CHARGES AGAINST A. D. BONESTEEL, UNITED STATES AGENT FOR THE MENOMONEE INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

The correspondence relative to charges preferred against A. D. Bonesteel, United States agent for the Menomonee Indians.

MARCH 19, 1860.—Laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
March 16, 1860.

SIR: In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives, adopted March 14, 1860, I have the honor to transmit herewith copies of the correspondence on file in this department relating to the charges made against A. D. Bonesteel, United States agent for the Menomonee Indians.

An investigation was ordered on the 18th ultimo, and the special agent (Mr. Pritchette) has already left for the Menomonee country.

With great respect, your obedient servant,

J. THOMPSON, *Secretary.*

Hon. WILLIAM PENNINGTON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

WASHINGTON, D. C.,
February 14, 1860.

SIR: It is alleged by the Menomonee Indians, a party of whom are now here, that their agent, A. D. Bonesteel, received money of the department last year for purposes of their subsistence which was not honestly disbursed, Will you please inform me the amount so furnished them, and what evidences you have of its proper disbursement?

Your obedient servant,

C. C. WASHBURN.

Hon. A. B. GREENWOOD,
Superintendent Indian Affairs.

AUTHENTICATED U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION GPO

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office Indian Affairs, February 16, 1860.

SIR: Your letter of the 14th instant, stating that "it is alleged by the Menomonee Indians, a party of whom are now here, that their agent, A. D. Bonesteel, received money of the department last year for purposes of their subsistence which was not honestly delivered," and asking to be informed of the amount so furnished them, and what evidences there are of its proper disbursement, has been received; and, in reply thereto, I have to advise that on the 22d January, 1859, a remittance of $5,000 was made to Agent Bonesteel, in compliance with the request of the Menomonee chiefs communicated to this office by him for the purchase of pork, flour, and corn for the use of their people; and that it is shown by the accounts of the agent that the provisions required were duly purchased and delivered to the said chiefs in the month of April, 1859, as will be more fully seen by a copy of their receipt filed with said accounts herewith enclosed.

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

A. B. GREENWOOD,
Commissioner.

Hon. C. C. WASHBURN,
House of Representatives.

MENOMONEE AGENCY, *Keshena, April* 21, 1859.

We, the undersigned head chiefs and warriors of the Menomonee tribe of Indians, do acknowledge to have received of Augustus D. Bonesteel, Indian agent, the following described articles of provisions this twenty-first day of February, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine:

400 sacks of superfine flour, 100 barrels of mess pork, 150 bushels of corn, and 210 bushels of wheat.

Names of the different chiefs.

Ah-co-no-may, head chief,	his x mark.
Oh-ke-he-na-nim, 2d chief,	his x mark.
Show-ne-nien, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Shoneon, 2d chief,	his x mark.
Wau-ke-chon, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Nah-nah-he-tuck, 2d chief,	his x mark.
Ah-wah-sha-shat, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Matiche-ki-nien, 2d chief,	his x mark.
Lamotte, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Joseph Lamotte, 2d chief,	his x mark.
Pequah-ke-nah, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Nah-kan-clis-kaw, 2d chief.	his x mark.
Keshena, 2d head chief,	his x mark.
Py-an-wah-sha-sha, 2d chief,	his x mark.

Ah-yam-e-tah, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Corron, 2d chief,	his x mark.
Shah-boi-tack, 3d chief,	his x mark.
Shawano-pe-nassien, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Muh-a-tha-pe-nass, 2d chief,	his x mark.
Way-kaw, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Ahe-che-quo-no-way, 2d chief,	his x mark.
Ko-man-ne-can, 1st chief,	his x mark.
Ky-oh-no-mah, 2d chief,	his x mark.

In presence of—

WM. POCHY,
WM. W. JOHNSTON.
WM. POWELL, *U. S. Interpreter.*
FREDERICK HAAS, *Menomonee farmer.*

The within is a true copy from the original on file in this office.

T. J. D. FULLER,
Second Auditor.

MARCH 16, 1860.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *February* 16, 1860.

