

**TENTH ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE BOARD OF  
INDIAN COMMISSIONERS  
FOR THE YEAR 1878**

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Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners for the Year 1878 by Various

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1879.

REPORT  
OF  
THE BOARD OF INDIAN COMMISSIONERS.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., *January 15, 1879.*

SIR: The Board of Indian Commissioners appointed by the President, under the act of Congress approved April 10, 1869, to co-operate with the Administration in the management of Indian affairs, respectfully submit their Tenth Annual Report.

MEETINGS.

Four meetings of the Board have been held during the year: one in New York, to advise and assist the Commissioner in the annual opening of bids and letting of contracts for Indian supplies; and three in this city, for consultation with the executive officers of the government and with representatives of religious societies upon the condition of the several Indian tribes, and the best methods of supplying their wants and promoting their welfare.

Entire harmony has continued between the Board and the Interior Department, and their efforts have been encouraged by the cordial support of the President.

CHANGES.

Hon. E. N. Stebbins, of New Jersey, sent to the President his resignation as a member of the Board on the 25 of March, and Hon. Charles Tuttle, of New York, was appointed May 16, to fill the vacancy. No other changes have been made during the year.

VISITS TO AGENCIES.

At the meeting of the Board held in New York June 19 last, it was—*Resolved*, That it is the judgment of the Board that as many of its members as possible should visit the different agencies during the present year, and that they confer with our chairman as to the times and places of such visitation.

In accordance with this resolution, the chairman and the assistant secretary visited the two agencies in the State of Wisconsin; Commissioners Fisk and Stickney visited the Utes in Colorado, returning by the Indian Territory; Commissioner Lyon went to the Pacific coast, and supervised the letting of contracts at San Francisco; and Commissioner Kingsley, in company with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, visited several agencies in the Indian Territory. Thus more time than in the previous year has been given by the Board to personal inspection of the condition and progress of the Indian tribes.

The reports of these delegations will be found in the Appendix.

## THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The examination of accounts and expenditures for the Indian service, as required by act of Congress approved March, 1871, has been continued by the executive committee, whose report is appended. The total number of accounts examined and acted upon during the year is 3,085, covering disbursements and transfers of funds amounting to \$446,109.30. The committee have also copied and approved 341 contracts for supplies.

## THE PURCHASING COMMITTEE.

Much time has been given by this committee to the purchase and inspection of goods and supplies, and their report, which will be found in the Appendix, exhibits the method pursued in awarding contracts, and the care taken "to secure the best values offered, a faithful delivery of identical value by the contracting party, a careful distribution to the several agencies, and safe transport thither." We are confident that the precaution and vigilance thus exercised have secured for the benefit of the Indians the appropriations made by Congress for their support.

## INDIAN AGENTS.

It has long been the custom to condemn Indian agents. Allegations of fraud and speculation and villainy of every kind have been so often made and reiterated that in the public estimation the term Indian agent and rascal seem to be almost synonymous. If trouble arises anywhere, or an outbreak occurs, the agent must have been the cause. No matter what a man's character and position may be, no sooner is he appointed an Indian agent than he becomes the target at which are aimed all the weapons of the press and the rostrum. An officer of high rank in the Army, in a recent official report, says:

The average Indian agent, intent upon the spiritual welfare of the red man, desirous of elevating his soul, and achieving what has never yet been reached in a single generation—making a civilized man of him—but too frequently neglects his bodily wants, and while the agent is preparing him for heaven, as he thinks, is actually making a hell for him upon earth, by leaving him unclothed and unfed, whilst but too frequently the price of his clothing and food is put into the agent's pocket.

In a volume entitled "The Plains of the Great West," by Lieut. Col. Richard Irving Dodge, published in 1877, we read on page 46, introduction, as follows:

Congress honestly grants the appropriations due to the Indians, but as a rule not more than from 5 to 20 per cent. of the actual amount due ever reaches these unfortunate wards of the government. Usually the actual amount received by the Indians approximates more closely to the smaller than the larger percentage I have named.

