

University of Oklahoma College of Law

## University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

---

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

---

12-20-1871

**Condition of the Indians of Fort Berthold Agency. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, in relation to the condition of the Indians of the Fort Berthold Agency, in Dakota Territory, together with an estimate for an appropriation of \$40,000 for the support of certain Indians.**

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indian and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 25, 42nd Cong., 2nd Sess. (1871)

This House Executive Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [darinfox@ou.edu](mailto:darinfox@ou.edu).

CONDITION OF THE INDIANS OF FORT BERTHOLD AGENCY.

---

L E T T E R

FROM THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

IN RELATION TO

*The condition of the Indians of the Fort Berthold agency, in Dakota Territory, together with an estimate for an appropriation of \$40,000 for the support of certain Indians.*

---

DECEMBER 20, 1871.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

---

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

Washington, D. C., December 20, 1871.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a report dated the 16th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and accompanying papers, in relation to the condition of the Indians of the Fort Berthold agency, in Dakota Territory, together with an estimate for an appropriation of \$40,000 for the support of the Arickaree, Gros Ventre, and Mandan Indians of said agency, for the fiscal year ending 30th June, 1872.

The subject is respectfully submitted for the favorable consideration of Congress.

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., December 16, 1871.

SIR: Of the Indian tribes within the limits of the United States there are none that deserve better of the Government than the Arickarees, Gros Ventres, and Mandans, located in the northeastern part of Dakota. Harassed for years by the Sioux, and urged to join them in warfare against our people, they have ever remained firm and faithful friends

to the whites, struggling to eke out a scanty subsistence, in a cold and rigorous climate, by cultivating a soil which, even under the most favorable circumstances, yields but little.

An annual appropriation of forty thousand dollars is made by Congress for the support of these tribes, but the greater portion of that amount is necessarily expended in the purchase of annuity goods and agricultural implements, and in the employment of persons to instruct and assist the Indians in agricultural and mechanical pursuits. Of the sum appropriated for the present fiscal year only a small balance of about five thousand dollars is now remaining, while the agent's estimates of the actual requirements by way of subsistence for the twenty-four hundred Indians in his charge up to June 30 next, exceed one hundred thousand dollars.

I inclose herewith a copy of Agent Tappan's estimate, as above, together with copies of his letters of the 15th and 16th August last, representing the urgency of the case, and respectfully suggest that said papers be laid before Congress at an early day, with a request for a special appropriation of forty thousand dollars, to provide for the most imperative necessities of these Indians up to June 30, 1872.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

F. A. WALKER, *Commissioner.*

Hon. C. DELANO,  
*Secretary of the Interior.*

UNITED STATES INDIAN AGENCY,  
*Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory, August 15, 1871.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith estimate for provisions for the care for and support of the aged, sick, and infirm, and for the helpless orphans of the Indians of this agency. I would recommend that these articles be bought at and shipped from the East, unless the Commissary Department can supply the demand. They will not be able to do so this winter from any of the posts in this region. The prices asked for these articles by the traders and parties who hold them are so exorbitant that it seems like robbing the Indians to pay such prices as I am obliged to, even to give them the little that I do; and the lower cost of the goods shipped from the East, even with the transportation added, would enable you to send me at least twice the amount I can buy here, thus making their appropriation buy for them more goods and provisions than it has done heretofore. The basis of this estimate is 2,400 Indians for 200 days. The articles that can be cut down to the lowest possible amount. These Indians are the only friendly Indians on the upper waters of the Missouri, and are suffering very great privation for want of food. The Government feeds Indians that are hostile, while these three tribes are left in an almost destitute condition.

White men could not live in this country were it not for the protecting arm and watchful eye of the Arickaree, Gros Ventre, and Mandan. They guard the country and keep the hostile Sioux at a distance. Though we are told "to love our enemies, and pray for those who despitefully use us," still there is nothing that tells us not to take care of our friends, and in some measure our protectors, and who have suffered much for our sake.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN E. TAPPAN,  
*United States Indian Agent, Arickarees, Gros Ventres, and Mandans.*

*Estimate of provisions required for the use of the Arickaree, Gros Ventre, and Mandan Indians for the year ending June 30, 1872.*

200,000 pounds flour.	500 pounds candles.
100,000 pounds bacon.	5,000 pounds salt.
600,000 pounds beef—net.	2,000 pounds soda.
45,000 pounds sugar.	10,000 pounds rice.
20,000 pounds coffee.	1,000 pounds tea.
8,000 pounds soap.	

