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Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Montana. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, in answer to a resolution of the House of March 14, 1871, in relation to charges made by the late agent for the Blackfeet Indians, in the Territory of Montana, against the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for said territory.

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SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS FOR MONTANA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

IN ANSWER TO

A resolution of the House of March 14, 1871, in relation to charges made by the late agent for the Blackfeet Indians, in the Territory of Montana, against the superintendent of Indian affairs for said Territory.

MARCH 28, 1871.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C., March 23, 1871.

SIR: In compliance with the terms of a resolution adopted by the House of Representatives on the 14th instant, I have the honor to transmit, herewith, a copy of a report from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated the 18th instant, submitting a "copy of the charges made by M. M. McCauley, late agent for the Blackfeet Indians in the Territory of Montana, against A. J. Viall, superintendent of Indian affairs for said Territory, with the reply of said Viall to said charges. Also the letter of Colonel Gibbon to Wm. Welsh, under date of February 21, relative to the distribution of annuity goods to said Indians."

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
C. DELANO,
Secretary.

Hon. JAMES G. BLAINE,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., March 18, 1871.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter of yesterday, inclosing a copy of a resolution adopted by the House of Representatives on the 14th instant:

That the Secretary of the Interior be requested to furnish this House with a copy of the charges made by M. M. McCauley, late agent for the Blackfeet Indians in the Territory of Montana, against A. J. Viall, superintendent of Indian affairs for said Terri-

tory, with the reply of Viall to said charges. Also the letter of Colonel Gibbon to Wm. Welsh, under date of February 21, relative to the distribution of annuity goods to said Indians, now on file in the Indian Department.

In compliance with your request, I have the honor herewith to present copies of the papers referred to in the above resolution.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. S. PARKER,
Commissioner.

Hon. C. DELANO,
Secretary of the Interior.

BLACKFEET INDIAN AGENCY, MONTANA TERRITORY,
February 13, 1871.

SIR: I write you in order to ascertain something in regard to the conduct of the superintendent of Indian affairs of this Territory.

On the 19th day of October last I arrived here and took charge of this agency. I found upon my arrival a small amount of Indian provisions, left by the retiring agent. I immediately made a requisition on Superintendent Viall for what I thought would be necessary for the winter supplies at this agency. I received a reply that my requisition would be honored as soon as possible. The articles not coming, I again wrote the superintendent, and received the same reply. From that time to this nothing has been furnished this agency by the superintendent—not even to a bottle of Thompson's eye-water, which I requested him to send me for the use of sore-eyed Indians. On the 9th day of December last I received at this agency five and one-half tons of Indian goods, valued, as per invoice, at \$7,620 04. These goods consist of blankets, clothing, and hardware, for the Indians. These goods were furnished, I believe, by Mr. L. M. Black, but am not positive, as I never receipted for them to any one, except to sign the bills of lading of the wagon-train. These are all the goods received by me. These goods arrived here during my absence, and the wagon-master that brought them told my employés that "Mr. Garrison (the owner of the train) had received from Mr. L. M. Black one-half of the freight money on fifty tons of annuity goods from Corinne, Utah Territory, to this agency;" and further said, that if I did not receipt to Black for the full amount, I would lose my head.

On or about the 25th of November last I received a letter from Superintendent Viall dated "Bozeman, Montana Territory, November 23," requesting me to be in Helena by the 1st of December, "before parties left for Washington;" in response to which letter I hastened to Helena. On the 2d day of December Superintendent Viall requested me to accompany Mr. Black to his (Black's) hotel, as he (Black) had business with me. Upon arriving at the hotel, and while in Mr. Black's room, he (Black) first asked me if General Sully had ever purchased anything out of the \$50,000 appropriation for this agency for 1870. I answered him I did not know. He then requested me to make out and sign vouchers in his (Black's) favor to the amount of forty-five thousand dollars for goods received at this agency. This I refused to do, and informed him (Black) that I would receipt for what goods came to this agency and no more. He then said that if I would sign said vouchers, Superintendent Viall would indorse them. I refused. He (Black) further said, that if I would sign such vouchers I should stay in office (as agent) as long as Grant was President, as he (Black) and Commissioner Parker were great friends.

On the next day (3d December) Superintendent Viall sent me twice to the hotel. (once in company with Black, and once by myself,) saying that "Black had business with me." Upon arriving at the hotel Mr. Black made the same request in regard to signing vouchers, which I again refused to sign, and never have signed. The five and one-half tons of goods mentioned arrived at agency while I was absent, as stated, but I returned in time to receive them.

