

RECOMMENDATIONS
ON FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR CALIFORNIA INDIANS, 1852*

E. F. Beale

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN
AFFAIRS, San Francisco, Nov. 22, 1852

SIR: I have the honor to report the arrival of the balance of the Indian goods sent by Major Reading, with the exception of one box, or bale. A settlement with him will be made on his application to this office. He is at present on his rancho. The Indians throughout the country are quiet, but dreadfully destitute in many parts of the State. After long and painful deliberation on the course to be pursued, I have determined the following: To devote the appropriation of the last session of Congress to the protection of one section of country, convinced that to attempt to succor all parts with an appropriation of \$100,000, would be to lose the benefit of the whole. It would be to give the sum of one dollar to each Indian in the State to subsist him during a year. If, on the contrary, I take one district and expend this amount, I may succeed in saving great suffering to the Indians and preserve peace to the whites. In making this selection of a single section, I was not ignorant that I would call down the violent censure of each of the others, which would consider itself shamefully neglected. I therefore put to the blush any charge of partiality. Here they are: The north is a mining country, and consequently thickly settled. The people always living in communities, do not fear Indian hostilities, except in course of emigration; they are Americans, and well armed. They have but comparatively few cattle, and therefore offer but few incentives to Indian depredations. For the middle portions of the State the same may be said, except that the Indians are less liable, from disposition, to go to war, being generally docile and harmless. In the south all this is reversed; the people are entirely pastoral in their pursuits, and in consequence live on large ranchos, at long distances from each other. They are at the mercy of the Indians surrounding them. Nothing can be more defenceless than these solitary haciendas, when the nearest neighbor is frequently twenty miles off. You will naturally ask, if there are so few people there, why protect them, to the neglect of the more populated portions of the country: Because it is from this quarter we draw our supplies of beef cattle entirely. Los Angeles county is the cattle market of the State. If an Indian war were to cut off our communication with that single county (which could be easily done, as the cattle are driven directly through the Indian country) for one week, beef would rise to fifty cents a pound in the market in San Francisco, and in six months there would be scarcely any at twice that

* Documents of the Senate of the United States During the Special Session Called March 4, 1853. Executive Document No. 4, pp. 377-380. G P.O., Washington, D. C., 1853. (The "Indian goods referred to by Beale are specified on p. 360. They comprised small white porcelain beads, small black porcelain beads, small red porcelain beads, large assorted glass beads (cost: \$11,500.00) turkey red prints and gay-colored shawls (cost \$4000.00). D. B. Wilson, Indian Agent for Southern California informed Superintendent Beale (Op. cit., p. 276) that "the greatest part of the goods are entirely useless, such as the Indians do not use...I must say that, in my opinion, the purchase was a bad one.")

price. These reflections, therefore, determined me to protect, with all the means placed at my disposal, that part of our State; and the next subject of thought was, how to do that most effectually.

In looking over the map I am now preparing, and will soon send you, you will find that Los Angeles county contains of itself a very numerous Indian population, and of course one would presume that they would be the parties to commence a course of conciliation with. I do not think so. These are my reasons: All the Indians of that county, or at least a very large proportion of them, are "Christianos;" many have belonged to the old mission establishments. All of them have some connexion or dependence on the ranchos near them. They have traded or mixed with whites, either in employment as servants or vacqueros, or lived on these extensive ranchos on the same footing as the lower classes of Europe in the feudal ages, an idle but sometimes useful retainer, until they have become entirely dependent. They therefore are not much to be dreaded; but there are those who live beyond (the Cowillas and Tejones) who owe no such allegiance, and whose only source of food for years, during the winter season, has been robbed from the fertile vegas of Los Angeles; a bold and enterprising race, numbering, with all their connexions of the Cowchillas and Freznales, at least five thousand souls. It is these tribes from whom we are to expect trouble, and against whose depredations we must guard. It is through the very pass of the Tejones that all our cattle are driven to this market, and through this pass also that the Indians descend on their winter forays. It has been well said, that "the Tejones" is the key to Los Angeles. In this determination to expend the whole appropriation in keeping these tribes quiet, the department will see that I am right. At least, I know that I am so.

