

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL WITH THE CROW INDIANS

Fort Laramie, Dakota Territory
November 12th, 1867

At ten o'clock a.m. on Tuesday, the 12th inst, the Commission met the Crows in Council, the proceedings of which were opened by Commissioner Taylor as follows:

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR

My friends! Chiefs, Headmen and Warriors of the Crow Nation. Of one blood the great Spirit made all people. We are therefore brethren. At our invitation you have come a long way, through much difficulty, to meet us. We have travelled a great distance to see you and to take you by the hand as friends and brothers. Your great Father at Washington, though so far away from you, is well informed of your friendship towards us. He knows also of the many proofs of faithfulness you have given to the government in past times. He knows also of some of the difficulties and troubles that surround you. He has sent us to see you in order that he may learn more fully, from your own lips, your true situation, and that he may take all necessary steps to remove those difficulties, and to make your way smooth for the future.

We learn that valuable mines have been discovered in your country which in some instances are taken possession of by the whites. We learn that roads are laid out and travelled through your land, that settlements have been made upon your lands, that your game is being driven away and is fast disappearing. We know also that the white people are rapidly increasing and are taking possession of and occupying all the valuable lands. Under these circumstances we are sent by the great Father and the Great Council in Washington to arrange some plan to relieve you, as far as possible, from the bad consequences of this state of things and to protect you from future difficulties.

We desire to set apart a tract of your country as a home for yourselves and children forever, upon which your great Father will not permit the white man to trespass. We wish you to make out a section of country that will suit you for this purpose. When that is set apart, we desire to buy of you the right to use and settle the rest, leaving to you however, the right to hunt upon it as long as the game lasts. Upon the reservations you select, we propose to build a house for your agent to live on, to build a mill to saw your timber, and a mill to grind your wheat and corn,

when you raise any; a blacksmith shop and a house for your farmer, and such other buildings as may be necessary. We also propose to furnish to you homes and cattle, to enable you to begin to raise a supply or stock with which to support your families when the game was disappeared. We desire also to supply you with clothing to make you comfortable and all necessary farming implements so that you can make your living by farming. We will send you teachers for your children. Our hearts are glad to see you and you shall not leave us empty handed. There are presents for you on the road which we expect here every day. They ought to be here now. We will show our friendship by our acts. We wish to hear from you everything you have to say. We will consider it well and answer you in a friendly spirit.

BEAR'S TOOTH

I have come a long way to see you. I am very poor. My horses are all tired. In coming it was very cold. We had no wood to make any fires. (Turning to General Harney.) You are now getting old. The weather is cold, so I will give you my robe, and place it on your shoulders.

Last spring, I came to the Garrison on the Big Horn. They told me that the Great Father was calling for me. Our agent talked to me about coming here. I told him if my great Father would meet me at Phil Kearney, I would listen to him and agree to all he said. I was on the Yellowstone when the leaves were falling from the trees. Your messenger brought me ten plugs of tobacco from you. He told me that the Commission was not coming to Fort Phil Kearney and he told us to come here. Since I have come here I want you to do what I ask you. There is no wood, water, or buffalo this side of Phil Kearney. I was very hungry on the way. I have been waiting for you here a long while.

Look at me right. I am a person like you and have the same limbs and blood. I wish to live a long time and I want you to prosper us. I have plenty of children and I want them to live a long time. Your young men scare away the game and I have none left. I came to see you on this account. I want you to take pity on me and call back your young men from the country of the Big Horn. Your young men have destroyed the young grass and have set the country on fire. They kill the game, not because they want it. They leave it to rot on the roadside. Suppose I were to go into your country and destroy your cattle? But no, I would not do so. I have a good strong heart. The Sioux have given me a great many hundreds of horses and mules to join them in fighting you, but I have not done so, and I am still here shaking hands with you.

A long time ago you made a treaty with my nation, the Crows, and took one of us to Washington. He has been gone a long time and has not returned. We now want to get anything which he may have here. We are tired of waiting for him. You called for the Sioux the same as you did for us. You sent them tobacco. You sent them very little. You sent them packhorses. The Sioux told us to come and listen to you and then return and tell them what we had heard. They told us that you were going to fool us and not give us back our country and that you would play us the same trick you did them. They told us that if your words were good they would follow our tracks. In going back to my country, I expect to lose a great many horses. Take pity on me. I am not ashamed to talk to you. I am speaking from a full heart. The great Spirit made us all. We are surrounded by the whites. Take some of your heart and put it in with mine and try to make of me a good man. All my people, for a long time, have been friendly to the whites. Some time ago, a white Chief struck one of my people on the head with a revolver. On the Yellow Stone there were four white people. Four Indians, two of them Chiefs, went over and asked for bread. One of the whites pulled out a revolver and shot two of the Indians. One died. The whites have killed a brother of one of my young men, Wolf Bow, who went and joined the Blackfeet. We went and joined the Blackfeet. We looked over it and have never mentioned it until now.