SIR: The subscribers, senators and representatives from the State of Wisconsin, feel it to be their duty to call your attention to the fact that very grave charges have lately been brought to our attention by the Menomonee tribe of Indians against the United States Indian agent for said tribe, A. D. Bonesteel, William Powell, interpreter, and other government employés in connexion with said tribe. The charges are so well sustained by affidavits that we cannot doubt that there is great reason for complaint on the part of said Indians against some, if not all, of said employés.

It is charged by said Indians that their said agent does not honestly apply the moneys furnished him to purchase provisions and other articles for them; that he makes such purchases at private sale of his brother-in-law; that he has allowed whiskey to be sold on the pay ground; that he has refused to allow persons of Indian blood, who were acquainted with both the Indian and English languages, to be present in council; and that when they have been so present, and complained that the interpreter was falsely interpreting, has caused them to be silenced or turned out from the presence of the council; that he has not the confidence of the Indians, but, on the contrary, is regarded as an enemy, rather than a friend; that he treats them with gross neglect, by reason of which a large number of aged and infirm persons, members of the tribe, are now in a state of actual starvation.

That the present interpreter, William Powell, is a dishonest person; that he falsely interprets to them, and that he is banded together with unprincipled white men to impose upon and defraud them; that he has an Indian wife and children that he has turned out of doors, and thrown on the tribe for support, and is now living with a white woman; and it is further charged that the other employés are wholly incompe-

tent and unworthy of confidence. The head chief, the second chief, and two other leading men of said tribe, are now in this city. Their complaints are grievous, but, if the affidavits are true, in our opinion, just.

We ask that you will cause an investigation to be had into the conduct of the agent, interpreter, and other white persons employed by the government in behalf of said tribe, and that such action may be taken in regard to them as the facts disclosed by such investigation shall warrant.

We have the honor to be your obedient servants,

CHARLES DURKEE.
J. R. DOOLITTLE.
JNO. F. POTTER.
C. C. WASHBURN.

Hon. JACOB THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Interior.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *February* 20, 1860.

SIR: In compliance with your suggestion made at the time of our interview on the 18th instant, we now beg leave to recommend to you, as a fit person to be associated in a commission to examine into the frauds perpetrated on the Menomonee Indians, Cyrus Woodman, esq., of Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Mr. Woodman is an old resident of the State, a gentleman of high character, and admirably qualified for an investigation of this kind.

In issuing your instructions, we would suggest that they be made so broad as to enable the commissioners to examine into and report upon every abuse which, in their judgment, ought to be inquired into.

We have the honor to be your obedient servants,

CHARLES DURKEE.
J. R. DOOLITTLE.
C. C. WASHBURN.
JOHN F. POTTER.

Hon. J. THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Interior.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, February 29, 1860.

SIR: In reply to your inquiry as to the fitness of Mr. Woodman to be selected by you to investigate the charges made against A. D. Bonesteel, Indian agent, I would respectfully protest against his appointment.

The appointment of the late law partner of Hon. C. C. Washburn, who has joined in making the charges against Bonesteel, would seem to be peculiarly inappropriate. I have no desire to retard the investigation, but will suggest to you that the ends of justice will be better

subserved by the selection of some one wholly unconnected with the controversy.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CHARLES H. LARRABEE.

Hon. JACOB THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Interior.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
March 6, 1860.

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to acknowledge the recept of your letters of the 16th and 20th ultimo, and to state, in reply, that an investigation of the charges against Agent Bonesteel has been ordered, and that Mr. Pritchette, who was formerly an officer of this department, and has had some experience in Indian affairs, has been appointed special agent for this purpose.

I am quite willing, as I had the honor to state to you verbally, that some citizen of Wisconsin should be associated with Mr. Pritchette; but I will not conceal from you that objection has been made to the gentleman recommended by you, (Mr. Cyrus Woodman.) Mr. Larrabee, especially, has protested in strong terms against his appointment, and, under these circumstances, I am unwilling to associate him with Mr. Pritchette. For a similar reason, I am unwilling to appoint Mr. Dousman, he having been objected to by you.

It has been suggested that Colonel Charles D. Robinson, of Green Bay, would be a suitable person to appoint on the commission, and, if you do not object to him, I will so appoint him. If, however, you should object, I will then direct Mr. Pritchette to proceed alone, having entire confidence in his competency, impartiality, and integrity.

