"Address of Col. R. Mckee."
Sacramento Daily Union, January 27, 1852: p. 2, col. 4.

ADDRESS OF COL. R. McKEE, Indian Commissioner.

The Standing Committees on Indian Affairs of the two Houses held a meeting in the Assembly Chamber on Saturday evening. Quite a large number of persons were in attendance, including the Governor and several leading members of the Legislature, it having been announced that Col. Redick McKee, Indian Commissioner of the United States, would address the Committees.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Lyons, of Nevada, and, at his request, Gen. Estill briefly stated the object for which the Committees had assembled, to hear from the Commissioner an exposition of the policy of the General Government in reference to the colonization of the Indian Tribes of California, and a brief history of the proceedings of the Indian Commissioners since their arrival. Gen. E. then introduced Col. McKee to the meeting. That distinguished gentleman immediately commenced his address:

In presenting the statement which he proposed to make before the Committees, at the request of the presiding officers of the Senate and Assembly, Mr. McKee remarked that he saw around him many others who doubtless felt an interest in the important subject which he had come here to discuss. He tendered his acknowledgments to the Committees for the kindness they had evinced, both in inviting him to address them, and in attending here to listen to his remarks. He also bespoke their indulgence for any errors or omissions which might occur. The limits of a short address rendered brevity indispensable, and would allow him time merely to glance at the more prominent topics. He made no pretensions to oratorical display. He was not a politician in the popular sense of that term. His habits of life, for more than a quarter of a century,—he might say his *ambition*,—had led him to seek distinction in very different pursuits, in the more quiet and pacific employments of commerce. These, in their nature,

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different pursuits, in the more quiet and pacific employments of commerce. These, in their nature, rather disqualified than fitted a man to shine on the rostrum. The Committees would therefore expec nothing from him but a plain and true statement of the proceedings of the Indian Commissioners, Col. Barbour, Dr. Wozencraft and himself, while they acted as a joint board, and his own subsequently. He had the more readily embraced this opportunity of presenting to the intelligent Committees of the Senate and Assembly, a correct account of the proceedings of the Commissioners, because his own acts as well as the acts of his colleagues had been a standing theme of coarse criticism and misrepresentation, in the columns of a newspaper published in this city,—a paper claiming to be the exponent of the principles and policy of the great Democratic party. He referred to the paper (The Times and Transcript) whose character was so vividly illustrated by Mr. Ellis, of Nevada, during a late debate in the House. So far as the base calumnies uttered by this paper concerned himself, he (Mr. McK.) cared nothing for them. They could not injure him; his acts, as a Commissioner of the Government, would, he trusted, be entirely vindicated by the beneficent results which he believed would proceed from them.

The Indian races once occupied and owned this entire land; they were the monarchs that ruled from the frozen North to the sunny South—from the eastern Sierras to the mighty Pacific on the west. When California was admitted into the American Union, one of the first duties of the General Government was to establish a system of government for these once powerful and still numerous tribes. A law was accordingly passed by Congress, under which three Indian Commissioners were promptly appointed. The Government, in sending them forward to the Pacific, gave them no definite instructions. In discharging the great duty allotted to them, they were directed to follow up such a system of conduct, as upon their arrival here, their own judgment might dictate as wise and proper. In preparing for the work, the Commissioners brought with them, and carefully studied the system of policy hitherto pursued by the Government in its negotiations with the Indians of the Southwestern States; they found that system inapplicable here, and they came to the conclusion to adopt a different one. Upon this subject, the Commissioners had many anxious consultations, and the result was they determined that the old system of negotiating the

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policy hitherto pursued by the Government in its negotiations with the Indians of the Southwestern States; they found that system inapplicable here, and they came to the conclusion to adopt a different one. Upon this subject, the Commissioners had many anxious consultations, and the result was they determined that the old system of purchasing the lands of the Indians for a money consideration, was out of the question, and an entirely different one was adopted.

When the Commissioners arrived in this country, they found it in a state of war: he (Mr. McK.) would not undertake to say how far speculative or selfish influences entered into the origin of that war, or those gotten up since, at such great expense to the State; but the Commissioners found every thing operating to the prejudice of the great interests of peace which they had come here to promote. They however were not to be discouraged by the obstacles which they clearly saw opposed to a successful accomplishment of the great mission confided to them; they settled down upon a plan, and by a temperate, cautious and conciliatory system of policy, they finally succeeded in getting the ear of the chief of one of the large tribes along the foot hills of the Sierra Nevada. Their interviews with this chief led, after some delays and many negotiations, to a termination of hostilities in that quarter. The first treaty made by the Commissioners was at Camp Fremont, in March; the second was a covenant with twelve powerful tribes, on the San Joaquin in April. Explorations of the country, its vast extent, and a more familiar acquaintance with the habits and instincts of the savage tribes, finally induced the Commissioners to separate. They divided the country into three districts, the northern, middle and southern, and it was determined that one district should be allotted to each Commissioner. Under this arrangement, the southern district was assigned to Col. Barbour; the middle, to Dr. Wozencraft, and the northern to himself.