If I were to kill you, we would all be killed by your people. There was a party of whites encamped near us one night when there was no fire or moon. We thought it was a war party of Sioux so we fired into it. We were sorry when we found it was a white camp. We are bad for doing so, but it was my young men. I went along the Missouri River to try and find some white Chief to whom I could tell of my bad doings in firing into that camp. I went to Fort Benton to beg pardon of the Commander there, and to give him a great amount of robes and mules and horses for doing that bad act. I paid for my badness. When I found your young men on the Big Horn, I was glad to meet them; so that I could often visit them. They drove me away. I want you to pay me for coming here. You talk about farming for me and raising stock. I don't like to hear that. I was raised on game and I would like to live as I was raised. If I were brought up like you, our arms would be strong, and I could work like you. We want to kill our own game and be glad. All the Crows feel as I do. We want Dr. Matthews to remain as our agent. (Taking off his Moccasins and offering them to Commissioner Taylor.) I have nothing else to give you. It is cold weather, but take them.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR

I accept them as a token of friendship. I will borrow the warmth of your blood to make me warm.

BLACK FOOT

I was raised and born on the dust, but I shake hands with you all. I am glad to see you. I have come a long way. (Presenting a robe to Commissioner Taylor.) I make you a present of this robe. It is cold. Take it to cover yourself. The Crows used to own all this Country including all the rivers of the West. When I was a boy, we had no iron to make arrow heads, knives, or axes; and we would roam the prairie and pick up old shoulder blades to make all the things we needed. Then we had no white man among us. We would pick up flints to make a fire and to make arrows and knives. My grandmother used to take a tripe and make a kettle out of it to cook in and also to carry water with.

You speak of putting us on a reservation and teaching us to farm. We were not brought up to that and are not able to do it. That talk does not please us. We want horses to run after the game, and guns and ammunition to kill it. I would like to live just as I have been raised. I know the Great Spirit made a man and woman to live together. We were brought up to fight our enemies, and we do so. The Great Spirit made me not to wash my hands in the blood of the whites. I will never kill or scalp a white man. I am talking with a good, honest heart now. I will advise my young men to do nothing bad. I have a clear conscience and am ashamed of nothing. I want my Great Father to love me all the time.

A long time ago a treaty was made with us. Our agent told us the great Father wanted to see us. We had an enemy's country to go through, but we went. We sold them the California road. They were to give us goods for fifty years. One of our men went to the States some sixteen years ago. We want to know where he is, and to get everything he may have. We did not get the goods promised to us for fifty years. We only received them once. (The Indian he speaks of stepped off the Steamboat going down the river when near St. Joseph, and got drowned.)

We have nothing now, not even a knife. We are very poor and keep getting poorer. The great spirit has forgotten me. We are being surrounded by the whites and by other nations. Our country is getting smaller and smaller. The whites have made two branches of a road besides the California and have cut up the best game country we have. I suppose my great Father was brought up to the use of all good things. I was born and raised naked. He has put his heart to mine. I want you to protect me and to let me live as long as yourselves. I love my children and

want *them* to love you strong, and not a little. Do the same by me. You would be mad if I were to go into your country and kill all your stock. I cannot go anywhere without coming on some of your people. What have we done to be served in that way? I would like to have them called in and the Road stopped. (Meaning the Powder River Road.) Your people do not make anything by that Road that I can see.

I am in earnest with you. All the Indians have been trying to make me fight you and join them. Your people going through the Country looking for gold are the ones who cause us much trouble. When I go to any travelling party of your people and ask for food, they strike me on the head with a club and run me off. When our nation was first called to meet the Commission, we wanted to go to Phil Kearney. We were told you could not go there so we agreed to come here. Up to this time we have been told nothing but lies and we hardly believe now. Give us a good agent. Give us a copy of the treaty that you will make with us. Our present agent is a good man and will not fool us. The food of the white man is not good for us. It makes us sick.

