

I have now the honour to report upon that Despatch, and the concluding clause guides me to represent to you my serious apprehensions of the consequences before I take any step to the communications directed in the former paragraphs of the Despatch.

The idea of proposing to the chiefs of tribes to convert the payment of presents, or other tribute to them, in money, would be received with the utmost alarm. Every man here knows that money to Indians is instantly spent in spirituous liquors; and the system adopted in making useful presents as payment was intended expressly to avoid temptation, and take away the means furnished to that dreadful state of brutal drunkenness, to which all Indians, men, women and children, give themselves. One of the most urgent and most constant prayers made to me by the chiefs is to remove the white men, tavern keepers, from their villages, and it has created great trouble, with much legal expense and difficulty, to do that in late years.

In addition to the dislike of the chiefs, His Majesty's Government would be loaded by the execration of the country, were they to pay in money to Indians the large sums due to them by bargain, or by custom long established. All the societies labouring for the moral and religious improvement of the Indians, would fly to His Majesty's Government to implore a recal of the order.

I need not seek for a multitude of such arguments which might be easily furnished. I think the proposed measure fully fraught with mischief to the Indians, no saving nor advantage possible to Government, and the future consequences of it dangerous in the extreme.

I have not therefore, Sir, authorized any intimation of the intention to be made to the chiefs; I have, on the contrary, desired that the utmost secrecy should be held on it by my military secretary, the only efficient officer, and the only acting in the department.

I now beg to call your attention to the papers I have thought it proper to enclose for the further explanation of this subject.

The statement required of the precise expense of the Indian department and the presents made annually, is now enclosed; I have added to it a memorandum of the comparative expense, when I assumed this government in 1820, by which I wish to shew that I have studied by every practicable means to cut down the expenses, and that these are immensely reduced since the close of the war. I do not think it can be further reduced, but it ought to be made more efficient by more active officers, and if that be not done I am certain that the greatest confusion and serious difficulties will ensue.

My Lord Goderich looks forward to the abolition of the establishment. I most respectfully submit that that is impossible, so long as the Indian tribes continue to be warlike in their ideas and recollections. Insignificant as are some of the tribes now in Lower Canada, civilized and accustomed to social life, there is not one of them that does not boast of the warlike days of their chiefs and warriors; even now the word warrior is assumed by every young man; he is trained up to it, and has a higher idea of the approbation of his chief, or the consideration of white men in that character of an active hunter or warrior, than he has of any other object, or use of his existence. If, Sir, that be the feeling of our peaceable tribes near us, what can be the feelings of those who are in no degree civilized, who live by war and hunting, who, proud and independent, and ferocious, disdain the angry threats or frowns of white men, and who think no more of striking a man dead with their tomahawk, than they do of shooting their forest deer.

But savage as those distant tribes are, they have their treaties, their peace and war agreements, constantly in their minds; they would insist upon their presents established by long custom, and if not complied with on representation, they would do themselves justice to their own satisfaction, and we should soon find them most formidable enemies.

The papers of Lieutenant Gaston shew the desire of certain chiefs for the protection of the British in promoting their moral improvement, as well as their subsistence, and I would most earnestly recommend their prayer to the attention of His Majesty's Government.

I am afraid, Sir, I have enlarged too much on this subject, but it appears to me too serious a matter to be touched hastily, and there are so many arguments of wisdom and policy to affect the consideration of it by His Majesty's Government, that I felt it my duty to say this much.

I conclude