

11/17/1880
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Mr. A.S. Baird,
Mrs. Lavinia Dextater and
Other Oneida Indians,

Oneida, Wisconsin.

My friends:

From the letter addressed by you to the Secretary which comes into my hands with one from Carl W. Hill of the firm of Hill and Thomann, attorneys at Madison, Wisconsin, I note that many of you, through failure to pay the taxes assessed against your lands since the expiration of the trust period or the issuance of patents in fee, have lost the lands or are unable to raise the money to redeem them and that you believe that your hardships are, in the main, the result of fraudulent dealings on the part of real estate men and speculators.

I very greatly regret that such misfortune should have befallen any Indians who for so long a period had the supervisory protection of the Government. It is unnecessary for me to tell you of all the careful consideration that was given, preliminary to a final decision on the action proper to be taken for the Oneidas at the end of the 25 year trust period. You, or most of you, were doubtless resent at the meetings called at Oneida, where every member of the tribe had opportunity to set forth the reasons for and against a closing out of our jurisdiction over your affairs. With the advantages of more than 50 years' association with missionaries, Government officials, white settlers and the advantages of education in non reservation schools, which a large number of the younger members enjoyed, the Government was satisfied that your further progress depended upon your own efforts.

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For the assistance, however, of all members who were not self-reliant, a financial clerk has been maintained at Oneida. From matters which have come before me, I understand that only a comparatively few Oneidas availed themselves of advice from this source. On the contrary, many sold their undivided interests in inherited lands to dealers, who came to them, for less than their value. This gave their purchasers the right, under the State laws, to petition the local court for a partition of the tracts or if the lands could not be partitioned, for a sale. This course involved large and needless expense for court charges and attorney fees. The sale of land by the court frequently brought a lower price than might otherwise be obtained. This Office is not able to guard the Indians from loss thus brought about.

Concerning taxation, it is understood that for the lands patented in November 1920, the first taxes assessed were for the year 1921. But if through mistake assessments were made before the lands became subject to taxation, there is provision in the laws of Wisconsin for a rebate or refund. I am sending a copy of this letter to Superintendent Edgar A. Allen and asking him to take up with the taxing authorities of the county, the question of rebate or refund for such of the Indians as may apply to him. This does not mean that any Indian may expect a rebate or refund for the asking but Mr. Allen will ascertain the status and if taxes have been assessed before the lands became subject thereto or if the assessments were higher than they should have been, it is believed the taxing authorities will make proper correction when the matter is brought to their attention.

It must be understood by all that citizens who enjoy the privileges of good roads, school facilities, state institutions and other benefits, should be ready to assume some responsibility toward

the community and the state. It is the same whether the citizens be Indians or white, ignorant or educated.

It is my hope that the Onaida Indians may become a prosperous and influential factor in the development of their counties. Whether this is to be realized or not the success of every Indian must depend upon himself.

Your friend,

(Signed) Chas. H. Buckle

Commissioner.