A long time ago we were rich in horses. Now we have but few. When we get back to camp, what we have will die. Give me some horses to go to my camp. Last summer a lot of goods were promised me. All I received was damaged flour which killed a good many of us. My father told me a big lie. (Referring to Judge Kinney.) I think the words of the Great Father will come to me straight now this time, as General Harney is a good man, and I see him here.

WOLF BOW

None of us ever fought against you. We have never been your enemies. I am speaking and will always speak the truth. You want me to go on a reservation and farm. I do not want to do that. I was not raised so. I was not raised on hog meat or cattle. I love buffalo meat and want to remain on my own land. Here are my children behind me. There are yours behind you. Call off your young men from the Powder River road and let that road be abandoned. If you do that, I will think you love me. You white people love your own provisions. Don't trouble my country any more with roads but send every thing up by steam boat. Put the Sioux Indians in their own country and keep them from troubling us. Don't stop fighting them.

The Council then adjourned. The Commissioners agreed to meet the Crows at ten o'clock a.m. Wednesday, the 13th inst, for the purpose of making with them a treaty of peace.

Second Day's Proceedings
Fort Laramie, Dakota Territory
Nov. 13th, 1867

The Council was opened by Commissioner Taylor who replied to the speeches of the Crow Chiefs in Council yesterday, as follows:

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR

Chiefs, Headmen, and Warriors of the Crow Nation. On yesterday you met us in Council and spoke freely. We were glad to hear you because you have always been our friends. We have considered what you have said and I now, in the name of the Commission, answer you. A man can well afford to give friendship for friendship. You spoke of several injuries you received at the hands of white people. If you had not been true to us, you might have gone to war with us, but

because your hearts were warm, you forgot those injuries. When the Great Father hears of your injuries he will be sorry. He has some bad children who commit those things without his knowledge, but he is always willing to make you amends. He will be pleased to know, that you did not go to war. We hope you will always act in the same friendly spirit.

When you have any grievance to complain of, always go to your agent. He will inform your Great Father, and he will have you righted. You speak about our people killing game and leaving it to rot. We are sorry to hear that, but we cannot have our children always under control. We will try to prevent it in future. On account of your refusing to join the Sioux against us, when urged to do so, you are dearer to us than ever. We hope when you return to your country that you will inform the Sioux of our promises and that they will be induced to make peace. We will not allow you to come to us at a heavy cost. You say you have lost a good many horses in coming here and will lose more in returning. We will show you that we know how to reward our friends. We will give you horses, if any can be procured here.

Your countryman of whom you spoke yesterday, went to Washington, was well treated and returned as far as the Missouri River. When last seen he was on a steamboat with many presents which the whites had given him. He disappeared without the knowledge of anybody. He must have been murdered by some bad people or have fallen overboard from the steamer. This Commission did not know anything of it until they arrived here and made some inquiries about him. They propose to give your nation two horses to make you feel glad. You can dispose of them as you see fit. You object to being placed on a reservation and to farming because you were raised wild on the prairie. Formerly you could find all the game you needed but now the buffalo have entirely disappeared from a large portion of your country. The game will soon entirely disappear.

Our people were formerly confined to the eastern country but they are rapidly spreading all over the West. Your great Father looks ahead and wishes to preserve, for your own use, some of the good lands as a reservation for you and your children forever. He does not wish to force you to settle down immediately, but simply to keep a place for you, free from the intrusion of the white men. You will still be free to hunt as you are now. You ask us to abandon the Powder River road and to withdraw our troops from that line. The great Father has sent us here to examine that matter, and when we sent for you and the other Indians, we expected to council together in reference to it. We are sorry that all who are interested in that road are not here. If they were, we might settle the question at once, but as only a few are here, we can only tell you what to say to the Sioux when you return. We will consider your wishes in that respect.

We will meet you next spring and settle the matter. The season is so far advanced, the distance to your country is so great, and the property is so bulky and heavy, that we could not leave the posts this winter, if we would, without great loss and suffering. If you will stop the war and keep the peace in good faith until we hold our peace Council next year, we may do as you wish us to do about the road and the posts. But if you go to war we can make no promises, but that we will meet war with war. We hold that road to protect our people against bad Indians. If war continues, the road and posts will be held. If we do not abandon the road in the spring, we will pay you for it. The Great Father prefers peace. He loves his red children and does not want them to perish.

BLACK FOOT

What you have told me today is all good. The Sioux are fighting you, what for, I do not know. I went into the Sioux camp on Tongue River to learn why they were fighting. They told me it was on account of the Powder River Road and that as soon as that road was stopped, they would stop fighting. The Man Afraid of his Horses told me that. All the whites love him. He is

my brother-in-law. When I return to my country, I will tell them all what you have said, and they will be glad. We would like to have the troops withdrawn from our country this winter. The Sioux say they cannot come here now but will come in the spring, when the grass grows.

