

California 1859  
J. P. P. Perry  
San Francisco Jan 1859

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Reports in relation  
to the present condi-  
tion of Indian Affairs  
in California

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J. P.

Letter  
from  
J. Ross Brown  
in relation to the  
Present Condition of Indian Affairs  
in  
California.

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San Francisco, Cal.

Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> 1859.

Hon. J. N. Dever,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs,

Sir:

Since the receipt of the recent orders from your Department, reducing the expenses of the Indian service in this State, repeated applications have been made to me by the Superintendent and Agents for advice and assistance in the premises, although it is well known that under your instructions I have no authority to interfere in the administration of the affairs of this Superintendency.

A brief statement of the difficulties at present existing in the service will enable you to adopt some suitable remedy, and relieve me from a very embarrassing position, without powers of any kind and yet solicitors of maintaining the public interest.

The order requiring an immediate reduction of the number of employes on the different reservations was, as I am informed by the Superintendent, promptly carried into effect. It is represented, however, that there is an arrearage of pay for the last two quarters due to each person

(2)

discharged, and that a large proportion of the force so discharged are wholly without means to leave the reservations, and in debt to the neighboring store-keepers. No funds to pay these arrearages have been received, and it is not known how soon the payments can be made. In all cases where the appointments have been sanctioned by the Department, and where service is supposed to have been actually rendered, as in the case of regular employes, it would seem but just and reasonable that their discharge should be accompanied by the prompt payment of their wages.

The Agents complain that they cannot, in justice, drive these men away from the reservations - that many of them are really unable to seek employment elsewhere without some ready means, that such a proceeding would engender great difficulty and probable retaliation against the action of the Department by creating desertion and disaffection among the Indians.

As it is presumed that the charges brought by me, showing the inefficiency of this force, had some influence in procuring its reduction, I am now requested to exonerate the Agents from any blame in taking care of <sup>discharged employes</sup> them until their wages are paid. This, as you must perceive, is a question of some difficulty - it being manifestly

3

unjust to remove them forcibly without payment, and equally improper to keep a large number of idlers on the reservations at public expense.

Another subject of difficulty has recently been presented in the case of the Humboldt prisoners taken by Genl. Kibbe. The Department will remember that several months ago, I forwarded the printed proceedings of a public meeting at Humboldt, calling for the intervention of the Federal and State military authorities to protect the citizens of that region from the depredations of hostile Indians in the vicinity. In compliance with the call of the citizens, Governor Weller ordered out some of the State militia, under Genl. Kibbe, who has been for the past three months scouring the country with the forces under his command, attacking and routing the Indians wherever he met them. After several engagements, in which it is said he killed about forty Indians, he succeeded in capturing between a hundred & fifty and two hundred of the disaffected warriors, and marched them down to Humboldt, with a view of turning them over to the Superintendent, for safe keeping on some of the reservations. Here again was another difficulty. They could not be detained at the Klamath, because it is in the vicinity of their customary haunts to which they would soon

escape and thus renew all the troubles of the past few months. Some Lachee and Some Cult could not be reached conveniently at this season by so large a body; and Mendocino seemed the only available point. The citizens of Humboldt had repeatedly avowed their intention to exterminate them if ever they were let loose upon them again.

The force of employes at Mendocino had been reduced to four men, which would be amply sufficient with partially domesticated tribes, but might find some difficulty in controlling and keeping within bounds a hundred or fifty or two hundred perfectly wild and hostile savages.

