
CIVILIZATION OF THE INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TO THE

Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs,

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT OF GENERAL CLARK,

SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,

IN RELATION TO

The Preservation and Civilization of the Indians.

MARCH 9, 1826.

Read, and referred to the Committee of the whole House, to which is committed the
Bill for the preservation and civilization of the Indian tribes within the United States.

WASHINGTON:

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1826.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,

March 7th, 1826.

SIR: I transmit the enclosed copy of a report of General Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, on the scheme for the preservation and civilization of the Indian Tribes, now under the consideration of the Committee on Indian Affairs, in the persuasion that the Committee will find in it sound and enlightened views on that subject.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant.

JAMES BARBOUR,

HON. JOHN COCKE,

Chm. Com. Indian Affairs, H. of Reps.

WASHINGTON CITY, *March 1, 1826.*

SIR: I have just read the printed copy of a letter from you to the Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, and have, also, seen and examined the bill reported by that Committee, for the preservation and civilization of the Indian tribes within the limits of the United States; and, in obedience to your request, will now submit to you my ideas with respect to the interesting subject to which they relate.

The view which is taken in the letter of the relative condition of the United States on one side, and the Indian tribes on the other, is, in my opinion, perfectly correct; and the obligation which is imposed upon this Government to save them from extinction, as the letter suggests, and to make persevering exertions to improve their condition, is equally the dictate of magnanimity and justice. The events of the last two or three wars, from Gen. Wayne's campaign, in 1794, to the end of the operations against the Southern tribes in 1818, have entirely changed our position with regard to the Indians. Before those events, the tribes nearest our settlements were a formidable and terrible enemy; since then their power has been broken, their warlike spirit subdued, and themselves sunk into objects of pity and commiseration. While strong and hostile, it has been our obvious policy to weaken them; now, that they are weak and harmless, and most of their lands fallen into our hands, justice and humanity requires us to cherish and befriend them. To teach them to live in houses, to raise grain and stock, to plant orchards, to set up land marks, to divide their possessions, establish laws for their government, to get the rudiments of common learning, such as reading, writing, and cyphering, are the first steps towards improving their condition. But, to take these steps with effect, it is necessary that previous measures of great magnitude should be accomplished, that is, that the tribes now within the limits of the States and Territories should be removed to a country beyond those limits, where they could rest in peace, and enjoy in reality the perpetuity of the lands on which their buildings and improvements would be made.

This great measure is proposed in the bill to which I have referred, and the country west of Missouri and Arkansas, and west of the Mississippi river, north of Missouri, is the one destined to receive them. From all accounts, this country will be well adapted to their residence. It is well watered with numerous small streams, and some large rivers; abounds with grass, which will make it easy to raise stock; has many salt springs, from which a supply of the necessary article of salt can be obtained; contains much prairie land, which will make the opening of farms easy, and afford a temporary supply of game.

I would recommend the following measures to be pursued:

1st. Employ commissioners who are acquainted with the Indians themselves, and who are zealous in the business, to negotiate for their

removal, and to impress upon their mind the conviction of the truth, that it is impossible for them to remain as independent nations within the limits of these States and Territories.

2d. Lay off suitable portions of country for the different tribes to remove to, and facilitate their removal by placing agents at suitable points where they will cross the Mississippi, and at other points on the line of march, to supply them with provision, ammunition, &c. Nor should they be required to move in a body, but singly, or in families, as they pleased. In this way a constant tide of Indian emigration is now going on from the states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, to the west of the Mississippi. They cross at St. Louis and St. Genevieve under my superintendency; and my annual accounts with the Government show the aid which is given to them. Many leading Chiefs are zealous in this work, and laboring hard to collect their dispersed and broken tribes at their new and permanent homes.

3d. To assist them in commencing an agricultural life, by inclosing with fences an adequate portion of ground near to each village, and have it broken up with the plough, and divided into parcels for each family, and have it planted with all the common and most useful fruit trees; also furnish them with stock, animals, and the different kinds of fowls, and assist them in the erection of permanent houses.

The condition of many tribes west of the Mississippi is the most pitiable that can be imagined. During several seasons in every year they are distressed by famine, in which many die for want of food, and, during which, the living child is often buried with the dead mother, because no one can spare it as much food as would sustain it through its helpless infancy. This description applies to Sioux, Osages, and many others, but I mention those because they are powerful tribes, and live near our borders, and my official station enables me to know the exact truth. It is in vain to talk to people in this condition about learning and religion. They want a regular supply of food, and, until that is obtained, the operations of the mind must take the instinct of mere animals, and be confined to warding off hunger and cold. The nations which I have mentioned, and many others west of the Mississippi, have neither hogs or cows, and do not want them, because they would eat up their little patches of corn, which are without fences, and, because, as the whole nation has to go out to hunt twice a year, and at that period have nothing to eat at home, hogs and cows could neither go with them nor be left at home in safety. They want nothing but horses and dogs, which accompany them in their hunts; and, in these expeditions, the aged and infirm, when unable to keep up, are frequently left to die. To stop all these evils, fences, stock, and grain, are the first things to be given them.

