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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Office Indian Affairs, April 13, 1852.*

SIR: In answer to the resolution of the Senate of the 6th instant, in which you are required to inform that body—

“1. Whether the Indian commissioners or agents in the State of California, in their negotiations, have contracted any debts for which the government is liable—and if so, the amount thereof; and,

“2. Whether any drafts, drawn by said commissioners or agents, have been protested by the department—and if so, the amount,”—

I have the honor to transmit, herewith, copies of sundry communications from the Indian agents in California, from which it appears that they have contracted debts to the amount of \$716,394.79; also, copy of a communication from the late sub-agent, Johnston, showing that he, too, has con-

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tracted liabilities to a considerable extent. The precise amount is not given, but it is believed to be upwards of \$50,000, as I understand his drafts to near that amount have already been presented.

The whole amount of the appropriation for Indian purposes in California was placed in the hands of the agents, and they had no authority whatever for exceeding that amount in their negotiations. They allege, however, that the pressure of circumstances was such as to justify them in the course they have pursued. Upon the correctness of this allegation depends, I apprehend, the liability of the government to pay the debts they have contracted. To what extent it is correct the department has not the power to determine, nor has it the means of forming a satisfactory opinion. The question of the liability of the government to pay these debts must, necessarily, be decided by Congress; and, presuming that a thorough investigation into the whole matter would be required, I have heretofore recommended that an appropriation be made to meet the expenses of such investigation.

A large portion of the debts above referred to are in the form of drafts, drawn by the agents on the Secretary of the Interior; and, as they have not been presented to this office, I am not able to state the amount to which they have been protested.

In connexion with this subject I have the honor to transmit, herewith, copy of a communication, with accompanying papers, addressed to you by the Hon. Thomas H. Benton, and referred by you to this office.

It may also be proper to state that, in addition to the foregoing liabilities, a claim has been presented by Dr. W. M. Ryer, to the amount of \$13,402, for his services in vaccinating Indians in California, the particulars of which are set forth in papers, copies of which are herewith submitted.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

L. LEA, *Commissioner*.

To the SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

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