And again, on page 433:

The amount of money appropriated by Congress is ample for the support and comfort of the Indians, provided they get it or its equivalent. But they do not get it; cheated in quantity and quality of rations and goods, cheated in transportation, the appropriations burdened by expenses of numerous commissions, of deputations of a favored few Indians to Washington and the Eastern cities, it is doubtful if the Indians receive any benefit from more than 20 per cent. of the vast sum appropriated.

Such sweeping charges are spread over the land by the press, and public speakers quote them as authority, and say they are sustained by the public opinion of the people living in the vicinity of Indian agencies.

Now, we protest against all such wholesale condemnation as flagrant injustice. These agents are recommended by men who represent the

great religious missionary societies of the land. They are nominated by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of the Interior, in most cases after personal examination; and they are appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate of the United States. No more care and caution are used in the selection of any officers of the government. And yet it may be that here and there one is inefficient or dishonest. But we are confident that, as a class, the Indian agents now in the service will compare favorably with an equal number of business men in any part of the country, for intelligence, honesty, and efficiency.

#### INDIAN PROGRESS.

But little has occurred during the year to disturb the industrial pursuits and the educational work going on among the various tribes. Rumors of war have been plenty, but the only serious outbreaks have been the Bannock war in Idaho, and the Northern Cheyenne raid through Kansas and Nebraska. The cause and the history of these outbreaks are given in full by the General of the Army and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in their annual reports. The facts presented in those reports make it perfectly evident that the Bannock war might have been prevented had adequate and timely provision been made by Congress for the support of those Indians when they were cut off from their usual resources of the chase.

We heartily indorse the conclusion of General Sherman that for such emergencies "Congress alone can provide a remedy; and, if prevention be wiser than cure, money and discretion must be lodged somewhere in time to prevent starvation."

The great body of the Indians have continued peaceful, and the reports of agents, confirmed by our personal observation, show an increasing interest in various pursuits of industry, and commendable progress toward a condition of self-support.

Some of the bands of Chippewas in Wisconsin appear to have very nearly reached the point where they can be left to themselves without governmental aid or supervision. They are respected, and often employed as laborers and lumbermen by their white neighbors. On the Menominee Reservation, in the same State, at the close of the farming season a fair was held, to which more than two hundred Indians contributed, exhibiting their stock and samples of grain and vegetables, which would do credit to other county fairs. It was pronounced, in the Shawano Journal, to be "so superior to the county fair lately held at Shawano that it would almost convince any one who attended both that the Indian was further advanced in agricultural matters than the white man. It has shown that those whom the white people were wont to call the 'lazy red men' are able to cope with them in cultivating the soil."

In Minnesota, Dakota, and Nebraska, like signs of improvement are manifest at several agencies. The crops have not been destroyed by grasshoppers, as in former years, and the Indians who have worked industriously are reaping rich rewards for their labor.

On White Earth Reservation, Minnesota, "all land that was in condition, or could be placed in shape, was seeded, and the results are gratifying to the Indians. The disposition to work to increase the size of their farms is stimulated by the good yield of this year's crop. More new land has been broken than in any former year since they have been here. With a few such seasons \* \* \* these Indians will soon be on the way to prosperity, happiness, and contentment." Some of the



fruits of their labor are 18,000 bushels of wheat, 4,860 bushels of oats, 3,281 bushels of corn, and about 36,000 bushels of vegetables.

The agent at Sisseton Agency, Dakota, reports that—

Indian farming has been attended with universal success, and the Indians feel very much encouraged with the result of their farm labor. A much larger acreage was plowed last fall than ever before at the same season of the year, and was well prepared for seeding in the spring. Several Indian farmers who have large wheat-fields have bought harvesters for themselves, at a cost of \$165 to \$200 each, and are to pay for them from the proceeds of their sales of wheat. They manifest much interest in their farm-work, and are evidently determined soon to become self-supporting.

The report from Yankton Agency, Dakota, says:

Indian farming, each man for himself and on his own plot of ground, is increasing. Every year their wheat-fields will average from 5 to 15 acres each. The Yanktons are very ambitious now to raise wheat, and have been breaking much land this summer for next year's crop. Besides, they are cutting a very large amount of grass to supply their stock with hay the coming winter, exhibiting in this way, more than ever, providence and thrift.

