
CAMP MORRIS, SACRAMENTO VALLEY,
July 12, 1851.

SIR: Your communication, informing the joint board that their commissions as commissioners were abrogated by a late act of Congress, and instructing us to continue our negotiations with the Indians, and assume our duties as agents, has been duly received; as also one of a subsequent date, requesting the joint board to accompany the troops that may go out against the Indians.

Since my communication of the 25th May, I have spent my time in attempting to conciliate and pacify the Indians in El Dorado county.

The State having sent out troops against the Indians, after having several engagements they finally left them in the same position they found them, convinced of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of destroying or subduing them. They then went into a rancheria occupied by those who had been *known* to be friendly to the whites, and captured several as prisoners. Soon after the troops were disbanded, and the war declared happily terminated.

I have been informed that on former occasions those Indians who had been at peace with the whites have been cruelly persecuted by those who either killed or abused their men without assigning a cause therefor, all of which has been very unfortunate, making it difficult for me to have an interview with or conciliate them. When I am favored with a talk, they have but little confidence in my promises when they witness so many acts proving the reverse of my statements, that the white man is the true friend of the Indian.

I have, however, made preliminary arrangements by which I expect to consummate a treaty with them. This will take time, as it can only be done after inspiring them with confidence. In order to effect this, I have licensed traders who have sufficient influence with them to conduct their trade and disseminate the friendly talk; have sent men among them who speak their language, and are influential, and placed beef cattle under the care of the traders, in order to supply their pressing

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necessities for food, and to induce them to come down from out of their mountain fastnesses; all of which it is to be hoped will have the desired effect of causing them to come in and conclude a treaty.

I speak of this as the only true policy. Further experience only confirms previous statements, that the Indians are numerous and formidable, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to subdue them by waging a war; it is possible to make terms with them by exercising a proper and humane policy, making them not only useful to themselves, but to the white community at large.

In order to accomplish this, there should be an efficient government force stationed at convenient points, so as to protect both parties, and aid in enforcing the laws. In relation to the latter I have caused to be published a communication relating thereto, as it is one fruitful in evil, and should be suppressed, if we desire an influence over the Indians.

Unless the laws and regulations of the department are enforced here, no attempt at conciliation can succeed.

The section of country in which I am now laboring, and in which so many obstacles have presented themselves in attempting to consummate a treaty, is that in which the discovery of gold was first made, in or near the south fork of the American river, extending to the Yuba on the north, the Sierra Nevada on the east, and the Mocalumne river on the south, embracing an area of country of say ninety miles square, within which there are, so far as can be ascertained, some forty thousand Indians: one fourth or one third that number are disposed to be friendly, and have more or less intercourse with the whites, and express great satisfaction after being told that it is the intention of the government to set apart lands for their use and assist and teach them to live like the whites.

Mr. Norris and others, who have been living here for many years, and who have had intimate communication with them, say that there have been at least eighty thousand Indians within a few years past within the above limits, and think that my estimate is too low. They have diminished very rapidly of late, the mortality having been great among them. The Indians themselves attribute it to the fact of putting on the clothing of the white man; and I have no doubt but this is one cause, as they are much more healthy in their nude condition.

O.M. Wozencraft to L. Lea, July 12, 1851, Sen. Ex. Docs., 33 Cong., Spec. Sess., Doc. 4, 112-117 (688).

The cholera has carried off a great many, as well as other diseases which have prevailed among them, and they are disappearing from the whites by going up into the wilds of the mountains.

As previously stated, they have learned to distrust the white man; and it would appear that the difficulty of treating with them is in due ratio to the comparative length of time that the whites have been among them.

The friendly relationship which so happily existed at first has been broken, and the Indians are on the move east, going up into the mountains, where they can carry on a war of retaliation, making it unsafe for the whites to go out with a view of further exploration; and, as before stated, it will be difficult to dislodge or subdue them; but by having the laws enforced against all aggressors, and making provision

for them, they can be brought in at a trifling cost in comparison to the expenses of a war.