Mr. McKee next adverted to the character of the Indian reservations on the Fresno and San Joaquin rivers, and read a note addressed by himself to the editor of the Morning Post newspaper, in July 1851. This note presents a brief history of the operations of the Commissioners in that region; up to that time, they had concluded treaties of peace with

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Indian reservations on the Fresno and San Joaquin rivers, and read a note addressed by himself to the editor of the Morning Post newspaper, in July 1851. This note presents a brief history of the operations of the Commissioners in that region; up to that time, they had concluded treaties of peace with sixty-three tribes, numbering about 20,000.

As an act of justice to his absent colleagues, Mr. McK. then read an editorial article from the Alta California newspaper, containing a satisfactory narrative of the proceedings of Dr. Wozencraft, in concluding treaties with some of the Indians of the Sacramento Valley.

Complaints against the proceedings of the Commissioners had from time to time appeared in some of the partisan newspapers. They had been charged with the nefarious design of giving away all the good lands, and of conniving at schemes of speculation with the Indian traders. He (Mr. McK.) had paid no regard to these calumnious attacks; he had let them pass by as the idle wind. But his colleague Col. Barbour had felt them keenly.

Mr. McK. here read a note addressed by Col. Barbour to the Alta California newspaper, containing what appears to be a conclusive refutation of the statement referred to. The note also gives a detailed description of the boundaries of the Indian reservations in the San Joaquin and Tulare Valleys.

In indicating the policy by which the Commissioners had been guided in prosecuting their negotiations, the Commissioner proceeded to remark that on their arrival in the neighborhood of a treaty ground, their first course was to communicate with the whites in the vicinity, and to solicit their advice and co-operation. They had adopted this course because, in making reservations of lands for the Indians, they had desired, above all things, not to interfere with the claims of the white settler, and as far as possible select lands outside of the gold regions. The next point was to select a suitable tract as a home for the Indians. The idea of colonizing Indians and white men upon the same ground was a fallacy; it could not be accomplished, and the only way to avoid continual aggression, continual war, and continual bloodshed, was to remove the Indians

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terfere with the claims of the white settler, and as far as possible select lands outside of the gold regions. The next point was to select a suitable tract as a home for the Indians. The idea of colonizing Indians and white men upon the same ground was a fallacy; it could not be accomplished, and the only way to avoid continual aggression, continual war, and continual bloodshed, was to remove the Indians and settle them alone. It was with particular reference to this fact that the Commissioners had determined to colonize the Indians upon a number of reservations with white populations between and around them. Such a system of colonization would enable the whites to afford each other mutual support and protection, and prevent extensive combinations among the tribes.

But if the Indians could be gradually taught to love the arts of peace—if they could be persuaded to adopt the food, clothing, and working habits of the whites, as he felt confident they could—they would soon be able to support themselves; and they could, moreover, extend material assistance to the whites both in mining and agriculture. The most important element in the development of our immense mineral and agricultural wealth is labor;

when labor was cheapened; when the wages of labor were reduced to a better standard, we should not then see our rich fields lying idle, but by a combination of agriculture and mining, we should see wealth pouring into our coffers in exhaustless streams. He (Mr. McK.) had hoped for such a result, and he still hoped to see it accomplished. The whites, by adopting a conciliatory course towards the Indians might be able to obtain their labor in a few years, at wages which they could well afford to pay.

Whether all the reservations of Indian lands made by the Commissioners had been the most judicious that could have been secured, he (Mr. McK.) would not undertake to say; it was human to err; and in adjusting so many conflicting interests it was utterly impossible for the Commissioners to avoid encroaching, sometimes, upon the claims of white settlers. But this he would say—that they had acted in good faith, and with an earnest desire to discharge their duties as faithfully and speedily as possible. They had constantly remembered that their course would be scrutinized by Government, and that they must also answer at the bar of public opinion. While he did not vouch for the wisdom of every step they had taken, he insisted that they had not consulted their own convenience or profit, but what they conceived to be the best interests of the whites as well as the Indians. The Commissioner here uttered another withering rebuke to that portion of the public press which had assumed not only to know the thoughts and motives of his colleagues and himself, but had stigmatized those motives as corrupt and selfish.

