

The chiefs saw in the agents their principal enemies and the end of their domination and on most reservations there was a prolonged struggle for control of the Indian between these rivals, sometimes a struggle to the death. The chiefs held that their tenure of office was life long as heretofore and government officials visiting the reservation seemed to support this view by constantly addressing these men as chiefs. The same thing was true in Washington. The control of the chiefs was vested in tribal organization in their numerous relatives and in their control of the food supply of their people. The government by its custom of dealing with Indians through chiefs had greatly strengthened the hold of chiefs upon their people and increased their power. The agent and his police therefore had to buck not only Indian custom, tribal organization, jealous chiefs, but the whole government machinery. The chief maintained his power by outfacing the agent, by keeping his camp a unit, and by distributing the annuities and rations to his people himself. In order to break the influence of the chiefs and gain control of his Indians, the agent had to build up a police force as strong as the warrior societies controlled by the chiefs. He had to break up the big camp and scatter the Indians in smaller bands or individual families and he had to assume control of the issue of supplies to the Indians, and prevent the chief from having any hold on it. This brought about a prolonged diplomatic and even military struggle.

In building up a police force, the agent tried to attract ambitious young men, unrelated to the chief. Those who had personal grudges were apt to volunteer. On reservations where several bands or tribes were gathered, it was sometimes possible to play off one band or tribe against