

U.S Senate executive documents, Vol. 13 (Nos. 66-76) 24th congress
1st and 2d sessions 1855-56.

Special message of the governor delivered in joint session at the council and house of representatives of Washington Territory, Monday, January 21, 1856.

Fellow-citizens of the legislative assembly of the Territory of Washington. I have taken (copy) the liberty of departing from the usual custom of delivering a written message. This arises from the exigencies of the case. It did not seem necessary to follow the etiquette usual in such cases if by doing so time should be lost or public business deferred.

We are, fellow citizens and have been for the past three months engaged in an Indian war. Our settlers from the Cowlitz river to the Sound have been obliged to abandon their claims to live in forts.

It is true that almost all the Indians are friendly; that the number of Indians hostile does not exceed the number of one hundred and fifty or two hundred; but from the peculiarity of the country, if this force is not soon crushed, it will prove a source of serious annoyance upon this side of the Cascade mountains and the other. Several tribes have violated their pledged (plighted) faith and broken out in open hostilities.

We are now in the midst of a war. What has brought it about and what is the remedy? Gentlemen of the legislative assembly, it is due to you that I should enter dispassionately and fully into the policy which has marked the government in the making of treaties with the Indians of this territory.

It is important that the honor and dignity of that government should be sustained. That its course should be characterized by humanity and justice. Those who have done their duty and maintained the dignity and honor of the country should not be struck down. Let the blow be struck in the right quarter. If dignity and honor have been maintained then has no citizen anything to blush for, and it is a bright page in the history of the country and dear to every citizen.

When this Territory was organized there was a population of about four thousand souls, widely scattered. No treaties had been made with Indians occupying the lands of this Territory, nor was there, practically, an intercourse law. Congress had by law extended the provisions of the Indian intercourse act, so far as applicable, over this Territory and Oregon. Congress had also passed a donation law, inviting settlers to locate claims, first west, then east of the Cascade mountains and public survey had been ordered to be made over this domain. But the Indian title had not been extinguished. This was a bitter cause of complaint on the part of the Indians. The Yakimas, Cayuses and "alla-"allas were anxious to make treaties, selling their lands to the government and securing themselves reservations for their permanent homes and they asserted that until such treaties were made no settlers should come among them. These were the reasons of public policy which induced the government to enter into these treaties and no time was lost in consummating them. The people of this Territory urged upon Congress the necessity of such a policy and congress made appropriation to carry out their wishes. It fell to my lot to be appointed the commissioner to negotiate these treaties. I entered upon those labors in December, a year ago, and during that and the following month successfully treated with all the Indians upon the Sound, the Straits and the Indians at Cape Flattery.

In January a year ago I dispatched Jas. Doty, esq. east of the Cascade mountains to ascertain the feelings and views of the Indians. He visited the Yakimas, the Cayuses, the "alla-"allas and the Nez Perces in their own country and they were desirous to treat and sell their lands. Kamiakin advised the tribes to meet in council at "alla Walla, saying that was their old council ground. The council was convened and lasted 14 days. All those tribes were present. The greatest care was taken to explain the treaties,

and the objects of them and to secure the most faithful interpreters.

Three interpreters were provided for each language; one to act as principal interpreter, the other two to correct. At the close of that council such expressions of joy and thankfulness I have never seen exhibited to a greater degree among Indians. Kamiakin, Peu-peu-mox-mox, the young chief Stickas, and the Lawyer, all personally expressed their joy and satisfaction. Kamiakin asserted that personally he was indifferent about the treaty but as his people wanted it, he was for it and that was the reason he assented to the treaty.

The record of that council was made up by intelligent and dispassionate men, and the speeches of all, there made, are recorded verbatim. The dignity, humanity and justice of the national government are there signally exhibited and none of the actors therein need fear the criticism of an intelligent community and the supervision of intelligent superiors. By these treaties, had the Indians been faithful to them, the question as to whether the Indian tribes of this territory can become civilized and christianized beings, would have been determined practically, and as to whether the intervention of an Indian service, for the supervision of the Indians, might not become unnecessary, in consequence of the Indians being able to govern themselves. This spirit lies at the basis of all the treaties made in this Territory.

Another council followed in which three considerable tribes were convened, which lasted eight days--the Indians at the close, again expressing the utmost joy and satisfaction. It is due to gentlemen of the legislative assembly to make this frank and full statement. The Territory have nothing to blush for, nothing to fear in the judgment of impartial men, now living, nor the rebuke of posterity.