An early reply will oblige, with great respect, your obedient servant,

J. THOMPSON, *Secretary.*

Hons. CHARLES DURKEE, J. R. DOOLITTLE, C. C. WASHBURN, JOHN F. POTTER, *Washington, D. C.*

WASHINGTON, D. C., *March* 6, 1860.

SIR: On the 16th ultimo, we requested you to order an investigation into certain charges made by the Menomonee Indians against the government employés in connexion with said tribe.

We solicited the privilege of naming a person to be associated as a commissioner with a person to be selected by you to make the investigation. You assented to our request, and desired us to name some suitable person to be so associated.

On the 20th ultimo we recommended Cyrus Woodman, esq., of Wisconsin, as a person peculiarly well qualified for such an investigation—

a person of unquestionable integrity, and wholly unknown personally either to the Indians or parties accused.

We now have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this date, wherein you say that you decline to appoint Mr. Woodman, but indicate a willingness to appoint a gentleman recommended by Hon. C. H. Larrabee, viz: Hon. C. D. Robinson, of Green Bay.

Mr. Robinson, so far as we know, is a very respectable gentleman, but is a leading and active political partisan, and no doubt has political relations (more or less intimate) with the parties implicated. His appointment will not be acceptable to the Indians.

As you have objections to the person before named by us, we beg leave to name one of the three following persons, either of whom would satisfy the Indians and the public, viz: Hon. Timothy O. Howe, of Green Bay; Hon. C. M. Baker, of General, Walworth county; or Hon. Joel Allen Barker, of Lancaster, Wisconsin.

They are all gentlemen of high standing, and Mr. Howe and Mr. Baker have both held high judicial positions in the State. Mr. Barker and Mr. Baker each reside nearly or quite 200 miles from the Indians, and are probably entire strangers to all parties interested.

Should you decline to appoint either of the above-named gentlemen, we shall regard it as a withdrawal of your offer to allow us to indicate a person to be appointed a commissioner, and we therefore shall withdraw our application for an investigation.

We have the honor to be your obedient servants,

CHARLES DURKEE.
J. R. DOOLITTLE.
JOHN F. POTTER.
C. C. WASHBURN.

Hon. JACOB THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Interior.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office Indian Affairs, March 7, 1860.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the reference from you of the letter of Hons. Charles Durkee, J. R. Doolittle, John F. Potter, and C. C. Washburn, preferring certain charges against the official character of A. D. Bonesteel, United States agent for the Indians in the vicinity of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and to say that K. Pritchette, esq., has been appointed special agent to investigate said charges, and his instructions are now in course of preparation.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. B. GREENWOOD,
Commissioner.

Hon. J. THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Interior.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, *March* 9, 1860.

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th instant, in reply to mine of the same date, in reference to the appointment of a commissioner to co-operate with Mr. Pritchette in the investigation of the charges preferred through you against Agent Bonesteel and his subordinates, in which you object to the appointment of Colonel Robinson, and propose to withdraw your application for an investigation in the event of my refusing to appoint as commissioner one of three gentlemen named by you.

It is true, as you state, that I expressed in conversation with you a willingness to associate with Mr. Pritchette some citizen of Wisconsin; but I certainly did not design to convey the impression that I would unqualifiedly accept any one whom you might recommend. I could not be expected to forego the exercise of my discretion in a matter affecting the official honesty of an officer of the department. I had no personal objection to Mr. Woodman; but when he was objected to in strong terms by one of your colleagues, common courtesy seemed to require that I should respect his protest. For precisely similar reasons I declined to appoint Mr. Dousman, who was deemed objectionable by you. In suggesting Colonel Robinson I supposed I was fully meeting your wishes. It is not to be presumed that you desire anything more than that the truth should be ascertained, and Colonel Robinson's respectability is admitted by you, while his incorruptibility is lauded by a Wisconsin paper which is understood to reflect your sentiments and opinions.

