366

S. Doc. 4.

Office Superintendent Indian Affairs, San Francisco, September 30, 1852.

Sin: I find agents Wozencraft and McKee are both under the impression that their board expenses, even while not travelling on the business of their agencies, will be allowed. They allege that it is impossible to live in this country without such allowance being made; but while my own experience fully confirms all they say on this subject, I cannot find any provision of law for the admission of their claims. I therefore shall be obliged to disallow that part of their accounts when they come before me, unless otherwise instructed by the department.

Adam Johnston, late Indian sub-agent, called on me a few days ago, with the verbal request that I would settle his accounts. It appears he was dismissed from the service in January, and has nevertheless failed since that time to forward his accounts for settlement. As the date of his dismissal was previous to my appointment, and the fault that his accounts remained unsettled his own, I certainly did not feel that he had any claim on me. I replied to him, however, that if he brought the subject before me in an official manner, I would give it my attention. I believe he has since sent them to Washington.

It was my desire that agent McKee should accompany the troops now moving against the northern Indians. I thought it of great importance that one of the agents should do so, as otherwise it would be impossible to keep the department properly informed in relation to our position here. With this view I addressed the commanding general a letter, asking that agent McKee might join the detachment then on its

way. Enclosed I send his reply.

For reasons which I will give hereafter, I do not feel authorized to employ agent Wozencraft on that service. I regret to say that the confident anticipations you indulged, that I would, on conference with the agents here, be placed in possession of much valuable information, was misplaced, as neither of them has been to the Indian country for some six months; and this is the more to be regretted, as during that time cattle to an enormous amount have been placed in the hands of traders for the Indians, and a temptation to all kinds of frauds held out to them by the prolonged absence of those whose duty it was to be vigilant in superintending these issues.

The excuse alleged for this neglect is want of funds with which to travel. I cannot but regret, that after having involved the government to a large amount to furnish these supplies, they should have felt themselves unauthorized in creating a small further liability, which would have enabled them, by personal observation, to see so much public

property properly disbursed.

The result of this is, if statements which are before me are to be credited, that government property, for which drafts have been given and various liabilities contracted, placed in the hands of irresponsible men, has been squandered in every direction but that in which it should have gone. The accompanying statements will show my meaning too clearly to need further explanation.

This matter raises also a nice point on which I wish to take the advice of the department, though I fear that long ere the advice comes it

will be too late to be followed with effect.

Scanned by KJD - 2009

S. Doc. 4.

367

It appears by the statement enclosed that the traders to whom the beef was furnished by Messrs. Wozencraft, Barbour, and McKee, have allowed it either to remain unissued to the present time, or in some cases to escape in large droves. Now if I send and collect them, there will be altogether nearly a thousand head of cattle for which drafts on the government have been given, or liabilities contracted; but as the department does not recognise the transactions of these gentlemen, and has protested the drafts, if I take the cattle I place the government under some additional obligation to pay the contractors, and may, by that means, put myself in the same position as those gentlemen now are. On the other hand, if I do not collect them, and the government should

On the other hand, if I do not collect them, and the government should at any subsequent period conclude to pay these drafts, it will be the loser to the amount of this one thousand head of cattle, which in the mean time will have passed entirely out of the reach of the agents of the department. And again, there being no appropriation to meet such contingent expenses as would be incurred, I have not the power, even if I were clear as to the right, to collect these cattle. It was in anticipation of many such unforeseen cases that I made an estimate of contingent expenses large enough to make this office properly efficient; but as Congress has thought fit to strike out that estimate, the country must suffer by their economy.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. F. BEALE, Superintendent Indian Affairs.

Hon. Luke Lea,

Commissioner Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

Scanned by KJD - 2009 2 of 2