I have had couriers sent out in different directions, requesting the headmen of the different tribes to meet me at this place, with some of whom I have had an interview, agreeing with them to meet at a point near the Yuba river, in the mountains, where I feel sanguine of collecting some thousand and concluding a treaty; from thence will proceed on as rapidly at possible, visiting, conciliating, and treating with them, as the disaffections and difficulties are increasing daily—consequently it is all-important this be done soon; yet, owing to the many difficulties presented from various causes and quarters—the want of funds leading to a want of confidence with the Indians in the fulfilment of stipulations and making them presents—owing to the *success* of those Indians who are in open hostility with the whites, and the distrust of those disposed to be friendly, it is difficult to assemble them: the first will defy me, and the latter deny me by keeping out of the way. Another difficulty here is owing to the peculiar organization, or, more properly speaking, the want of organization among these Indians, they having no influential chiefs who can control them. They are in small bands; consequently it is difficult to get them to act in concert even in one band, and much more so with different tribes, as they are generally at war with one another—therefore very distrustful when it is attempted to bring them together; and I have reason to believe, nay I am satisfied, there are some white persons who, through selfish motives, dissuade them from coming in to meet me. Owing, as above stated, to all these difficulties, my progress has been slow; but be assured that it is to be attributed to the foregoing causes, and not to a want of untiring exertion on my part, as I have the work at heart, and will leave nothing undone which may be within the compass of my ability; and I am yet confident in the belief that the most sanguine hopes may and will be realized in pacifying the Indians, and ameliorating the unfortunate state of affairs existing between them and the whites.

By the first proximo I will make up the quarterly returns—it will then have been three months from the time of our separation as a joint board—and thereafter monthly statements, if it be possible to do so.

The commander of the Pacific department has very kindly ordered out twenty-five mounted men, under command of Captain Stoneman, to act as escort, affording me ample protection when required; and at the same time they are enabled to move with rapid celerity, in comparison with larger trains. Additional force, however, has been placed under orders, to be used should it be deemed expedient.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

O. M. WOZENCRAFT,
United States Indian Agent.

HON. LUKE LEA,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

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To the people living and trading among the Indians in the State of California.

From information received, as well as from personal observation while travelling among the Indians, and in conformity with the requests made me by the inhabitants, more particularly the miners, in sections of country occupied by Indians, it is deemed expedient to publish a communication advisory of the proper policy to be pursued towards the Indians, and the laws in relation thereto, that none may hereafter plead ignorance of the existence of said laws, and to inform them that those laws will be *enforced* in all and every instance on those who may become amenable to them.

It would appear that most of the difficulties that unfortunately have occurred between the whites and red men have been owing to an improper and short-sighted policy, or rather a want of true policy, with these children of the forest. Since the discovery of gold in this region, the section of country that was and is peculiarly the home of the Indians has been found rich in the precious metal, and consequently filled with a population *foreign* to them; and this has been done in most instances without attempting to conciliate or appease them in their *grief* and *anger* at the loss of their homes. I am sorry to say, that in many instances they have been treated in a manner that, were it recorded, would blot the darkest page of history that has yet been penned. Had they even been *foreign* convicts, possessing, as they do, a full knowledge of the evils of crime and the penalties therefor, and received the punishment that has been dealt to these poor ignorant creatures, this enlightened community would have raised a remonstrative voice that would have rebuked the aggressor, and caused him to go beyond the pale of civilized man.

Indians have been shot down without evidence of their having committed an offence, and without even any explanation to them of the nature of our laws; they have been killed for practising that which they, like the Spartans, deemed a virtue; they have been rudely driven from their homes, and expatriated from their *sacred grounds*, the grounds where the ashes of their parents, ancestors, and beloved chiefs, repose. The reverential and superstitious feeling of the Indians for the dead, and for the ground where they were deposited, is more powerful than that of any other people.

This is not only inhuman and unlawful, but it is bad policy. The Indians of the Pacific are not unlike this great ocean in that respect—they are pacific, and very *tractable*. We should adopt a policy towards them dictated by feelings of mercy, making due allowance for their ignorance of our habits and institutions, and bearing in mind that their habits and customs are very different from ours; treating them kindly, and with a firm perseverance teaching them the requirements of our laws; permitting them to remain among us; teaching them industrious habits; making them useful members of the community, instead of the most dangerous and implacable enemies.

In addition to the foregoing direct atrocious outrages so frequently perpetrated on the Indians by those claiming to be *civilized* men, there are those who *indirectly* caused as much mischief, endangering the lives

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a subsequent act of Congress, imprisonment for a term of two years is also imposed upon all offenders."

It is also provided, that in all prosecutions for the offences mentioned in the first of the foregoing heads, "Indians shall be competent witnesses."

In relation to the proper policy to be pursued towards those Indians who are provided with fire-arms, I would suggest that they be disarmed, but not in the manner advocated by some, who would either shoot them or violently wrest their arms from them. It would be well to consider, first, that they *bought* those arms from the white man, and we would wish to teach them that the acts of the white man are good, and we would teach them to imitate them; and it is not correct for them to infer, that because one or more white men act badly, the balance are necessarily so.

The proper policy would be to require of those Indians who may be found with arms in their hands, to inform on those from whom they were purchased, taking him or them before the culpable trader, demanding a return of the amount paid by the Indian, and making him feel the consequences of his derelictions.

O. M. WOZENCRAFT,
U. S. Indian Agent for Middle District.
