I herewith enclose the talks of the several chiefs that spoke in council. When with the several tribes, I used every exertion to ascertain the cause of so much disaffection, and in almost every instance could trace it to the *interference* and *lies* of small bands of Indians from the several tribes east of Red river, who, in the absence of all agents, have visited the prairie tribes this fall for the purpose of trade, and found it much to their interest to keep those wild bands hostile, as their plunder afforded a profitable source of traffic. They are furnished with goods by the traders in the Indian country east of Red river.

The only names I could learn were Jim Leplow and Black Cat, with their bands of Shawnees, and Jim Ned and party of Delawares, together with a large party of Kickapoos. Jim Leplow and party were in the

Wicheta village a month or two this fall, and bought a large number of horses stolen from our settlers. All of the friendly chiefs speak of the evil influence that those bands exercise.

Santa Anna, the Comanche chief, says that he had great difficulty in restraining his warriors after their visit, as they told his people that the whites were preparing to wage a war of extermination on the Indians; that the government would not comply with its promises, &c.; and had it not been for our timely arrival, I am assured they would have induced some of the now friendly bands to commence hostilities.

I would seriously call your attention to the propriety of giving the agents of those bands instructions to prevent them from visiting and trading with our wild prairie tribes, until such time as the government can establish agencies to superintend their intercourse. They are very credulous, and liable at all times to be led astray by their more civilized neighbors, especially when it is to the interest of those bands to create disaffection; and I have many proofs of their having tampered with all of the prairie tribes.

The only hostile Indians now on our borders are a part of Wacoes, Wichetas, and Towaconies, numbering about 500 warriors, assisted by those small bands of Kickapoos, Delawares, and Shawnees. Their object appears to be plunder, as I cannot learn of their having committed any *murders*. The friendly portion of these tribes are anxious for the government to send a few troops into their country, when they will assist in reducing those refractory bands to subjection.

The Comanches, Lipans, and other tribes are also anxious for the government to grant them permission to make war upon those Indians, as they have stolen a number of their horses. Until the government can act, I felt it my duty to do all that I could to preserve peace among those Indians. I accordingly made an arrangement with L. H. Williams, formerly an agent for the republic, to take charge of those tribes, and induce as many as he can to remain quiet; also, to recover as much of the stolen property as he can find, and to prevent those tribes east of Red river from trading or mingling with prairie Indians as much as possible; and I am satisfied, from his long acquaintance with all the Indians, that his services will be very beneficial. This arrangement will be in force until the government can act on our Indian affairs.

The Indians are very desirous to have their agencies and trading-houses established immediately, and expect to meet commissioners on the part of the government before the 1st of May next, to discuss and finally settle their differences. At such time as the government may designate to meet them, you may expect a very large number of Indians to attend, as all the different bands between this and Santa Fe, including the different bands of Comanches, Kioways, &c., that have met, heretofore attended our councils; and, from a few of those bands that I fell in with while I was with the Comanches on this trip, I learn that they will be down in the spring for the purpose of entering into treaty stipulations with the government.

I would also call your attention to the great increase in our Indian population within the last few months. Since the commencement of hostilities, bands of Indians that formerly lived in the northern provinces of Mexico have crossed the Rio Grande and located on our border. I learn that there are 26 Indian villages, extending from 80 miles above Austin,

on the Colorado, to the mouth of the Rio Puico ; from the best information, I learn that there are about 2,500 families. They are the different branches of the Lipan tribe, under the names of Muskeleras, Essequatas, Cietecas, &c., and have united with that portion of the Lipans who have always lived in Texas. I have conversed with many of their chiefs ; they are very friendly disposed, are partially civilized, speaking good Spanish, and have brought in a large number of horses, cattle, sheep, &c.

They express a desire to form a permanent settlement in Texas. Having no authority to enter into permanent arrangements with them, I have granted them permission to make a crop this year, presuming that the regular agents will soon be appointed, and have instructions what disposition to make of the several tribes.

I have, in all my arrangements with the different bands, confined myself to such temporary action as I thought best calculated to preserve peaceful relations until such time as the government could act permanently. I am fully assured that we have nothing at present of a hostile character to apprehend from any of our border tribes, except those already mentioned as hostile ; and our citizens express much more confidence in the permanency of our peaceful relations with the several tribes than heretofore.

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

R. S. NEIGHBORS,  
*Special Indian Agent.*

W. MEDILL, Esq.,  
*Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.*