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No. 97.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, *October 2, 1853.*

DEAR SIR: In the multiplicity of other engagements I have had some difficulty in finding a moment to respond to your letter of the 27th ultimo in relation to Indian reservations in California.

I should regret very much to find that you were unable to execute the act of Congress passed on the 3d March last. The plan contemplated by that law is in my opinion the only practicable one for preserving the Indians of this State from destruction. Unless they can be gathered together, and placed under military protection, we shall have a bloody war, which will result in the extermination of the race. The Indians should be withdrawn as much as possible from the white population, and taught to rely upon their own labor and industry for their support. The supplies which nature has heretofore furnished them will soon be cut off, and an attempt to sustain them otherwise than through their own labor would be impolitic.

It is well known to you that whilst the plan you are endeavoring to carry out received my warm support, yet I was utterly opposed to making the reservations as large as they are now authorized by law. Whilst we have some of the richest agricultural lands in the Union, the fact cannot be disguised that we have a large body of land in this State which cannot be cultivated. The greater portion of our population are engaged in commerce and mining. They are consumers, and in order to feed them all of our agricultural lands should be put under cultivation. We should not depend upon other States or foreign countries for our breadstuffs. If five reservations are made in this State,

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and to the extent authorized by law, great injustice will be done to our citizens; withhold, for the use of the Indians, 125,000 acres of agricultural land, and a serious blow will be struck at the farming interests of this State. Such a policy would be unwise in every particular; no reservation, in my judgment should be made containing more than 8,000 acres. In each of them you could readily find a sufficient quantity of land susceptible of cultivation to produce enough to sustain 5,000 Indians; and this, I apprehended, will bear as many as you can assemble or settle upon any one of your reservations.

In regard to the difficulty to which you refer I can only say, that if you find a sufficient quantity of land at any point desired which is unoccupied, although persons might claim it under Mexican grants, I would not hesitate to take it. If the grant is in the end sustained by the courts, the government, having taken private property for public use, will have to make compensation therefor. When there are only a few settlers upon lands which you may desire to reserve for the Indians, the better plan will be to make contracts for the improvements, subject of course to the confirmation of the department or Congress.

These reservations should be made so as interfere as little as possible with the settlements which have been made by our people.

Sincerely hoping that you may succeed in all your efforts to ameliorate the condition of our Indians,

I am, very respectfully, &c.,

JOHN B. WELLER.

E. F. BEALE, Esq., *Supt Indian Affairs.*

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