Under these circumstances, Superintendent Newley and Genl. Kibbe called upon me for advice and assistance in the premises. The former stated that he ~~would do so~~ <sup>was averse to taking any action</sup> without a recommendation from me sustaining him, and the latter stated that in turning these Indians over to the Superintending his duties must cease. I thought it best, in view of all the difficulties of the case, to call upon Genl. Clarke and ask him to send up to Mendocino a small military force to aid the reduced force of employes in maintaining peace, which would relieve the Superintendent of the necessity of disobeying orders by enlarging the force. It was necessary also to provide some means of conveyance

for the prisoners from Humboldt Bay to Mendocino, and temporary provision for their subsistence whilst they might be compelled to remain there. Upon consultation with the Superintendent, I could see no other way of accomplishing the object than to charter a small vessel to take them down, and to ship up a sufficient quantity of beans to meet their present necessities. The cost of transportation will be about \$1,200 and the beans purchased will amount to about \$800. This was accordingly done by the Superintendent, and Carl Kibbe has gone up to Humboldt to pick up the Indians and put them on board. Genl. Clark has ordered up the small military force asked for, and the provisions have been shipped. The necessity for the latter shipment has been sufficiently explained in my various reports relative to Mendocino.

I trust the advice given under these circumstances with the full understanding that it was entirely unofficial and without authority, will meet your approval.

The next serious difficulty to which I would invite your attention is that existing at the Fresno in the San Joaquin Valley. During several years past, as the Department is aware, two Indian farms have been conducted by Sub Agents in the San Joaquin Valley - one at the Fresno under M. B. Lewis, and the other at King's

6  
River in charge of Mr Campbell.

The results at both of these places, as shown by me in official reports dating as far back as 1856, have been a continued and almost entire failure of crops - especially at the Greens - and an absolute waste of public money, without the least practical benefit to the Indians in that vicinity. So far from any encouragement being given to them to come on these farms and work, they have been kept away by positive orders, on the plea that there was nothing there upon which to feed them; and during my last visit to the Greens (a few months since) Judge Lewis alleged as a reason for the informality of certain vouchers for articles purchased at Roane's Store, 30 miles distant in the mountains, and at Fort Miller 16 miles distant - all of which were certified to in the Abstracts of Issues as having been delivered on the Reservation - that he was forced to let the Indians get the articles there upon written orders, sent up by the Chiefs, in order to prevent them from coming upon the Reservation, where he had nothing to give them. Considering the amount of money expended at these points, and the entire absence of any beneficial results, the citizens of Kings River, who are mostly small rancheros and farmers, after repeated remonstrances,



7  
against the petty depredations committed upon their property, by the Indians who were constantly lurking about their places, assembled in a body about a month ago, gathered up a hundred & fifty of these destitute Indians, and took them to the Osage, where they delivered them over to Judge Lewis, against his protest that they must starve. The last news received from that point is, that there has been extreme suffering among them; that several, driven to the utmost extremity by the pangs of starvation, wandered out upon the plains and perished from hunger and cold.

These facts are well established, and the Department must perceive that they present a most pitiable condition of affairs. If, instead of the large and useless expenditure of means devoted to the payment of white employes at the places referred to, direct purchases of clothing and provisions had been made, or a better location chosen for a farm, where some return in the way of crops could have been obtained, much of this suffering might have been avoided. The facts are submitted for your consideration; but as everything now seems to be in an unsettled condition, & far as the future policy of the Department is concerned, I am unable to suggest a remedy.

Besides these isolated cases, there is much

that requires prompt attention at various other points. What is to be done with the Indians at Hoopa Valley? What is to become of the Col River Indians? I would suggest that some speedy action is absolutely necessary. A proper understanding should be had with all these Indians.

The policy of the Department, as laid down by the Secretary of the Interior and <sup>late</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Mr. Mix) can be carried into effect; but it can only be done by a hearty co-operation in the views expressed, and unremitting zeal and energy on the part of the officers charged with its <sup>execution</sup> administration.

A thorough investigation of existing liabilities for goods, <sup>provisions</sup> ~~cattle~~ and other supplies, should at once be made, and the indebtedness of the Department promptly discharged, so that the new organization of affairs can be put into immediate and successful operation.

If the Department should deem it expedient to favor me with instructions on this or any other subject connected with the service, under its present exigencies, I shall, with great pleasure, carry them into effect.

Very respectfully  
Yours Obedt Servt.

J. Ross Brown  
Special Agt Treasry Dept.