As to the causes of this war, it is not a question necessary to dwell upon. It has been conclusively demonstrated that it has been

plotting for at least two or three years. I am frank to admit, that had I known when the council at Walla-Walla was convened what I learned afterwards, I should not have convened that council. I learned from one of the fathers, some days after it had commenced, and I was satisfied that this information was correct, from the deportment of several of the principal chiefs that many of the Indians came to that council with hostile feelings. But when I left Walla Walla I thought that by the treaty such feelings were entirely assuaged--that those who were once for war were now for peace

It is difficult to see how such a combination should have existed and not have been known; and yet it extended from the Sound to the Umpqua--from one side to the other of the Cascade mountains.

Fellow citizens! War has existed for three months and still persists. A war entered into by these Indians, without a cause; a war having not its origin in these treaties nor in the bad conduct of our people. It originated in the native intelligence of restless Indians, who foreseeing destiny against them and that the white man was moving upon them, determined that it must be met and resisted by arms. We may sympathize with such a manly feeling but in view of it we have done high duties.

I will not dwell upon the efforts made, the false reports circulated, distorting the proceedings of these councils; the stories of killing friendly Indians, which the hostiles have resorted to, to spread hostility. The war exists; the question is--How shall it be met? There are duties to be discharged, difficulties to be grappled with. The war must be vigorously prosecuted now. Seed time is coming and the farmer should be at his plough in the field. The summer is coming. The snows will melt in our mountain passes. Day-light is breaking upon us. It seems to me the warm season is not the time for operations. The gloom which for a time hung over us is giving way.

There has been great energy displayed in handling the whole question. Judgment and energy in driving back, into a comparatively small region of country, the hostile Indians and in keeping the great body of the Indians entirely friendly.

The work remaining to be done is comparatively small. It is my opinion that it would be expedient forthwith to raise a force of three hundred men from the Sound, to push into the Indian country build a depot and vigorously operate against the Indians in this quarter; and nearly the same force should be raised on the Columbia river, to prosecute the war east of the Cascade mountains. This last would have a vast influence upon the operations in this section. It would prevent reinforcements from either side joining the bands on the other side and would effectually crush both. But what is more important would be the influence upon the numerous tribes not yet broken out into hostility. It is due to you to state what experience in travelling through the Indian country has taught me. There is a surprising feeling of uneasiness among all the tribes who have not broken out except, alone, the Nez Perce. These tribes may be led into war, if delay attends our operations.

I regret on this occasion to be compelled to criticize the official acts of a gallant and war-worn veteran, one whose name has been on the historic rolls of the country for nearly half a century. But it is due to the people and the authorities of the Territory of Washington that the facts should appear and be known to the national government. Gov. Mason, in obedience to the requisition of the commanding officer of the United States forces upon the Columbia river, raised two companies of volunteers, of excellent material. They were well mounted and ready for the field. Another company was raised to protect the commissioner appointed by the President of the United States to make treaties with the Indian tribes in the interior of the continent. These troops were disbanded, were

brought down ~~into~~ garrison, and the regulars were kept in garrison. And there stands out the broad fact, that seven hundred Indians in the Walla-Walla valley were met and defeated by volunteers, when the regulars were in garrison. The President's commissioner, a high functionary deriving his powers from the President of the United States, and not from any department, was left without protection and the troops ~~from~~ raised to protect Major General Wool thought proper to disband and bring into garrison. That officer acted unquestionably from a sense of duty. His reputation as a gallant soldier, his long and valuable services to the country cannot be disputed. I do not wish to impugn his motives. I only desire to submit facts for the judgment of superiors at home.

I learn, from good authority, that his plan of operations is to delay till spring, probably until May. It is well known by those who have experience and knowledge of their country, that February and March are the best months for the prosecution of this war. I think it due to the legislative assembly to state the reasons why all voyageurs and gentlemen of experience in these matters give it as their opinion that now is the proper time for action. There is a vast plain between the Cascade and Bitter Root mountains. The Columbia, Snake, Clear Water and Spokane rivers are to be crossed. The snow is but a few inches deep and lasts but a short time-- seldom over a fortnight. There is but one continuous period of cold weather, and that period has now passed. The mountain passes are all closed up with snow which can only be scaled by snow-shoes. For these reasons the Indians cannot escape, should vigorous operations be made. On these plains our forces can operate well. There is abundant fuel for camps, grass for animals and the rivers are low. The Indians must be struck now. But if we delay a few months the roots and fish will abound, supplying the Indians with food. The snows will melt and the mountain passes will allow them hiding places.

It is my opinion , if operations are deferred till summer they must be deferred until winter again.