The Commissioner next adverted to the general policy of the United States in regard to the extinguishment of Indian titles, and intimated that it was of the utmost importance to California that this policy should be carried out here to the letter.

Considering the small sum (only $50,000) appropriated by Congress to pay all the expenses—contingent and otherwise—of the mission, Mr. McK. submitted that a great deal had been effected, and if our people would hereafter practice kindness and forbearance in their intercourse with the Indians, he

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Considering the small sum (only $50,000) appropriated by Congress to pay all the expenses—contingent and otherwise—of the mission, Mr. McK. submitted that a great deal had been effected, and if our people would hereafter practice kindness and forbearance in their intercourse with the Indians, he thought the State need have no fears of a recurrence of hostilities. The Government would send them teachers to instruct them in the arts of civilization, under the direction of competent and faithful agents, and they would gradually acquire habits of peace and industry. Four or five of these teachers would be located upon each reservation, and he anticipated the most beneficial results would follow the introduction of such a system of education.

The Commissioner then proceeded to give the Committees a narrative of his campaign to the North, via Clear Lake and the Klamath, from which he has just returned.

In going north, the first Indian reservation he had made was the Valley of Clear Lake, a beautiful and fertile valley, shut out, or shut in, from all communication with the surrounding country by ranges of gigantic mountains. Its seclusion rendered it a most desirable spot for colonizing the Indians. His negotiations here had been eminently successful; he had succeeded in concluding treaties with all the tribes of Clear Lake. The next council held with the Indians was at or near the mouth of Eel River; being unable to procure a good interpreter, he did not execute a formal written treaty with the Indians there, but he had reserved for them a strip of land six or eight miles broad and fifteen or twenty miles long, situated near the False Cape Mendocino.—This reservation was the very best that he could make, taking into consideration the character of the surrounding country.

The next treaty was concluded at the mouth of Trinity River; here the Indians assumed a more bold and warlike appearance. The reservation made here as a home for the Indians commenced at a point six or eight miles above the mouth of Trinity River and extended up that river some eight or ten miles. It included the hunting and fishing grounds of the Indians. The Commissioner here illustrated most eloquently and vividly the powerful attachment of

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guilty) for every Indian who had suffered death at the hands of the pale faces. The Commissioner argued, therefore, that the man who would carelessly or maliciously kill an Indian, was guilty of a double murder.

In giving an estimate of the probable number of Indians in California, the Commissioner said his colleagues had placed the number at 200,000: his own opinion was that it would not exceed 75,000; it might possibly reach 100,000, but not more.

To illustrate the nature and extent of the reservations of land made for the Indians, the Commissioner observed that, estimating the State as containing 100 or 110 millions of acres, the white population at 200,000 and the Indian population at 100,000, what proportion of land ought to be given to the Indians? He thought that if California was divided into 1000 squares, and ten out of the 1000 allotted to the Indians, the original possessors of the whole, it would not be giving them too much. This he considered about the proportion in which the land had been divided between the Indians and the whites—990 squares will be relinquished to the latter, and ten only (or about one million of acres) reserved for the former. If time and experience should show that these reservations were too large or contained valuable minerals, then peaceful measures would be taken by the Government to confine them within more narrow limits, or remove them elsewhere. To do this the Government would have to purchase the land from the Indians again,—and this was the policy dictated by wisdom and past experience. Had it been carefully pursued before, the State would not now be burdened with the enormous debts which she has contracted in prosecuting fruitless hostilities against the Indians.

In conclusion, the Commissioner entreated the Legislative Committees to examine the subject calmly and candidly, to try in all their legislation to introduce and encourage habits of peace; and when more land shall be needed by the Whites, to invoke the strong arm of Government to come to their aid. The Commissioner concluded with an expression of thanks to the audience for the patience with which they had listened to his remarks, observing, at the same time, that it would give him pleasure to answer any question which might be asked him in regard to any matter connected with his duties, or the general subject.

Mr. McMeans, of the Assembly, enquired if the

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ing this reservation he had, as in every other case, acted with reference to the best interests of the government and the people: and it would be his pleasure and his duty to represent the facts to government in order to obtain some proper compensation to individuals. He had stated his views to the people, and to show the Committees with what cordiality they were responded to by those most interested, he here read several memorials addressed by parties interested to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at Washington, setting forth, in a respectful manner, the losses they had sustained, and asking government either to allow them to work their claims located within the reservations, or to pay them for the discovery, &c. Among other papers read was a letter addressed to Gen. Joseph Lane, by several gentlemen in Scott's Valley, expressive of their approbation of the course of the Commissioner, and asking him to try to get an appropriation from Congress to compensate them for giving up their claims.