I am forced, then, to the conclusion—which, indeed, you do not deny—that Colonel Robinson is objectionable simply because he is a democrat. Of course, then, you would object to the appointment of any democrat, or, in fact, of any but a member of the republican party. It is therefore evident that an investigation of these charges conducted otherwise than by the agents of the Indian office would have a political aspect, and would be inefficient in ascertaining the truth. This last is the only matter of any importance in my eyes. If Agent Bonesteel or any of his subordinates have acted dishonestly; if they are guilty of official corruption, it concerns the honor of the service that the fact should be known, and the dishonest and corrupt officer punished. If, on the contrary, Agent Bonesteel is innocent of the charges, I cannot consent to be made the instrument of his disgrace. I must adhere, then, to the purpose expressed in my letter of the 6th instant, of confiding the investigation entirely to Mr. Pritchette.

In regard to the withdrawal of the application for an investigation of the charges, I can only say that if such charges had been preferred against an officer of this department by the humblest private citizen, I should feel constrained to investigate them unless they were retracted; and the distinguished position occupied by the gentlemen through whom the charges have reached this department but increases my obligations in the premises. Unless, therefore, you are prepared to withdraw the charges as being wholly unfounded, I shall feel it to be my duty to proceed with the investigation.

Let me add, in conclusion, that every opportunity will be afforded

the Indians of establishing the truth of the charges. They may produce witnesses, and be attended by counsel to cross-examine these, and see their testimony properly reduced to writing; and when the whole testimony is before me, I will then take the responsibility of deciding the issue.

The papers which accompanied your letter of the 16th ultimo are herewith returned.

With great respect, your obedient servant,

J. THOMPSON, *Secretary.*

Hons. CHARLES DURKEE, J. R. DOOLITTLE, JOHN F. POTTER, C. C. WASHBURN, *Washington, D. C.*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, March 10, 1860.

SIR: I hereby acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 9th instant, enclosing copies of your correspondence with Hon. C. Durkee and others.

When I was in Madison, very recently, I was informed by members of our legislature that a memorial had been hurried through both houses in one day, by a party vote, praying for an investigation of certain charges against Agent Bonesteel.

I could not ascertain that the memorial occasioned debate, or that the truth of the facts on which it was founded was definitely ascertained. The impression among well-informed men at Madison was, that this was a mere scheme of interested persons to excite the Indians, for selfish purposes.

Upon my return to this city, and upon being informed by you that the senators from my State and my colleagues in the House had assumed to make charges against Mr. Bonesteel without consultation with myself, and had further recommended to you Mr. Cyrus Woodman, the late law, banking, and business partner of Hon. C. C. Washburn, as a proper person to conduct the investigation, I became satisfied that it was intended to assume a very different character from that which appeared on its face. I objected to Mr. Woodman on this ground, and not for political reasons, for that gentleman is understood to be a democrat.

The selection by you of Colonel Robinson was most admirable, for no one in our State stands higher as a man of integrity and business capacity than himself; and I am sure no one could be selected in whom our entire people would have more confidence.

I wish to say, however, that I am entirely satisfied with your decision in this matter; but will add that, should you reconsider, it and conclude to associate some one with Mr. Pritchette, I have not the slightest objection to either of the gentlemen last named by my colleagues.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CHAS. H. LARRABEE.

Hon. JACOB THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Interior, Washington.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office Indian Affairs, March 13, 1860.

GENTLEMEN: Upon the receipt of your communication in reference to charges against the official character of Agent A. D. Bonesteel, this office appointed, with the approbation of the Secretary of the Interior, K. Pritchette, esq., a special agent to investigate said charges, as well as any other which may be laid before him affecting the official integrity of the agent.

Mr. Pritchette is now ready to proceed to Wisconsin in the discharge of the duties assigned him, and would have started at an earlier period, but has been detained in consequence of the correspondence that has been going on between the department and yourselves.

In order that a full and fair investigation may be had, I would respectfully request that you address some competent and proper person residing in the vicinity of Indians, requesting him to afford Special Agent Pritchette all the facilities in his power with a view to hasten as much as possible the examination.

You are also authorized to say to such person as you may thus address, that if he desires to do so he will be permitted to be present during the examination and cross-examine the witnesses on the part of the Indians.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. B. GREENWOOD,
Commissioner.

Hons. C. DURKEE, J. R. DOOLITTLE, JOHN F. POITER, and C. C. WASHBURN, *Washington, D. C.*