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Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting letter of Secretary of the Interior relative to the purchase of supplies of certain tribes of Indians.

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

Letter of Secretary of the Interior relative to the purchase of supplies of certain tribes of Indians.

JANUARY 18, 1888.—Ordered to be printed and referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, January 16, 1888.

The Secretary of War has the honor to transmit to the United States Senate a copy of a letter of November 18, 1887, from the honorable Secretary of the Interior, together with the accompanying copies of correspondence on the subject of the purchase of needed supplies from Indians at Uintah and Ouray Agency, Utah, and to recommend that such legislation be enacted by Congress as will permit the Quartermaster's Department to purchase direct from Indians, in open market, such hay, grain, etc., as may be needed by that department, and offered by the Indians, at market price in the vicinity of military posts.

WILLIAM C. ENDICOTT,
Secretary of War.

The PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE U. S. SENATE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, November 18, 1887.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith, for your consideration and such action as may be deemed right and proper in the case, copy of a letter of 17th instant from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with accompanying copy of communication from Agent Byrnes, of Uintah and Ouray Agency, Utah, noted therein, upon the subject of required legislation authorizing the purchase by the Government, in open market, from Indians, of needed supplies of hay, grain, etc. (the product of Indian labor), at contract prices, when offered in quality as good as required.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

L. Q. C. LAMAR,
Secretary.

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
November 22, 1887.

Respectfully referred to the Quartermaster-General for report.
By order of the Secretary of War.

JOHN TWEEDALE,
Chief clerk.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
 QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
 Washington, D. C. November 29, 1887.

Respectfully returned to the honorable Secretary of War, with recommendation that steps be taken to secure such legislation as will permit the Quartermaster's Department of the Army to purchase direct from Indians, in open market, such hay and grain as may be needed by that department, and offered by the Indians, at market price in the vicinity of the posts.

S. B. HOLABIRD,
 Quartermaster-General U. S. Army.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
 OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
 Washington, November 17, 1887.

SIR: I have the honor to invite your attention to the inclosed copy of a letter dated October 15, 1887, from Agent Byrnes, of the Uintah and Ouray Agency, Utah, which to my mind presents a case strongly appealing to the law-making power of the Government.

The facts as stated are substantially as follows:

In the early part of last spring General Hatch, who was then in command of the military post of Fort DuChesne, on the Uintah Indian Reservation, agreed with Agent Byrnes to take, for the use of said post, all the hay and oats the Indians of the agency would deliver at contract prices.

The advantages of having a convenient home market, with good prices, proved to be a very great incentive to industry on the part of the Indians. However, when the contracts were let, it was specified that the hay should be alfalfa, red-top, or timothy, whereas the Indians' hay was of a different variety—what is known as the native hay—and therefore could not be received at the post under the contract, although it was "very good, nutritious hay, and well liked by the cavalry officers at the fort."

The contract price for hay was \$26.50 per ton, delivered at the post, and the quantity required, 800 tons. The price for straw for bedding was \$16 per ton.

General Hatch, at the date of the letting or subletting, had been superseded in command of the post by Colonel Randlett.

Agent Byrnes made every effort to have the Indian hay received at the fort, but was without success.

Finally, Colonel Randlett was willing to receive the hay in lieu of straw for bedding, the contract price for which, as we have seen, was \$16 per ton.

The contractors would pay the Indians but \$11 per ton for their hay, and at that price the Indians delivered their "good, nutritious hay" at the fort. The military could not buy direct from the Indians, and consequently they had to sell to the subcontractors at whatever price they would give or not sell at all.

It had been the agent's hope that by finding a good market for their hay and oats right at their very doors the Indians would be encouraged to do more than ever the coming year, but the experience of the past season has tended to discourage them, and he finds that he is likely to be disappointed unless some arrangement can be made to enable the Indians to sell their hay and grain at the contract prices. He

therefore urges, as a matter of simple justice to the Indians, that when the next appropriations are made for the support of the Army provision be made to enable post commanders to purchase hay and grain from the Indians in open market at the regular contract prices.

