

MONTANA SUPERINTENDENCY

In the absence of annual reports, except that of Agent Wright, from this superintendency, I am unable to make such a statement of the condition of the service within its bounds as could be desired.

The Blackfeet bands have always been more or less hostile with the whites, and with some of their Indian neighbors. In 1865 a treaty was made for a cession of the country claimed by them, lying south of the Missouri, the object being to throw open to settlements a section supposed to contain precious metals. No action has been taken upon it in consequence of the Indians having, soon after, violated its stipulations by renewing hostilities. The necessity for such an arrangement as it proposed still exists, and if the treaty is not to be ratified, another should be negotiated.

I deem it expedient that a separate treaty should be made with the Gros Ventres, a band of the Blackfeet, and a party to the treaty referred to, as they live distant from the others, and are on unfriendly terms with them. These Gros Ventres are friendly to the whites, and should be favored in this respect. It was the intention of the northwest commissioners to meet them for that purpose last year, but it was found impracticable to do so.

The agency for the Blackfeet at Fort Benton is regarded as being located in an unsuitable place. The town established at that point being incorporated and subject to territorial and national taxation, its citizens claim that the laws regulating trade and intercourse with Indian tribes are inapplicable to them, and therefore they may not be restricted in trading with the Indians who come among them. As a matter of course, the Indians are furnished with liquor, and the results are, frequently, difficulties between them and the whites. I propose that the agency be removed either to the Sun River farm, formerly selected for the purpose, but which, for various causes, was abandoned several years ago, or to some ~~other~~ locality remote from the settlements and great lines of travel. Agent