What effect would it have on the Sound should nothing be done until May or June? The whole industrial community would be ruined; the Sound paralyzed; the husbandman would be kept in a state of suspense by rumors of war and could not adhere to his pursuits; fields would not be tilled, and the Territory would starve out. ~~pursuits, fields~~ I am of the opinion that vigorous operation should be prosecuted on both sides of the Cascade mountains. Whenever it is practicable or expedient, it is best that volunteers should be mustered into the United States service. It should go to the authorities at home, that we endeavored to co-operate with the regular service. But there has been a breach of faith. Troops mustered into service were disbanded in violation of a positive understanding; and it is now proper that the authorities of this Territory should conduct the movements of their own troops-cooperating with the regulars where such cooperations can be effective. I therefore do not think the volunteers of this Territory should be mustered into the United States service. I am ready to take the responsibility of raising them, independent of that service and it is due to the Territory and to myself that the reasons for assuming it should go ~~on~~ to the President and the Departments at Washington.

The spirit of prosecuting this war should be to accomplish a lasting peace--not to make treaties, but to punish their violation.

The Gentlemen of the legislative assembly. I have done my duty. It was a pleasant feeling that actuated me on my mission, in making these treaties, to think it was doing something to civilize and render the conditions of the Indian happier; and while justice and mercy should characterize the acts of our government, there should be no weakness--no imbecility. In nations as well as individuals

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The Governor of Washington to the Secretary of War
Executive office, Washington Territory
Olympia, March 9, 1856.

Sir: Referring to my previous communication, setting forth the necessity of calling out volunteers to protect our settlements and to cooperate with our regular troops in waging war upon the hostile Indians I have the honor to submit for your information of the department the present condition of the volunteer service.

The general plan of operation, and the staff arrangements made to give efficiency to the service will be shown in General Orders No. 4, herewith enclosed.

The northern battalion is now rendezvousing at the falls of the Snoqualmie, will number about ninety men and will be supported by Pat Kanim and his band of nearly one hundred friendly Indians. This battalion is ordered to establish block houses on the prairie above with sixty days' provisions and will prevent the Indians either crossing over the mountains by the passes of the Snoqualmie or going down the Sno-ho-mish, to tamper with the friendly Indians on the reservations.

The central battalion, under Major Gilmore Hayes, is now established at Connell's prairie, on the south side of White river, a block house and corral has been built and the communication with the rear is secured by a ferry and block house on the Puyallup and by block houses at Montgomery's and on the Yelm prairie. They have one hundred days' supplies of provisions taken in by ox-teams which have since been withdrawn and will immediately establish block houses at the crossing of White river to communicate with the regular force under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Casey on the Muckleshoot prairie and at Porter's higher up on White river

The cordial relations between the regulars and volunteers, mentioned in my last communication, still continue and I have every assurance that our volunteers will do their duty.

The department will observe that one of the companies of this battalion is a company of pioneers. They are experienced axemen and have rendered the most efficient service in opening roads and building block houses. The war will be emphatically a war of block houses.

In the movement of the troops upon the Muckleshoot, a decisive battle was fought with the Indians in which the latter were signally defeated. Their establishment at Porter's has since been broken up, and they have been driven towards Green river. If they continue their retreat further, they will be met by the volunteers and friendly Indians of the northern battalion.

The southern battalion is still organizing, but their march to the interior will be delayed for a short time, in consequence of my finding myself obliged to order more than one company to the defence of the Sound. A band of hostiles under the notorious Qui-emuth, had unknown to us, established themselves in the Nisqually bottom within twelve miles of this place and the garrison at Steilacoom. We became aware of their presence one week since they having on that day killed one of our citizens.

One of the teamsters had been for some days missing, and he also had been killed was ascertained the same day. The whole force of the central battalion, except fifteen men, was then in the Indian country on White river. Immediately an express was dispatched to the Columbia river, ordering Captain Maxon's mounted company to the Sound, and tonight his company will be at Jackson's, ninety miles on the road. The rapidity of the movement is the best evidence of the necessity of action, and the disposition of the troops to obey orders. In the meantime I have raised the force of fifteen

men to sixty and in addition have sent twenty-nine friendly Indians into the field. These Indians are led by experienced white men.

These hostiles have, within ten days, driven off much stock and have alarmed our entire settlements; we hope soon to rout them. It is necessary, however, to have considerable guards to all our trains. The mail from the Columbia river came in on Friday, with an escort of four men.

The danger is not so much from the harm which this band may of its own strength do, as it numbers not over forty warriors, but from the facility with which it may communicate with the friendly Indians on the reservations and stir them up to hostility. Seattle is held by a company of volunteers, consisting of forty odd men, commanded by the chief justice of the Territory, Lieutenant Colonel Lander.