4th. Establish common schools in the villages, to teach all the children to read, write and cypher, &c. A college education for a few, while the body of the nation is left in ignorance, has been proved, by the experience of more than two hundred years, to be a most unprofitable experiment; and, besides, because there is no other way of dividing equally the large fund for education which is now accumulating in

many tribes, except by establishing common schools in every village. The fund for this purpose is too great to be given up to a few who choose to administer upon it. I presume that it is equal at present to more than two hundred thousand dollars, and constantly increasing. Charities among white people are liable to be abused, and among ignorant and careless Indians much more so. A plan of education and accountability should be established by law. The superintendents and agents should be charged with its execution. Frequent, rigorous, and personal examinations, should be had over the scholars and teachers, regular reports made to the Government, liberal pay given to the teachers at the end of each quarter, and after each examination; but large sums ought not be put into their hands, to be used at discretion.

5th. Give to the tribes the idea of submission to the authority of a civil government. For this purpose, as many of the tribes, or of the scattering bands, as possible, understanding one language, collected near each other, over which a competent agent should be placed, with full power of conducting the executive part of a government, to be submitted to and adopted by the Indians, subject to such changes as may be recommended and approved by the President. It is believed that the executive agent, by his authority, will prevent the Indians from killing one another for the chief place, and keep the inferior officers (who should be Indians) within the bounds of their duty, and decide those differences, by his influence or authority, which are now decided by the rifle and tomahawk.

Some of the chiefs, who wish to be head men themselves, might object to this, but the body of the tribes would approve it, when they understood it, and there would be stations enough under the agent to try the abilities and satisfy the ambition of the different contending chiefs. A general government over the whole might be necessary and proper.

6th. The presence of agents, clothed with the authority of the United States, would probably be sufficient to prevent the chiefs from killing one another, and to prevent different tribes from attacking each other, or committing depredations upon the white people; but, to make sure of this, a show of troops is necessary, and some military posts ought to be established along the frontier of white settlements, and all the nation should be made responsible out of their annuities, for the depredations which any one of its people should commit either on the whites or on Indians of other tribes.

7th. The permanent annuities ought to be commuted for limited ones; such a change would be beneficial to both the United States and the Indians. It would free the Treasury from what would otherwise remain an everlasting charge upon it, and which, in the lapse of a century, would amount to an enormous sum, as might readily be shown by looking to the annually increasing amount for the Indian Department, which exceeds seven thousand dollars for the present year, of which about one-fourth is paid in annuities. In a century the aggregate paid in annuities may be equal to one-fourth of the present national debt, without counting the probable increase. It would be better for the Indians to receive a large sum in a short time, than to be receiving a

small one forever. The largest annuity which we pay affords but a few dollars per head when divided among a tribe, and contribute nothing of much importance to the amount of their *property*, and it is *property* alone that can keep up the pride of an Indian, and make him ashamed of drunkenness, begging, lying and stealing. It is *property* which has raised the character of the southern tribes. Roads and travellers through their country, large annuities, and large sums for land from the United States, and large presents to Chiefs, have enabled them to acquire *slaves*, *cattle*, hogs and horses, and these have enabled them to live independently, and to cultivate their minds, and keep up their pride, while those, even of the Southern Indians, who have no *property*, as I am informed, are in the lowest state of moral and mental degradation. An Indian will not work while in his uncultivated state; that is considered a disgrace. The period of danger to him is that in which he ceases to be a hunter, from the extinction of game, and before he gets the means of living from the produce of flocks and agriculture. In this transit from the *hunter* to the *farming* state, he degenerates from a proud and independent savage to the condition of a beggar, drunkard, and thief, neglecting his family, suffering for food and clothes, and living the life of a mere animal. To counteract the dangers of this transit, *property*, in *cattle*, *hogs* and *horses*, is indispensable, and, to furnish these, the permanent annuities should be commuted into a gross sum, payable in equal annual parts, for a moderate term of years; and the women and children, upon whom the labor of cultivating the ground devolves, should be assisted in making fences, to which their own means and strength are inadequate; also in planting orchards, and instructed in raising cotton, and in spinning and weaving it into cloth, and making it up into garments. Small mills should be built, and a miller provided, to save the women from the labor of pounding the corn; useful mechanics employed to make their ploughs, carts, wheels, hoes, axes, &c. and for the purpose of teaching the young Indians how to use and make them.

Most of those provisions I have found incorporated in your letter to the Committee, and the adoption of others herein suggested I now recommend, and, if enacted into a law, I anticipate the commencement of a new era of prosperity in the condition of a people who have strong claims upon the justice and generosity of this Government.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant.

WILLIAM CLARK,

Sup't Indian Affairs.

HON. JAMES BARBOUR,

Secretary of War.

