

ACCOUNTS. }
1881. }

Department of the Interior,

{ CIRCULAR
No. 67.

OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,

May 10,

Washington, D. C., ~~April 27~~, 1881.

SIR:

Special and particular attention of agents and licensed traders is hereby called to the provisions of the laws of the United States in reference to the suppression of the traffic in intoxicating liquors.

The law as it now stands makes it a crime punishable by fine and imprisonment to sell liquor to Indians—the object manifestly being to prevent Indians from obtaining liquor, either by purchase or gift.

This provision of law applies to all Indians under the care of a superintendent or agent, whether in the Indian country or out of it, and the penalty for a violation of this law is a fine of three hundred dollars (\$300) and imprisonment for two years. Under this law Indian agents have the authority, and it is their imperative duty, to prevent this traffic, and any failure on your part to use, for that purpose, all the legal means at your command will be sufficient cause for your removal. In every case where any person is detected in a violation of this law you will place the matter in the hands of the district attorney for the district where the offense is committed, and it is your duty to coöperate with him to effect the speedy arrest and punishment of the offender. This you can do by furnishing him with all the facts and evidence in your possession or which you can obtain. In the trial of these cases Indians are competent witnesses.

So far as Indian agents are concerned, it is very clearly their duty to protect the Government from this great cause of trouble and expense. The Indians are considered to be the wards of the Government, and a drunken Indian is a condensed and intensified savage let loose on the community to commit crimes the blackest in the calendar, and the man who sells or gives liquor to him, whether that man be in the military or civil service, or a private citizen, is an accessory before the fact to whatever crimes are committed traceable to that cause. The records of this Office show that one drunken Indian caused the Bannack outbreak in 1877, resulting in the loss of a large amount of property, many lives, and the expenditure by the Government of a large amount of money.

Licensed traders must see to it that no intoxicating liquor is, under any pretense, allowed on or about their premises, and a violation of this rule, or a failure to use their utmost efforts to suppress the traffic, or to notify this Office in regard to it, will subject them to have their licenses revoked and themselves removed from the reservations. In short, a failure to heartily coöperate with this Office in preventing any one from furnishing liquor in any shape or under any pretext to the Indians, will certainly result in the removal of the agent and the revocation of the license of the trader.

The history of all our troubles with the Indians proves conclusively that if whisky and bad men had been kept away from them thousands of lives and millions of money would have been saved to the Government. It is sheer nonsense to suppose, that by establishing a "civilization" division in this Department of the Government, as has been done, we can civilize and christianize the Indians, so long as we allow drunkards, gamblers, and whisky traders to demoralize and debauch them.

This circular is not sent to you as a mere formal matter, to be read and thrown aside and forgotten, but to be strictly observed in letter and spirit, in your intercourse with the Indians, to the end that good government may be established among them, and the Indian problem so solved that they will eventually become, through the peaceable pursuits of life, law abiding and self supporting.

You will please acknowledge, upon the subjoined blank, the receipt of this circular.

Respectfully,

A. Price
Commissioner

no 67
May 10th 1881

Regarding traffic in
intoxicating liquors