From the agent at Flandreau special agency, Dakota, we learn that—

In agriculture these Indians have made fair progress. Wheat is the best crop raised here.

Agent Vore, at Omaha Agency, Nebraska, reports that—

There is a perceptible advancement in many of the Indians in judgment and skill in the management of their farm-work.

The Santee Sioux of Nebraska [says the agent] are industrious, and have turned their attention to cultivating the land. During the last year they had under cultivation about 1,000 acres. They have broken 400 acres of new land, and are taking an increased interest in their farm-work. This has been brought about by the hope that Congress will pass an act allowing them to take homesteads on their lands that they are improving.

The Navajo agent, New Mexico, says:

Within the ten years during which the present treaty with the Navajoes has been in force, they have grown from a band of paupers to a nation of prosperous, industrious, shrewd and (for barbarians) intelligent people. They are a nation of workers. The drones are very, very few. They are, as a rule, provident. The few thousand sheep given them a few years ago have increased to hundreds of thousands.

The Indians of the Grand Ronde Agency, Oregon, are now living, reports the agent—

Upon their farms and cultivating their lands, and following the avocation of farmers much the same as white farmers, on a small scale, the average number of acres cultivated by a single Indian or family being from 25 to 50, while quite a number cultivate as high as 50 to 100 acres. They will raise by their own industry from ten to twelve thousand bushels of grain the present season.

Agent Wilbur, of Yakama Agency, Oregon, says:

Our farming and stock-growing have taken the lead in business enterprise. We have now under good fence at least 15,000 acres of land, and 5,000 in cultivation. In four years we have made, with Indian labor, 30 miles of post and board fence as good as any farmer in all the country has about his farm. The Indians have, at least, 3,500 head of cattle of their own, and about 16,000 head of horses. Many of them live in good houses, painted outside and in, with furniture, clocks, watches, the newspaper, and the Bible. They have barns, and improved machinery for farming. The women have sewing-machines.

For several years we have not been giving rations to any except the sick. When the able-bodied Indians want food, if they work they are fed; if they won't work they go hungry.

Give the Indians good land, practical business and Christian men for their agents, and moral men, without an exception, for their employés, who will educate them to work; then let the government appropriate money to help them to seed, tools, and teams, until they can be educated to cultivate the soil, and the expense of taking care of the Indians in five years will diminish half, the Indian will be elevated, and wars with the whites will cease to the end of time.

Similar reports have been received from other reservations, but the foregoing extracts are enough to indicate that the improvement which has been recorded in our former reports has continued during the last

year. It is true that many tribes are yet far from the condition of self-support, and others have made only a beginning in the arts and pursuits of civilized life. But it must be remembered that it is only ten years since this policy of peace, justice, and humanity was adopted, and the work of civilizing, educating, and training for citizenship was undertaken in good earnest. And looking over that short period of ten years we can see that great progress has been made.

The following table of statistics, made up from official reports, presents a summary of results since the present humane policy was inaugurated in 1869.

RESULTS OF THE PEACE POLICY DURING TEN YEARS.

*Number of Indians in the United States, Alaska not included.*

	1868.*	1878.
Number of Indians.....		250,004
Wear citizens dress.....		127,456
Houses occupied.....	8,640	23,060
Debit last year.....		745
Schools.....	148	306
Teachers.....	163	417
Scholars.....	5,810	13,222
Money expended for education.....		\$652,125
Indians who can read.....		41,309
Learned to read last year (five tribes, Indian Territory, not included).....		1,563
Church buildings on reservations.....		219
Indian church members (about).....		36,000
Land cultivated by Indians, acres.....	79,071	373,019
Bushels of wheat raised.....	199,305	770,615
Bushels of corn raised.....	230,379	2,625,945
Bushels of oats and barley.....	81,151	260,122
Bushels of vegetables.....	350,090	994,001
Tons of hay.....	18,018	138,011
Horses and mules owned by Indians.....	78,918	228,754
Cattle owned by Indians.....	47,704	281,378
Pigs owned by Indians.....	31,284	300,952
Sheep owned by Indians.....	7,968	604,574

\* In cases where no reports were received in 1868 the reports for the previous year are added to make up the aggregate.