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Lone Tree point which commands a trail from the camp of the hostiles to the Sound, whence they may communicate with the reservations, is also held by a volunteer force of ten men. They have built a substantial block house.

Our people are not discouraged. Wherever four families are, they will build a block house, hold it against the Indians and endeavor to get in their crops. Over one half of the able bodied men on the Sound are bearing arms; our people have patriotically placed at the disposal of the authorities all their available means. We need aid from the general government—ample appropriations to defray the expenses of the war.

I have refused to receive into service a single man for local defence; all are enlisted for six months, subject to the orders of the executive.

In this way an effectual stop has been put on any attempt to enrol troops for nominal service, with a view of extorting pay and rations

from the government.

I am sir, very respectfully, your most obedient

Isaac I. Stevens

Governor Territory of Washington

Hon Jefferson Davis

Secretary of War, Washington D.C.

General Orders No. 4

1st-~~The~~ 2d regiment of Washington Territory volunteers called into the service of the United States against the Yakima and other hostile Indian tribes will be organized into three battalions, to be designated respectively the northern, the central and southern battalions.

2d-~~The~~ northern battalion includes company G, commanded by Capt. Van Bokkelin; company I Captain Howe; a detachment of company H, Captain Peabody and will be commanded by a major to be elected by the command upon its concentration.

3d. It will receive supplies and transportation from quartermasters and missionary Robinson and move immediately up the river to the Snoqualmie falls.

4th-~~The~~ central battalion, commanded by Major Gilmore Hays, will comprise company B, Captain Rabbeson; Company C, Captain Henness (mounted rangers;) the train guard, Captain Shead, and the pioneer company, commanded by Captain White, with detachments of scouts, commanded by Captain Swindall, of company F and be supplied by Quartermaster and Commissary Weed, at the post of Olympia.

5th-~~This~~ battalion will march to the Muckleshoot prairie, establishing block houses at the Yelm prairie, at Montgomery's station and the crossing of the Puyallup river and forming a junction with the regulars, erect a depot, hospital and block

house at or near the forks of White and Green rivers.

6th-The southern battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Shaw, will organize from the companies now forming by Captains Maxen, Achilles, Higgins and Pearson upon the Columbia river, and will march to the Walla-Walla valley as soon as possible.

7th-The southern battalion will be supplied by Quartermaster and Commissioner Hathaway at Fort Vancouver.

8th-Officers commanding battalions will appoint adjutants for their commands.

9th-The battalion adjutant will conduct the military correspondence, make the necessary reports to this office and keep the papers of the battalion.

10th-Quartermaster and commissaries will make their reports to Quartermaster and Commissary General Miller at Olympia.

11th-Lieutenant Colonel Lander, commanding post at Seattle, will organize company A of the 2d regiment of Washington Territory

volunteers, with as many friendly Indians as may report to him, and make war upon the hostile savages infesting the forests between Elliott's bay and the country lying adjacent to Seattle and cooperate with the naval forces now in the bay of Seattle and will be supplied by Quartermaster and Commissary F. Mathias.

12th-Jared S. Hurd and H.R. Crosbie, esq. are appointed aids to the commander-in-chief with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

13th-Eustis Huger is appointed acting adjutant to the 2d regiment W.T. volunteers with the rank of first lieutenant.

14th-Sidney S. Ford, jr. is appointed a captain and detached for the special service of organizing a force of friendly Indians of the Chehalis and Cowlitz tribes for operation upon the Puyallup.

15th-Captain C.W. Riley, with the force raised in Steilacoom will build a fort at Lone Tree Point north of the mouth of the Puyallup and occupy that post until further orders.

16th--Harren Cove is appointed quartermaster and commissary at the post of Stalacoon.

17th--A.H. Robie is appointed quartermaster and commissary of subsistence at the Dalles.

18th--G.K. Willard to be surgeon and purveyor of medicine and medical stores at headquarters.

19th--M.P. Burns is appointed a surgeon in the 2d regiment and ordered for duty with the central battalion.

20th--Dr. R.M. Bigelow, surgeon for the northern battalion.

21st--The officer commanding the southern battalion will appoint a surgeon for his command, and report his name to this office, that a commission may issue.

22d--Edward Furste is appointed chief clerk to the quartermaster and commissary general.

23rd--James Roberts is appointed military clerk to the office of the commander-in-chief.

24th--In all service of combined volunteer and Indian military forces, the military officer will take command of the whole.

25th--All officers commanding are requested to make reports to this office as frequently as practicable.

By order of the governor and commander-in-chief.

James Tilton

Adjutant General W.T. Volunteer Forces.

Headquarters, Olympia, W.T. February 25, 1856.