

No. 31.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OFFICE INDIAN AFFAIRS.

Washington, D. C., August 3, 1866.

SIR: By direction of the Hon. Secretary of the Interior, you have been appointed a special commissioner to make an investigation and report upon Indian affairs in California.

From the time the government first took charge of the Indians in California the management of affairs there has been unsatisfactory, and the great distance

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of that region from the seat of government renders it difficult to detect abuses, except from reports of some reliable person in whom the department reposes confidence.

Every superintendent, except the present one, has expended more money than has been appropriated, thus incurring a large indebtedness which there were no funds to meet, and bringing the credit of the department into disrepute. The present superintendent has been rigidly instructed upon this point. I have no reason to suppose that he is not strictly complying with the instructions given, but as it is a matter of great consequence you will make it a subject of inquiry.

Soon after Superintendent Wiley was superseded he transmitted to this office a list of outstanding liabilities, amounting to \$35,607 12. A small portion of this has been paid, but the residue remains unpaid, because there are no funds applicable to its payment. Behind this there is a very large indebtedness, some of it running back for 15 years.

I enclose a copy of the list submitted by late Superintendent Wiley, and desire that, so far as practicable, you will investigate and report upon the merits of each claim, giving your views as to the proper course to be pursued by this department in regard to the same.

The indebtedness incurred prior to this has been the subject of investigation by various parties heretofore. Although their reports are not satisfactory, your inquiries need not, except in a general way, extend to this matter. A thorough investigation of it would require vastly more time than will be at your disposal.

It is the policy of this department to make Indians self sustaining. Those in California have reservations that are represented as being very fertile, and producing abundant crops, and it is thought that with proper management and due economy the expense to the government of sustaining them would not be considerable; that nothing but clothing and agricultural implements need be purchased. It is certainly very strange that it should ever become necessary to incur an indebtedness in taking care of them; I therefore desire that you shall make this matter a subject of special inquiry, and also give your views as to what law can be enacted or what regulations established to secure to the Indians and the government the full benefits of the produce raised, and the funds arising from its sale.

There are at present four reservations authorized in California, the Hoopa Valley, Round Valley, and Smith River reservations, in the northern part of the State, and the Tuve River in the southern part.

It is thought to be advisable to decrease the number of reservations by placing the Indians in the northern part of the State on one reservation. The practicability of doing so will be an important matter for your examination, and will involve the following inquiries:

Which of the present reservations should be retained?

What will it cost, in the way of purchasing improvements of the settlers, to enlarge one of the present reservations to a sufficient size to support the Indians?

What can probably be realized from the sale of the reservation or reservations which may be vacated?

And any other matters which you may deem important in connection with the matter, such as the number of Indians at each reservation, the number not on any, their probable numbers in future, &c.

Your actual necessary expenses will be paid by the department, and you will take vouchers for the same in all cases when practicable; where it is not, you will keep an itemized account, to which you will be required to certify on honor.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant.

D. N. COOLEY,
Commissioner.

ROBT. J. STEVENS, Esq., *Present.*