This exhibit of results is certainly encouraging, and it presents a strong argument against any radical change of policy. Whatever department of government is intrusted with the management of Indian affairs, the humane and Christian sentiment of the country will demand a firm adherence to measures that have already secured so much, and that promise still greater good in the future.

HOMESTEADS.

It becomes more and more evident every year that reservations, though set apart by the government and guaranteed by solemn treaties as the possession of the Indians forever, do not and cannot secure to them a permanent home. Treaties do not execute themselves. Too often they are regarded by the dominant race as mere expedients for quieting disturbances, to be set aside and forgotten whenever the wants or the greed of the white man may demand it. Lands assigned to Indians and promised in perpetuity have been occupied by white settlers, and overrun by miners in search of gold. In many other cases where Indians, trusting the promises of the government, have selected allotments and made improvements, they are still without any permanent title to their homes. Thus the sixth article of the treaty with the

Omahas, ratified April 17, 1854, after providing for the survey and allotment of their reservation, continues as follows:

And the President may at any time in his discretion, after such person or family has made a location on the land assigned for a permanent home, issue a patent to such person or family for such assigned land, conditioned that the tract shall not be aliened or leased for a longer term than two years; shall be exempt from levy, sale, or forfeiture, &c.

In 1855 treaties were entered into with many other tribes of Indians, embracing nearly all those in Oregon and Washington Territory, referring to this sixth article of the treaty with the Omahas, and making similar provision for the survey, allotment, and issue of patents.

For convenience of reference extracts from these treaties will be found in the appendix. Had all the stipulations contained therein been faithfully executed on our part, much serious trouble, great waste of property, and sacrifice of life might have been avoided. But the simple, shameful truth is, that we have neglected and forgotten our part of these compacts. Many Indians, believing that we would keep faith with them, have selected their tracts of land and made improvements, but have waited nearly a quarter of a century in vain for the promised security of title. We cannot recover the millions of treasure lost, nor restore the lives sacrificed by our broken faith, but we may deal honestly and justly in the future.

Believing that permanent homes and a perfect title to their lands are matters of most urgent importance to the Indians, we made a draft of a bill last winter to secure these ends by legislation, and that bill is now before the Indian committees of the two houses of Congress.

We respectfully and earnestly request that it receive prompt attention. We have witnessed the good results of individual ownership of lands in the few instances where patents have been issued in the State of Wisconsin, whereby a new impulse has been given to industry and a new sense of manhood inspired.

The Flandreau Sioux of Dakota furnish another example very suggestive and encouraging. Under the wise guidance of their missionary and agent, John P. Williamson, this little band have struck out for themselves, and with very little material aid have become substantially self-supporting. In his last report Agent Williamson says:

The Flandreau Indians are citizens, and are, without a doubt, the most advanced in civilization of any portion of the Sioux Nation. They pay taxes, and very cheerfully, considering how high, we might say how exorbitant, some of them are. Their total taxation last year amounted to about \$800. They go to the ballot-box with their white neighbors, and appreciate the privilege very highly. It has an elevating influence upon the Indians themselves, and on the other hand gives them the respect which they need in the eyes of their white neighbors. They nearly all read their own language, and vote as understandingly as a large class of foreign voters. A large proportion have received their patents for land and so are property-owners. They all live in houses very similar to white neighbors, and dress like them. No painted Indian, with long hair, feathers, or breech-cloth, can be found in the settlement.

#### THEY ARE A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

There are two churches among them, one a Presbyterian and the other an Episcopal organization. In the two are 184 communicants, who comprise the most of the adult population. On the Sabbath nearly the whole community may be found at church. No reasonable man can doubt that Christianity is the foundation of that civilization to which these Indians have attained.

#### THE FUTURE.

The question is often asked, "Will they succeed?" "Won't they sell out as soon as they can and go back to Indian life?" We acknowledge there are serious dangers before them. One is whisky, another is going in debt, another is their inability to