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OFFICE OF  
Indian Affairs  
Rec'd MAY 4

1896

E. O. Vincent.

Ft. Defiance, Ariz.

April 27, 1896,

Rel. to destruction of  
head-gate by Show-ape,  
clerk, and waste of  
water from Red Lake  
Reservoir -

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RG 75 Bureau of Indian Affairs  
E.91(PI-163) Letters Received, 1881-1907

Year 1896  
Letter # 16882

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Camp R. L.

# Department of the Interior,

U. S. INDIAN SERVICE,

Fort Defiance, Arizona.

April 27, 1896.

The Honorable

Commissioner of Indian Affairs,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

Under date of April 21 I wired you as follows:

By whose authority did Shomaker and others destroy headgate thereby wasting millions of water from Red Lake reservoir.

and I have received your reply stating that my telegram was not understood and directing me to submit a full report by letter.

In compliance with these directions I have the honor to submit the following statement:

The Red Lake work was a pronounced success from an engineering point of view, and by the construction of an earth dam, the cost of which was insignificant, I had succeeded in impounding and retaining a body of water with a maximum length of 2 miles and a width of 1 mile, and an average depth of about 4 feet. This water was obtained principally from surface drainage, which had previously run off without benefit to any one, and partly by the diversion, through the aid of another dam, of a small intermittent stream known as Black Creek.

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Near one end of the dam which closes Red Lake I had constructed a sluice with a gate, and this gate served also as the head gate of a ditch which ran from this point about half a mile and discharged into Black Creek about half a mile below the dam in that creek. The plans required a flume across Black Creek at this point and a continuation of the ditch beyond, and by this ditch many hundreds of acres of fine land would have been brought under the water; but owing to my inability to procure lumber the flume was not built last year when the other work was completed.

When I reached Red Lake I found that the head gate, which had stood uninjured for a year, had been taken out bodily, and some of the upper works had been broken away. A stream of water of the full capacity of the sluice way, 1 foot by 3 feet in section, was being discharged into the ditch, which had broken under the pressure and was badly washed out in several places. I am informed that this destruction was accomplished two weeks before and that the waste of water had continued from that time until I stopped it. In that time the level of the water in the reservoir had been lowered 2 feet, and at a low estimate 520 millions gallons of water were wasted.

I am informed that this destruction and waste was accomplished by one Shomaker, an employee of the Agency, and I presume he had some authority or orders to support him, otherwise his

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action is most remarkable. The pretext upon which this was done was that the Indians holding farms upon the creek near the railroad, some 40 miles below this point, were complaining of lack of water, as they wished to irrigate their land before plowing; but no one who knows anything about irrigation would think for a moment of irrigating land from a storage reservoir 40 or 50 miles away, and especially at this season. Black Creek at this time of the year seldom carries water below, or even as far as Fort Defiance. Furthermore, the snow has only recently gone off from this country---there is still a little in the mountains--- and the ground is moist everywhere. I know that nothing has yet been planted between Red Lake and Defiance, and in fact the water in pockets about Red Lake is covered with ice every night now: this ice disappears during the day and forms again the succeeding night. It appears, therefore, that extensive farming operations could hardly be in progress. Had it been necessary or desirable in any way to let water into Black Creek an hour's work with a shovel would have sufficed to cut off the flow of the creek from the reservoir and send it over the spill-way of the dam, thereby sending down the creek the same amount of water that it would have carried had no dam been constructed. The water in the old lake has never been of the slightest advantage to those below that point, and the water of the storage reservoir was intended to be applied only to lands

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within a mile or two. By my opportune arrival about two-thirds of the water in the reservoir was saved; had I not arrived when I did the reservoir in a short time would have been drained dry and the enormous waste of water that has occurred has not, so far as I can discern, benefited any one a particle. Stored water is especially valuable at this time of the year, for the intake from melted snow is now practically completed, and the loss from evaporation will now progress at an increasing rate until the rainy season in August. A storage reservoir, to be of use, should be as full as possible at this season of the year.

If this reservoir was opened by the orders of the Office very little intelligence was exhibited in carrying out ~~the~~ these orders. The reservoir could have been opened and 3 or 4 times the amount of water usually carried by Black Creek could have been let into that stream without the slightest damage to the works, and without the immense waste that has taken place. I have put a force of men to work to repair the damage done, but I cannot restore the water that has been wasted. I shall keep these men on the work or leave a sufficient guard to protect it until such time as I can formally turn it over to the Agent, after which my responsibility ceases. This I hope to accomplish within two weeks.

In this connection I beg to state that the spill way

of the dam at the head of Cottonwood Pass ditch had been torn out when I reached there and I am satisfied that this was done by human hands. I have carefully examined the little stream of water upon which this dam is located, both above and below the dam, and I failed to find any sign whatever of exceptionally heavy floods since the dam was built. The structure is a crib dam, the timbers being held together by oak pins and heavy iron spikes, and there was an ample margin of strength to resist any flood to which it might be subjected. Furthermore I have carefully examined the bed of the stream below for some remains of the dam structure and failed to find any, but I did find a number of logs, of less weight than those in the dam, which have certainly been in position over a year. Upon inquiry among the Indians I was informed that "the boys" (meaning any body of men) tore out the work; but so far I have been unable to obtain any more definite information.

So far as my experience among them goes the Navajos appear to appreciate the work that has been and is being done for them, and I cannot believe that any of them would destroy this work on their own accord. It is my earnest desire to clean up and repair these ditches as rapidly as possible and to formally turn them over to the Agent, so that my responsibility for them may cease.

Respectfully submitted,

*E. L. Vincent,*  
*Supt. & Spec. Disbg. Agent.*