We are not very numerous, but are very strong and powerful. There is plenty of buffalo, deer, elk, and antelope in my country. There is plenty of beaver in all the streams. There is plenty of fish too. I never yet heard of any of the Crow Nation dying of starvation. I know that the game is fast decreasing, and whenever it gets scarce, I will tell my Great Father. That will be time enough to go farming. Your people like to get my country for nothing. That is not right. I want to be paid for it. I believe all you tell me, and whatever you give me, I will be satisfied with. You are speaking of making a treaty now. You have not kept the promises made to us in the last treaty. We have only received goods once, when we ought to have received them every year.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR

The goods were sent by the Great Father but were stolen by his agents. We will report the matter to him and have you righted.

WOLF BOW

You have talked good and straight to me today. I am not a fool. I am peaceable and yet you refused me ammunition. The Sioux are trying to get me to join them, but I want to stay with the whites. I do not want my country made the battle ground of the Sioux, as you might think my nation was mixed up with them. If any of your young men want to seek for gold, let them travel on the river. They have good boats. Let those who have no boats travel on the other side of the Missouri where there is a good trail. I will give you those two trails, one by water, and one by land. I will not give you the Powder River Trail. If you keep on going there, I will get into trouble. There is plenty of gold in our country. I have got some of it. I know where there are plenty of gold mines, but I did not like to tell anybody because there would be so many people come to us. All our people are good. If you give us horses, we will pay you with buffalo robes which we will dress and give our agent.

GENERAL SANBORN

We have drawn up a treaty. Will you sign it now, or at the meeting in Spring?

BLACK FOOT

There are hard feelings between you and the Sioux and it is better to wait until spring, when you will meet them, and you can ascertain their feelings towards you. We will wait until you come to Phil Kearney and you can see all the Indians together. We will then sign the treaty.

Two Arapahoe Chiefs, Sorrel Horse and the Coal, came forward and stated that they represented the whole nation of Northern Arapahoes and that they were authorized to inform the Commission of the willingness of that nation to sign a treaty of peace. Sorrel Horse spoke as follows:

I have done today what I have often wished to do. I have shaken hands with you all. I have no claim in the country of the Platte. That belongs to the Crows. I was raised between the North and South Platte. That is my country. You have sent for the Sioux who are very slow to listen to you. I was camped further away than they were, but as soon as I heard you wanted me, I came right away. My heart is very glad to see you. My old men told me they would be looking for me so that they could hear good news from you. I am living with the Sioux on the other side of the North Platte, but I am afraid, and I wish to go on the other side of the South Platte. There are very good streams up there and I want you to choose me a place there on which to

live. That is why I came here. I want you to build houses where I can live all my life. All my nation wish for cattle and all kinds of farming implements. I want to learn how to raise corn and wheat.

You have come a long way to see us and only a few of us are here. What you have done with the Southern Arapahoes is good and, I hope, you will do the same to us of the North. Just before I started, the Man Afraid of His Horses and his band came to me and told me he was glad I was coming to see you and that he and his young men had the same feeling towards you as I had. He wanted to shake hands with you again. The Cheyennes told me the same. Little Wolf and Old Bear told me that. They are Chiefs of the Cheyennes. They said whatever you did would please them. When the next moon is full, I think I will move south of the Platte near Fort Saunders with a few of my lodges, no matter how high the snow is. All the nations will come in in the Spring. The snow falls very deep in my country and the winters are very severe. We cannot hunt but in small parties and as we have not the privilege to hunt in large parties, we will leave that country. I wish to return home as soon as possible and make robes.

I want you to give me something to eat when I leave my country. My whole nation will be pleased when they hear what I have been saying to you. I must hunt to live. Our powder is very scarce and I want you to give me some. I am camped a little on one side of the Sioux. The old people will ask me for tobacco when I get back.

Fort Laramie, Dakotah Territory
November 13th, 1867

A meeting of the Indian Peace Commission was held at this place at 6 p.m. this day. Present: Commissioners Taylor, Sanborn, Harney, Terry, Augur and Tappan.

On motion of Mr. Tappan, it was voted that General Augur be requested to furnish, without delay, fifty (50) Pawnee Indian Ponies to the Commission (at \$80.00 each) to be presented to the Crow delegation now here.

The Commission adjourned at 6:30 p.m.