The Klamath Valley and the neighboring region was, in the judgment of the Commissioner, one of the most important gold fields in California, and it would afford lucrative employment to gold diggers for centuries to come. Hence the importance of getting the Indians to relinquish their lands upon that river, and remove to Scott's Valley. To say that Indian reservations must be located where there was no gold was an absurdity, and to avoid interfering, sometimes, with the claims of miners, an utter impossibility. Persons, however, had complained, and others would complain. He anticipated that complaints would be made to the Legislature; but it was unavoidable. He submitted that it would be unjust to locate the Indians upon barren lands where they could not raise vegetables to subsist upon. The policy pursued by our people toward the Indians was, in the judgment of the Commissioner, exceedingly unfortunate. He said "our people," because, though he was now a Commissioner from the government at Washington, he intended to return to California with his family and make this country his future home. The policy referred to, had often inflicted heavy punishments upon the innocent; the law of retaliation was regarded by the Indians as all-important to them. It was a law always practiced by them most rigorously. The Commissioner here related two highly interesting incidents illustrative of the terrible manner in which the Indians had put this principle of retaliation in practice, and showed that they considered it an imperative duty to kill a white man, (whether innocent or

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and extended up that river some eight or ten miles. It included the hunting and fishing grounds of the Indians. The Commissioner here illustrated most eloquently and vividly the powerful attachment of these tribes to the homes and graves of their fathers, and he showed how impossible it was to induce them to leave places for which they cherished such deep and undying veneration. After the solemnization of the treaty with these tribes the Commissioner ascended the Klamath River about 120 miles, to Scott's Valley. He passed through a region whose mineral wealth, he predicted, would ultimately be found to surpass the almost fabulous wealth of the more central and southern portions of California. The land was, however, generally poorly adapted to farming purposes. Upon his arrival in Scott's Valley, he foresaw that a selection of suitable lands for a reservation would be a labor attended with great difficulty. In order to make such a reservation as would meet the approbation of the white settlers, and with a view to avoid, as far as it was in his power, any encroachments upon their claims, he took great pains to learn the character of the country, and made frequent and extended explorations of the interior. Desiring, also, the advice and co-operation of the most respectable American gentlemen residing in the neighborhood, he dispatched messengers to them, requesting them to come and confer with him upon the subject of a reservation. His wish was granted, and a number of gentlemen visited his camp. A consultation with them showed that a reservation of land could not be made without prejudice to the interests of the white settlers; if it was made in one place, it absorbed a quartz vein; if in another, it interfered with a water privilege, or a rich gulch, or an embryo ranch. In instituting inquiries for a more suitable location for the Indians, he heard finally of the existence of a valley in the vicinity of Shasta Valley, which it was suggested to him would answer. He immediately dispatched a commission, consisting of five gentlemen, with directions to visit and explore this valley, and learn if it was adapted for the purpose in view. The examination was made, the explorers returned, and made their report. The Commissioner here read a copy of this report, being a descriptive narrative of the country explored. It appeared from this report that the place was entirely unsuited to the purposes contemplated by the Commissioner; he had, therefore, no alternative but to select a reservation in the northern end of Scott's Valley, including the ancient Indian fishing ground in the Klamath river. In mak-

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In conclusion, the Commissioner entreated the Legislative Committees to examine the subject calmly and candidly, to try in all their legislation to introduce and encourage habits of peace; and when more land shall be needed by the Whites, to invoke the strong arm of Government to come to their aid. The Commissioner concluded with an expression of thanks to the audience for the patience with which they had listened to his remarks, observing, at the same time, that it would give him pleasure to answer any question which might be asked him in regard to any matter connected with his duties, or the general subject.

Mr. McMeans, of the Assembly, enquired if the Indians had a right to alienate their title to the lands reserved for them? The Commissioner replied in the negative, and stated that the fee simple to the

land was in the United States—the right to use and live upon it only being guaranteed to the Indians.

Gov. Bigler enquired whether these separate communities of Indians were to be controlled by the General Government or the State authorities? The Commissioner replied that they were fully amenable to the State authorities, the laws of the country where they resided being expressly placed by the treaties in the ascendant over them. The Commissioner then explained the principles and provisions of the treaties concluded with the tribes upon several points of interest, and closed with the remark that the resident Indian Agents, to be appointed by the U. S., would be the most proper medium of communication between the Whites and Indians, if difficulties should unfortunately arise.

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