

still hoeing and working in the fields, although it is evident they cannot possibly raise anything. Last year, also, their crops were almost a total failure. As it is, some extra provision must be made for this people during the winter, or trouble will come. It will require at least 1,000,000 pounds of beef to keep them from suffering. Unless this is furnished, or they find plenty of buffalo (the latter even hardly to be look for), they cannot be prevented from committing depredations on stock wherever they can find it.

Their crops must be watered during the growing season, or farming might as well be abandoned here. A field of 1,000 acres on the river bottom near the agency can be thoroughly irrigated by a ditch which could be dug by the Indians for pay in provisions, to cost about three or four thousand dollars. From this field enough vegetables and breadstuffs could be raised every year to supply all their wants in that line. This outlay would be a great economy, as otherwise, if these Indians are to remain where they are they will have to be fed entirely by the Government, as they cannot be expected to succeed in farming where a white man would starve.

The agent in charge of Fort Belknap Agency, the home of the Gros Ventres and Assinaboines, also adjoining the Blackfeet, writes under date of 21st ultimo:

Bame on this reservation is practically exhausted. My Indians many of whom have lately returned to the agency from hunting, all concur in this statement, the truth of which is established by my own observation and by a report of an officer of the United States Army who has lately made an extended expedition over the reserve.

My Indians are already coming in every day complaining of hunger, but I can feed them very little as the winter will soon be here when they must be fed or they will starve and commit depredations. To divide the supplies of flour and beef furnished for the year, viz., 100,000 pounds of the former and 180,000 pounds of the latter, into fifty-two parts would allow but about one pound of flour and two pounds of beef, gross, per week to each person. While there was plenty of game this could be made to do, but now I am confronted with a problem which it is almost impossible for me to solve; and unless some assistance is rendered in time, I fear the question of whether it is cheaper to feed or to fight Indians will have another test. If the Government expects ever to make this people self-sustaining, it must furnish means to start them in the right way, viz: by supplying their wants for the present, and assisting them, by irrigation, & c., to live by farming in the near future.

Efforts have been made to establish agency herds for these Indians, but with very poor success, as they cannot be prevented from killing the cattle when driven to do so by hunger.