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Letter from George Sibley to Thomas Hart Benton, February 2, 1830

George Champlin Sibley
St. Louis, Missouri

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Saint Louis, February 2. 1830

Sir,

You will not I trust, deem it intrusive for me to call your attention to the yet unsettled accounts of the late Commissioners on the Road from Missouri to N. Mexico, upon which they claim a balance of 1504 54/100 Dollars for expenditures actually made by them out of the ____, beyond the sum appropriated by Congress: and which was of necessity expended in order to complete the object of the law under which they acted. The Accounts of expenditures, were rendered in proper form, to the appropriate offices at the Seat of Government more than two years ago; and the necessary appropriation to meet the Balance due, has been asked by the Secy, of War, from the committee of Ways and Means. - But owing to some erroneous impressions on some other cause; that committee has refused on omitting last years to report this claim to Congress, and we are consequently desired even to this day, the repayment of the Money so justly due to us.

I am very certain Sir, that the real merit of this claim must have been overlooked or misconceived by the committee, about this delay of Justice could not have occurred. I am arguably sure, that it is within your power and influence to correct the erroneous impressions of the Committee, and to procure the appropriation asked and I cannot permit myself to doubt for an instant your readiness to render such aid as may be proper and necessary to effect that aid. Because when about to carry the Act of Congress into effect the late commissioners felt, and if I mistake not, expressed to you their apprehensions that the appropriation was insufficient; but they were, in a degree, relieved from their embarrassment in that respect by your assurances that no difficulty whatever would occur in promptly obtaining an additional appropriation, of even ten thousand dollars; if necessary, to carry the object of the law into effect. And as I remember, you even advised the comsnr. not to limit their plan of operation too strictly to limited means at their disposal, but to allow themselves freely a latitude proportioned to the great importance, as you considered it, of the work before them, refusing on the prompt repayment of any sum they might find it necessary to advance.

That the commissioners faithfully excepted their duty; assigned them. No one can pretend to deny; and it is very certain that they observed a proper economy in their expenses. Effecting completely the object of the Government, and notwithstanding the many difficulties and great delays they had to encounter, so husbanded the funds placed at their disposal, as to be able very nearly to accomplish their work with the sum appropriated. -

I will take this occasion to remark that in my opinion the Report of the Comsnrs. On the Road ought to have been published long ago, for the information of the Public. Has this been done, I believe the embarrassments that have been experienced in the trade to N. Mexico, the loss of lives and of property might have been prevented. -

For myself, I never in my life entered with more zeal into any service, or felt more interested in the proper performance of duty, than in that above referred to. In accordance with your __ views which I sincerely entered into, I made it [hole in page] business not only to ascertain and establish the best route for the trade, but I took a wide view of the whole subject. Sought & discovered & parsed out the dangers to which the trade might be liable and as I believe, suggested the sure means of avoiding and removing them in the report.

And I am yet of opinion that it is over to the Public if not to the commissioners, that the report should be published.

I am Sir, respectfully

Yr. Mo. Obt. Svt.

G. C. Sibley

Hone: Tho. H. Benton

Senator from Missouri

Washington City.