For the other districts I feel all that a man of humanity must in contemplating their condition. Driven from their fishing and hunting grounds, hunted themselves like wild beasts, lassoed, and torn from homes made miserable by want, and forced into slavery, the wretched remnant which escapes starvation on the one hand, and the relentless whites on the other, only do so to rot and die of a loathsome disease, the penalty of Indian association with frontier civilization. This is no idle declamation -- I have seen it; and seeing all this, I cannot help them. I know that they starve; I know that they perish by hundreds; I know that they are fading away with a startling and shocking rapidity, but I cannot help them. Humanity must yield to necessity. They are not dangerous; therefore they must be neglected. I earnestly call the early attention of the government to this condition of affairs, and to a plan I have proposed in a previous letter for its relief. It is a crying sin that our government, so wealthy and so powerful, should shut its eyes to the miserable fate of these rightful owners of the soil. What is the expense of half a million for the permanent relief of these poor people to a government so rich? A single dry-dock, or a public building, costs twice that, and is voted without a dissenting voice; and yet here are seventy-five thousand human beings devoted to a death so miserable that humanity shudders to contemplate it, and these very people the owners of that soil from which we monthly receive millions; that very soil whose timely golden harvests have saved from bankruptcy, probably, the very men who will oppose this appropriation. I ask an appropriation of five hundred thousand dollars for the Indians of

this State. I have now to speak to the department in a more decided manner of the scheme proposed in my letter of October 29, 1852. I there briefly stated, in general terms, the outlines of the policy which, in my judgment, was the only one which could settle on a permanent basis our Indian difficulties. It is not necessary I should repeat what I then said; facts and figures speak for themselves. In that communication I suggested the possibility of Indians being made not only to support themselves in comfort, but to bear the expenses of the army in this State. Here are the figures and the facts: our Indian population has been estimated by myself, and others well calculated from position and experience to judge, at from 75,000 to 100,000. Taking it, therefore, at 90,000, and assuming the fact that one in five possesses the ability to work, we shall have 18,000 working hands; and in this calculation it must be taken into consideration that, among all Indians, the women work as well as the men. This would bring the estimate to 36,000 working hands; but as I wish to come far within the limits of certainty, and to preserve myself from all probability of controversy, I will only take one-half of what I am convinced the number of operatives will count -- 10,000. The ordinary wages for field hands in this State may be estimated at \$3 per diem; but without admitting so great a disparity between Indian and white labor, I will place that of the Indians at fifty cents per diem, which would give us \$1,700,000. In this estimate the fact must be considered that only the hired value of hands is taken into consideration, no allowance being made for the value of its products, which, in this extraordinary country, might safely be estimated at least at a sum equivalent to double the hire of the laborer.

Now what is it we desire? Certainly peace, and the preservation of the Indians by the most economical means. Let us see what has been the result of a want of some means of preserving peace. A single war with but a small portion of the Indian tribes of this State was waged for a few months at an expense of one million dollars; and it is unnecessary I should point to Florida as an example of what may become of the fate of this State, or the cost of more prolonged hostilities. By the system I have proposed, admitting that the margin is too narrow; admitting that so great an error should exist in my calculations, that instead of \$1,700,000, the result of the mere hired value, without the consideration of the product of Indian labor -- admitting the supposition that no pecuniary advantages should result from this system to the government, and that by the plan proposed the Indians should be made to do no more than to relieve the government of any actual outlay, securing to its citizens the certainty of peace and a freedom from all apprehensions of an Indian war, -- is not even this a sufficient inducement for the adoption of the scheme submitted? -- preserving us, as it would, from the charge of intentional and premeditated extinction of our Indian population. Actual experience furnishes the practical illustration of the fact that this is no idle calculation. The individual enterprise of a single citizen of this State having demonstrated the fact that the farming and ranching abilities of Indians may be made a source of certain and extraordinary profit; and looking back to a time when, with no such facilities as our government possesses, to the old Jesuit mission establishments, the opportunity is afforded to any one who would wish to investigate this subject, of discovering sufficient proofs to substantiate all I have written. Those enterprising men, unaided by means, and checked and embarrassed by a watchful and jealous government, were en-

abled in a short time to bring into subjection, and render useful assistants, those very tribes who are now the source of so much anxiety and apprehension to our citizens. Surely that which was attempted and accomplished by a few poor priests, is not too great a task for the mighty republic of the United States.

To those who would oppose the argument of want of intelligence and ability of the Indians for useful labor, I would direct their attention to every great national work of Spanish enterprise on the whole continent of America. Not a city, a cathedral, or a fortification, but furnishes a proof that Indian labor, directed by white intelligence, may be made as effective as that of any other purely laboring class. Let us take, as an exemplification of this assertion, the stately missions reared by Indian labor, which at one time flourished in every part of California, the ruins of which to this day astonish those who have visited them. I could draw a picture of the condition of those flourishing colonies, as they existed at that day, which has no parallel in the early settlement of any country on the face of the earth. That narrative would need no embellishment or exaggeration, and history, substantiated by living witnesses, would sustain its truth. Every useful mechanic art, all necessary knowledge of agricultural pursuits, was here taught under a system of discipline at once mild, firm, and paternal. It is this system, modified and adapted to the present time, which I propose for your consideration; nor can I conceive of any other which would preserve this unfortunate people from total extinction, and our government from everlasting disgrace.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. F. BEALE,
Superintendent Indian Affairs.

Hon. LUKE LEA,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.