Anything that can properly be done to encourage the Indians in habits of industry should be done, and none need useful occupation more than the Utes.

It seems to be a reasonable proposition that the Government should purchase needed supplies from the Indians, as hay, grain, etc., the products of their own labor, when offered in quality as good as required, and when wanted, and I think that Agent Byrnes's suggestion is an eminently proper one.

Whether the rule should be made applicable to all military posts I am not prepared to say, but I trust that the experiment may be tried at the post of Fort DuChesne.

I therefore respectfully recommend that the subject be laid before the honorable Secretary of War for his consideration, and such action as he may be pleased to take to secure needful legislation should the plan proposed meet with his approval.

I inclose a copy of this report.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. B. UPSHAW,
Acting Commissioner.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE,
Utah Agency, October 5, 1887.

SIR: Since I have been in charge of these agencies I have made a strong effort to bring these restless Indians down to work. In this I have met with good success.

In the early spring, General Hatch, then in command at Fort Du Chesne (on this reservation), agreed with me to take, for use at the fort, all of the hay and oats that my Indians would raise at contractors' prices.

The fact of having a home market at good prices was a great inducement for the Indians to labor.

General Hatch was succeeded in command by Colonel Randlett, when contracts were entered into (under bids) by the War Department for the delivery of 800 tons of hay at the fort, at \$26.50 per ton, and straw, for bedding, at \$16 per ton. The contracts specified that the hay must be alfalfa, red top, or timothy. The Indian hay, being the native hay of the country, was neither alfalfa, red top, or timothy, but was a very good, nutritious hay, and was well liked by the cavalry officers at the fort.

Under the contracts as awarded this hay could not be received at the fort, although I made every effort to secure its sale there. Colonel Randlett, however, was willing to receive this Indian hay in place of straw for bedding.

The contract price for straw was \$16 per ton. I endeavored to get Colonel Randlett to buy this hay direct from the Indians at the contract price for straw. In this I was not successful, and in this connection I call your attention to inclosed letter from Colonel Randlett on that subject.

As this Indian hay had to go through the hands of a contractor to find a market at the fort, I sought out the contractor, who informed me that he had sublet this straw contract to Blythe and Mitchell, of Ashley, Utah.

Blythe and Mitchell, the subcontractors, were seen, and they expressed their willingness to buy this Indian hay at \$10 per ton, delivered at the fort, and after much trouble, I had them agree to pay the Indians \$11 per ton for their hay delivered at the fort, and they informed me that there was no profit for them at that price, that while the contractor received \$16 per ton, they had sublet it at \$11 per ton, and at that price my Indians are now delivering their hay at the fort.

I had hoped that a market price for their hay and oats at the fort, on their own home or their reservation, would be a stimulant to renewed industry the coming season. But the results of this season have been very discouraging to them.

PURCHASE OF SUPPLIES OF CERTAIN INDIAN TRIBES.

Simple justice to these Indians demands that in the appropriation for the War Department supplies, there should be a clause inserted permitting commandants of military posts to purchase in open market hay and grain from the Indians at the contract price.

Very respectfully,

T. A. BYRNES,
U. S. Indian Agent.

Hon. J. D. C. ATKINS,
Indian Commissioner.

FORT DU CHESNE, UTAH, *September 20, 1887.*

DEAR COLONEL BYRNES: There is but one way that the Indians can put in hay, and that through the contractor. Mr. Blythe, who has the contract, is willing to put the hay in for them. I have done all that I can do to facilitate the matter, but if they decline to sell it to him, the contractor, then there is no use talking about disposing of it here. This is the decision of the War Department, and we can do nothing but be governed by it. Blythe lives in Ashley; he was here a few days since, and said he would buy their hay, but that the Indians would not sell it to him. If they change their minds and let him have it, it must be done soon, or the contract will be filled, and then it will be too late to talk about the matter.

I would do anything I can for the Indians, but what they want in this is simply an impossibility for me to do.

RANDLETT.

Colonel BYRNES,
Uintah.