On the 23d of January, 1871, a man by the name of Simmons—A. J.—arrived at this agency, with several employés, and demanded that I should turn over to him this agency, the Government property, &c., on the strength of an order from Superintendent Viall, which he had to that effect. I at first concluded to do so *under protest*, but upon further reflection I concluded that inasmuch as I was, and am, a commissioned officer, appointed to this agency, under bonds to the Government, and that I had never been officially notified of my removal or the appointment of my successor, I would not be justified in turning over the property to Mr. A. J. Simmons, nor any one else, except to my duly qualified successor in office. At this time several lodges of Piegians were here awaiting their annuities. In conversation with Mr. Simmons, and before

I had refused to turn over to him, he informed me that it was his intention to give each Indian one blanket, and send them buffalo hunting.

On the 25th of January, 1871, Mr. Simmons made his demand in writing, which demand I also refused in writing. On the 28th of January I made a distribution of a portion of the goods to the Indians, in the presence of two commissioned officers of the United States Army, who were sent here at my request by the commanding officer at Fort Shaw, forty miles from here. These officers were here as witnesses to the distribution, and have signed their names as such to the proper papers, and have ere this made their own report of the affair.

Some days since a large amount of provisions was sent from Helena, Montana Territory, destined for the Indians of this agency, as I am informed. These goods were stopped and stored (as I am also informed) by this same Mr. Simmons, at Sun River Crossing, forty miles from here.

From thirty to forty lodges of Piegan and Blood Indians will be in here to-morrow. Two of the head chiefs are already here, and are in the room as I write this. I have nothing for them but a little corn and flour, and the little that is left of the five and one-half tons of goods before spoken of, the larger portion of which was issued on the 28th.

The main camp is but a few days behind. These Indians have traveled from two hundred to three hundred miles to get here, in the midst of winter, and now find that their provisions are held by a stranger forty miles away.

The foregoing facts I stand ready to substantiate by affidavit.

Very respectfully,

M. M. McCauley,

United States Indian Agent for Blackfeet.

Hon. E. S. PARKER,

Commissioner Indian Affairs.

WASHINGTON, D. C., February 28, 1871.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of this day, inclosing a copy of a letter from Mr. McCauley, late agent for the Blackfeet Indians, in which letter certain charges or allegations are made against myself and the management of Indian affairs in the Montana superintendency.

Mr. McCauley states, 1st, that he received five and one-half tons of Indian goods, valued as per invoice at \$7,620 04, furnished, as he believed, by Mr. L. M. Black; that they were all the goods received, and that Mr. Garrison, the owner of the freight train, told his (McCauley's) employes that Black had paid to Mr. Garrison one-half of the freight money on fifty tons of annuity goods from Corinne, Utah Territory, to said agency, and that if he, McCauley, did not receipt for the full amount he would lose his head, &c.

In regard to this matter I would say that the records of the Indian Office will show that only five and one-half tons, or thereabout, of annuity goods were purchased for the Indians at said agency, and consequently that the statement made by Garrison, if made, was wholly unwarranted and without any foundation whatever. In view, therefore, of the fact that there was no foundation for the statement reported to have been made by Mr. Garrison, I respectfully submit that Mr. McCauley has been imposed upon by his employes, or that the statement has been manufactured or concocted by Mr. McCauley himself for the purpose of furthering or accomplishing some object he has or may have in view. In fact, from the general character sustained by him in Montana, I have no hesitancy in saying that, in my opinion, the statement emanated from him, and that Mr. Garrison never made any such statement.

Regarding McCauley's statement about his having received a letter from me to come to Helena, and to the conversation he says he had with me relative to Mr. Black, I have to say that no such letter was ever written by me, nor did the conversation referred to ever take place. As to the interview he claims to have had with Mr. Black, I have no knowledge, but I am of the opinion, from my knowledge of the two men, that there is not a word of truth in the statement of McCauley.

Relative to Mr. Simmons having stored goods purchased for the Blackfeet agency at Sun River crossing, I would say that no instructions were given for the storing of said goods at that place; yet, in view of the fact that McCauley's appointment had been revoked, I think Mr. Simmons was justified in not delivering the supplies at the agency, when McCauley would doubtless have gotten possession of them.

I hold myself responsible for the supplies referred to, and will see that they are properly disposed of so soon as the newly-appointed agent for the Blackfeet Indians shall have taken charge of the agency.

In conclusion I would say that there is only one statement made by McCauley in reference to myself that is true, and that is in regard to the one bottle of Thompson's eye-

water, which he says he requested me to send to him; I believe he did make such request, but I did not send it; nor did I send him the other articles or supplies referred to, for reasons well known to the Department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. A. VIALI,
Superintendent Indians, Montana.

Hon. E. S. PARKER,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

WASHINGTON, D. C., DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BOARD OF INDIAN COMMISSIONERS,
March 8, 1871.

SIR: I inclose herewith for your information a copy of a letter received this morning per hands of William Welsh, from Colonel Gibbons, commanding Fort Shaw, Montana Territory, concerning the present condition of the Piegan Indians, and an account of his witnessing the issuing of annuity goods to the Indians, and the satisfaction with which they expressed themselves concerning the quality of the goods distributed, &c.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

VINCENT COLYER, *Secretary.*

Hon. COLUMBUS DELANO,
Secretary of the Interior.

