

LIEUT. COL. McDONALD TO SECRETARY FOSTER

(Indians.)

DRUMMOND ISLAND 10 Oct. 1815

SIR

An opportunity just presenting itself by the last light Canoe which descends the Grand River this season, and understanding that the communication by the route of Nottawsaga, is at an end, I am induced to forward by it the Proceedings of a Court of inquiry held by order of Major General Sir F. Robinson, to investigate certain charges preferred by the American Government against Lieut. Cadotte of the Indian Department and also against the Govt Generally, that its agents had instigated the Indians to hostilities since the Peace.

As the rapid Conveyance of the proceedings to Head Qrs may be very desirable at a Crisis when the *Indian Question* must soon become very interesting and as it being directly forwarded to Sir F. Robinson would occasion great delay, I entreat of His Excellency to represent this accordingly to the Major General and that you will have the goodness to transmit him a copy thereof. I had not time for this myself and a Serjeant whom I entrusted to take a copy has bungled it in a way that renders it quite unfit to be sent.

His Excellency directed me to a full and complete investigation of the circumstances complained of, I was fortunate, in still having at this remote Post, so many of the necessary evidences. Solemnly convinced in my own mind that the charges in themselves were a base calumny & utterly without foundation, I felt myself peculiarly interested in their refutation, conscious that their chief object was to shut our eyes to the manifest infringement of the Treaty of Ghent, & to the horrible tragedy which they meditate against the Indians of the Mississippi. Unfortunate men! forced by us into the War, assured by us again and again, of our faithful adherence to their cause, and if our constant protection, & now, "abandoned at their utmost need," to the merciless vengeance of a relentless Enemy. Their pretext is, that they continue the war: It is false, not an act of hostility has been committed (we have every reason to believe) since the 24 May and it is clearly proved that the Indians then knew nothing of the Peace. It is clearly proved by Capt. Andersons evidence, that when it became known, they not only assented thereto, but were anxious to observe it, upon the real terms on which it was made, (see the Sauk Chief, LaMoite's speech). These too well ascertained facts, strips the American Government of every pretext for their meditated hostilities, and reduces them to the bold

alternative of cutting of the Indians by a glaring violation of a recent treaty, and rendering themselves liable to the usual consequences.

One observation I conceive it my duty to suggest, and to recommend its being fully explained to our Minister at Washington, that a series of vague surmises, undefined conjectures, reports of Indian Agents on the frontier, founded on no evidence, & perhaps purposely vamped up to answer some purpose of the Govt in General too, the absurd information of some ignorant Indian Chief; that charges of this nature, so flimsily, so totally unsupported, and involving such serious consequences, should in future be wholly inadmissable, & instantly rejected. If it suited the purpose of the American Government not a week would elapse but they could with the utmost facility obtain from their Indian Agents, accusations much more voluminous, when their own *assertion* or *opinion* is only necessary—proof of the fact alledged being altogether unnecessary.

A decided protest should also be made against the principle assumed by them, that every petty reconoutre (very often provoked by themselves) which takes place between them & the various Indian nations on their vast frontier, is to be ascribed to British influence & agency; I trust the proceedings of the Court will sufficiently evince the absurdity of such a supposition. If there appears that unusual pains had been taken, almost unprecedented exertions used, to restrain the Indians from hostilities, even when threats were made use of, and much provocation given by themselves, and also a disposition evinced by the American Government in no respect compatible with the Treaty of Ghent. When conduct like this, originating in the most anxious desire that the Indians should observe the Peace, has only tended to provoke the most odious calumneys, what chance is there, that they will desist from future accusations, or there ever being an end to the altercation.

It was my intention to have sent the proceedings of the Court of Enquiry by Captain Anderson, as this prudent and judicious officer (so recently from the Mississippi) could have afforded His Excellency much information as to the present state of Indian Politics. A sudden indisposition, however, renders him unable to undertake the journey.

A collection of Indian Speeches, which I have enclosed for His Excellency's perusal at his leisure, will throw some light upon the subject. They are in some measure interesting, as exhibiting correct specimens of Indian Eloquence, and in some instances of judgment & penetration which could scarcely be expected; I have been struck with that of La Feuille so deeply evincing bitterness of his sorrow at having parted with those *marks of distinction* which his Father Wabasha had recd from the English, and on his death bed enjoined

him never to part with. The note which follows this speech is worth attention at the *present moment*.

Capt. Anderson is the translator of these speeches. He happily retains their figurative mode of expression, and that touching simplicity in some instances, speaks to the heart.

As to our neighbors at Mackina, they are at present actuated by a system of the most illiberal policy, which shews itself in the persecution of every person connected with the British Government, and in the pillage of their property. They watch the Indians with an increasing jealousy, and cannot bear their increasing attachment to us. Mrs. Mitchell who was compelled to remain at Mackina, to look after her property, has been treated with gross indignity—accused of the most absurd falsehoods, & to prevent being sent in confinement to Detroit, obliged to make her escape to this post in the night.

I thought it my duty to make a strong remonstrance upon the subject of these outrages, the reply to which I have not yet received.

I have the honor to be

Sir, Your very obdt Servant

RT McDONALI, Lt Col.

MAJOR FORSTER

[ C 258, p 293. ]