

OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Northern District of California, March 8, 1864.*

SIR: Observing in yesterday's paper that an appropriation of \$20,000 is about being made to effect a treaty and purchase the lands of the Klamath Lake, Modoc, and Snake Indians, I thought it advisable to furnish the department with what present knowledge I possessed of the country and Indians. This I could not better do than by forwarding a copy of a letter sent several days since to Hon. John Conness, which copy is herewith enclosed. The Snake Indians, or Shoo-shon-as, are a very numerous tribe, and of rather roving proclivities, traversing from the southeastern portion of Oregon, a part of Washington Territory, Idaho Territory, Nevada, and Utah Territories. I have met them as far down as southwest of Salt Lake City. A treaty with them, as in fact with all other Indians whose country is not required for immediate settlements, should be only for their good behavior, and the right of way and grazing, &c. In any case the principle of presents and stipulations for purchase should be avoided, as the presents only tend to impress the Indians with a belief of their superior powers and our cowardice, and whenever they desire a new outfit they will make an outbreak, with a view to a new treaty and further presents. I speak thus from actual experience. As for the question of purchase, that idea is incited in the mind of the Indian by white men, who desire to speculate out of both Indians and the government. The instalments, when paid, are soon squandered to white men, who follow in the footsteps of the government agent with whiskey, tobacco, and trinkets, and the Indians, by it, find means to indulge their most pernicious habits.

The Indian, in his normal condition, has no knowledge or idea of proprietorship in the soil, and considers his right to consist in keeping others from occupying or owning in common with him any district of country if he has sufficient force to do so, and, further, to extend occasional levies on those surrounding him

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR. 267

The Snakes, being a very large tribe, go hither and yon as they please, and meet with no checks north until they come to the Blackfeet, or south until the Apache country. They have not been known to come west over the Nevada mountains on any of these warlike excursions, though I have seen and talked with Snake Indians that had been to the Pacific ocean.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. STEELE,

*Supt. Agt. Ind. Affairs, Northern Dist., California.*

Hon. WM. P. DOLE,  
*Commissioner, Washington, D. C.*