FORT SHAW, MONTANA TERRITORY,
February 21, 1871.

DEAR SIR: I was called on a few days ago to send an officer to the Blackfeet agency, about thirty-six miles northwest of this post, to witness the distribution of goods to the Indians. I accompanied the officer to the agency, and found assembled there some six hundred Indians, men, women, and children, principally of the Piegan and Blood tribes of the Blackfeet nation.

The chiefs present were: 1. Big Lake, principal chief of Piegans; 2. Mountain Chief, Piegan; 3. Bird Chief, Piegan; 4. Generous Woman, Piegan; 5. Five Bears, Piegan; 6. Middle Bull, Piegan; 7. Many Horses, Piegan; 8. Bear Chief, Piegan; 9. Screaming Owl, Piegan; 10. Elk Chief, Piegan, blind; 11. Fish Child, Blackfeet, living with Piegans.

I was invited to meet the chiefs in the inevitable "talk," and never heard Indians talk more peaceably.

Mountain Chief spoke first. He is an old man, and said to be very smart. His was one of the bands Colonel Baker was after last winter, but did not succeed in striking. He expressed a desire to live at peace with the white man, and to have no more trouble, and was glad to meet us in this way.

Bird Chief, an old man, who was in the fight with Colonel Baker last year, said he had not had a good night's sleep since that fight, and had ever since been moving from place to place, expecting every day to be attacked by somebody, he did not know who; that they all wished to live at peace with the whites now, and to have no more trouble. A number of others spoke, all in the same strain. They all expressed pleasure at having an agent residing among them, as Major McCauley now was; that heretofore their agent never lived at the agency, but would sometimes appear there for a day or two, promising to meet them elsewhere, but when they went there he was always somewhere else, and he failed to keep his promises with them. (I suspect this is true, and their present agent certainly deserves credit for taking up his residence in such a desolate, uninviting region as that surrounding the agency.) They all expressed themselves satisfied with their present agent; said he had done more for them than any previous agent, and hoped he would remain. That I would be surprised if I could compare the present issue of goods, with which they seemed very much pleased, with issues by former agents, when each Indian would receive a little package which he could carry away in his hand.

They hailed this new state of affairs as a good sign, and that now white men should always go through their country in safety, and if any of their horses should be stolen they should be returned at once.

I told them I was glad to hear such "good words" from them; that it was better for both whites and reds to be at peace than at war, and that I knew the President preferred peace to war with them; that the Indians knew there were bad as well as good whites, and the whites knew there were both good and bad Indians; that there were a great many good whites who were now trying to do all the good they could to help the red

man, and that they would, and expected all good Indians to do all in their power to assist in bringing about a better state of feeling between the Indians and the whites, so there would be no more trouble, and I promised to send their "good words," so that they would reach the ear of the President. I know of no more effectual method of fulfilling this promise than through yourself.

Peace with this heretofore troublesome band—the Piegans—is much to be desired, and I think can be maintained without much trouble, provided they are dealt with justly, and the intentions of the Government toward them are honestly carried out.

The agent complains that of the \$50,000 appropriated for these Indians, but \$7,000 worth of goods has been sent him for distribution, and that very few provisions have been sent.

The Indians presented the appearance of being very destitute, and although they have plenty of buffalo meat to eat, *this is all* they have got; and breadstuffs, some sugar and coffee, &c., would be very acceptable.

Unfortunately their chiefs have not as much influence as is desirable, and therefore we should endeavor "to hold up their hands," like those of Moses of old, as much as possible, by conciliating them as much as possible, and demonstrating to the younger men of the tribe that the favor of the Government is worth contending. The agent says he never saw a more peaceably disposed set of Indians, and my observation confirms this. It is to be hoped that this disposition will continue.

The Pend d'Oreilles, occupying a reservation directly opposite, on the western side of the Rocky Mountains, are at present at war with the Blackfeet, and no longer ago than last fall stole about two hundred of their horses.

The chiefs I saw at the agency expressed a desire to make peace with the Pend d'Oreilles, and it is very desirable that such a peace should be brought about. It might be done, I think, by instructions sent to the agents of the two tribes.

During the council Elk Chief, who was totally blind, made a speech to the young men, urging them to act in accordance with the promises made by their chiefs; that it was no use to talk without acting; that he, being blind, could do nothing, but that every one should do all he could to fulfill in good faith the promises there made for the tribe, so that the whites and reds should live together in peace.

The Indians all seemed highly pleased at their visit to the agency and the presents received, and yesterday morning left for their camps north on the Maria River.

A visit to this section of country by some of the gentlemen who have interested themselves in Indian affairs could not but be productive of good.

Very respectfully, yours,

JOHN GIBBON.

Mr. Wm. WELSH,
1122 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.