
NEW YORK, November 9, 1850.

SIR: I have the honor to report that my purchases of Indian goods, for presents, &c., in California, amount to some \$6,500. About one quarter of these I propose taking with me over the isthmus, sending the rest round the Horn in a fine Baltimore-built brig, to sail in 8 or 10 days. I should take the whole with me, as a matter of choice; but the lowest offer I have had for transportation is fifty cents per pound, which I deem exorbitant. The goods I take with me, in the steamer "Georgia," to Chagres, I will re-ship myself, and thus save considerable expense. Having no instructions from the department in relation to these matters, I have acted just as if all were my own. To the cost of the goods I have added 10 per cent., and taken insurance in an office recommended by Messrs. Grant & Barton.

In view of the very limited appropriation under which we go out, I have confined my purchases to a few limited articles most likely to be immediately useful to the Indians—as 2½ and 3 point blankets, red flannel shirts, sashes, calicoes, shawls, &c. From information received here, I think it probable we shall find it necessary to purchase provisions to a considerable amount after we get into the country, to aid in the subsistence of some of the tribes driven out of the valleys by the whites. To avoid starvation the Indians will continue their predatory incursions, unless some provision be made to subsist them, at least in part; and this, in the end, may be the cheapest way to protect the lives and property of our own people.

After paying for our goods and appropriating \$2,000 each to the commissioners for the use of their families, and some \$2,500 for travelling expenses and freights, I shall have left only some \$10,000 for our operations in California. You will at once perceive the utter inadequacy of the means at our disposal; and, at your earliest convenience, send us—in drafts on San Francisco, if to be had—such additional sum as Congress may deem expedient to appropriate. Ignorant, as I am, of the expenses we shall have to incur in travelling, for the pay of interpreters, a secretary, commissary, &c., &c., I cannot even venture an estimate of the proper amount to ask for; but as, from all accounts, *every expense* is two or three times greater there than in this country, and many more goods will probably be wanted, I shall deem an appropriation of one hundred or one hundred and fifty thousand dollars quite small enough for our proposed operations.

Allow me here to suggest that a special and more liberal provision should be made by law for the salaries and travelling expenses of commissioners and agents, and for the payment of interpreters, &c., in California; or it may be difficult, and even impossible, to obtain good

men to perform the service. By the present law the pay of commissioners is \$8 per day; interpreters, \$4; secretary, \$5; mileage, I believe, 10 cents. In the old States these rates do well enough; but in *California* a very different state of things exists. I am informed that a good interpreter will expect at least what he could make at ordinary work—say, half to one ounce per day; and that to a secretary we shall have to pay about the same wages as clerks get in the custom-house or stores—say, \$300 to \$400 per month. It will be our constant object and aim to economize, as far as possible, in all our expenditures; but the customs of the country cannot be remodelled in a day. Special legislation will, I apprehend, be indispensable in relation to all the public servants in *California*. There is another matter which, as I am writing on this subject, though personal to myself, I will mention here: it is, a fair and liberal commission to the agent charged with the care and disbursement of the public money.

Just before I left the West for this city, I wrote to the acting secretary of your office for a requisition on the proper officer in this city for personal arms and medicines, and for the laws of the United States, treaties, &c., from the State Department, and as yet I have no replies. The *Georgia* is to sail on Monday, the 11th instant, at 3 p. m. Until further advised, please address any communication for myself, or colleagues, to care of the collector of the port, San Francisco.

In acknowledging the receipt of this, you will oblige by enclosing copies of my previous letters to your office.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. McKEE.

Hon. LUKE LEA,

Commissioner Indian Affairs, Washington City.
