

The immediate question that arose for the consideration of the Mounted Police was how this influx of Sioux would affect the Blackfeet and other tribes whom they had by this time got so well in hand. Fortunately, the answer was not left long in doubt. The humane and kindly treatment accorded to the Canadian Indians in the northwest now brought forth its fruits. Early in the breaking out of hostilities the Sioux had sent a message to the Blackfeet camp with a piece of tobacco. The letter was intended for them to smoke if they were in the mind to go over the line and join the Sioux in fighting the Americans. In return, the Sioux promised the Blackfeet horses and mules and other loot they had taken in the campaign. Furthermore, they promised to help the Blackfeet to exterminate the whites on the northern side of the boundary after they had settled with the Americans. To this the Blackfeet chiefs made answer: "We cannot smoke your tobacco on such terms; the whites are our friends, and we will not fight against them."

On receipt of this message, the Sioux leaders sent word back that they would go over the border in any case and show the Blackfeet that white soldiers were nothing before them, adding that after they had exterminated the latter and taken their forts they would attack the Blackfeet themselves. As has been noted earlier, Crowfoot, the head chief of the Blackfeet, went with some trepidation to Colonel Macleod to ask for advice. He received the answer that in the case of such an attack he might rely upon the support of the Mounted Police, who were bound to protect them as subjects of the country, and with this assurance the old chief was well content. He even offered the Commissioner to send out 2000 of his warriors against the invaders if help were needed.

The failure to secure the alliance of the Indian tribes in the north-west, however, did not lead to any active demonstration on the part of the Sioux. Sitting Bull pitched his principal camp in the vicinity of Fort Walsh, and sat down to await developments. There now ensued a long series of negotiations in which the Mounted Police were ever foremost, the purpose in view being to induce the rebels to return to the American side of the line and surrender themselves to the authorities there.