I certify that the above estimate is absolutely necessary for the care for and support of the aged, sick, and infirm, and for the helpless orphans of the Indians at this agency.

JOHN E. TAPPAN,  
*United States Indian Agent.*

UNITED STATES INDIAN AGENCY,  
Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory, August 16, 1871.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith estimate for annuity goods for the year ending June 30, 1872.

I would respectfully suggest that instead of the articles of clothing (omitted from my estimate) usually sent, that Henry carbines and ammunition be sent, as the clothing is not of any use to these Indians, nor do they care about it, but the amount usually expended for that purpose, if invested in Henry carbines and ammunition for the same, would be of great service and a real benefit to them. The carbines cost, at wholesale, I think, about \$30 each, and the ammunition \$10 per thousand. The field-glasses would be equally serviceable, and would be better than cheap pantaloons that fall to pieces the first rain, to say nothing of their nondescript transformation from a deep black to a subdud orange color upon slight exposure to the sun. The carts and harness are very much needed by the Indians for the purpose of hauling wood, as they have to go some four miles for it, and pack it on the backs of their squaws and horses—those that have the latter. They also need them for the purpose of gathering and bringing in their crops of corn, squash, pumpkins, and beans, which now are carried by the squaws. Whenever it is practicable I have let them have agency teams, and from the most distant patches; and as a reward for good farming I have set certain days to haul their products in for them—three days in a week. This somewhat delays our own work, but it helps them out and has a very good effect.

I would respectfully suggest, as a reward for good and patient farming, that twenty-five or thirty carts and harness be presented these Indians. These carts and harness can be purchased in the Red River country for about \$20 in gold—cart and harness. If this meets with your approval, funds—say about \$1,000—should be placed at my disposal for this purpose, say as early as June, as it will take about thirty days to make the round trip, and that will bring the carts here in time for the next harvesting.

To bring the carts over it would be the best to bring half the number of horses (they will cost about \$40 each) that we do carts, and to give to the very best a horse with the cart, as there are very few horses among these Indians.

I have made this estimate and the one for provisions simply for articles and provisions necessary and needed, and for the smallest possible amounts.

Permit me to say in this connection that it is an unfailling source of wonder to these Indians that the Sioux, who are the enemies of the whites—and some bands of which are at war all the time with the whites, even though they may draw rations from their agencies, either directly or indirectly—and who also are the deadly foes of these Indians, driving the game from out of this, their country, compelling them to stay at home, and preventing them from hunting, except in large parties and at a great distance from their villages, while they, who have always kept their treaties and have been firm and steadfast friends of the whites, and who have protected them in their travels through the country, should be so neglected by the whites, and allowed to hover just upon the verge of want, cold, and starvation, while the Sioux are clothed and fed, and more provisions given to them than they can use, and get more goods than they need. They say it seems like setting a premium on bad conduct, and that if they had behaved badly they also would receive similar good treatment from the whites. They say that since they have become friendly to the whites and kept their treaty, they have drawn upon themselves the enmity of the surrounding tribes, and have suffered from disease, want, and starvation; have had their horses stolen and their people killed by the same Indians that are now being taken such good care of.

They ask that the same hand that takes care of the Sioux and with whom they have been at peace for these many years give to them a little more to eat and a little more to wear, and of such articles as they have asked for.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN E. TAPPAN,

*United States Indian Agent for Arickarees, Gros Ventres, and Mandans.*

HON. COMMISSIONER INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, District of Columbia.*

*Estimate of appropriation required for the Indian service at the Fort Berthold agency, Dakota Territory, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1872.*

For this amount, or so much thereof as may be necessary, for the subsistence of the Arickaree, Gros Ventre, and Mandan Indians at Fort Berthold agency, Dakota, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1872..... \$40,000