

CASS TO ARMSTRONG

Detroit Decr 17. 1813

Sir,

I am about to surrender the command of this post, and its dependencies, to Lieut Colo Butler of the 28th, and to leave here for Albany, agreeably to orders, rec'd yesterday, to attend as a witness the trial of Brig Gen: Hull.

Permit me, sir, upon this occasion; to communicate to you, more in detail, my opinion respecting this country and its prospects, than, under other circumstances, would be necessary, or, perhaps, proper.

This duty is rendered the more imperious, since the information which reached us yesterday, that our Armies, below, had taken up their winter quarters, without attaining the ultimate object of the campaign. I have anxiously looked to that quarter, for some brilliant operation—well knowing the effect it would have upon the Indians, and the disaffected, in this country

The part of Upper Canada now under our controul, extending from Point au plait to the Moravian town, a distance of about 130 miles, contains, probably, near 8000 inhabitants. It is divided into three districts: One from point au plait to Amherstburg—One from that place to the river Trench—and one upon that river. The middle district contains, principally, a french population.

The people of the other districts are, in a great measure, old tories, who fled from our country during the revolution. The canadian inhabitants of the country, I believe, are really, attached to us. The others are, with equal sincerity, and more zeal, attached to the cause of the enemy. Every injury they can do us, short of acts of open hostility, they will do.

The Indians are restless and uneasy. British emissaries and agents are at work among them. They have rec'd, from us, neither presents nor annuities; and their situation is such, as requires immediate relief. They are destitute of ammunition, of clothing, and, almost, of provisions. You may rely upon it, that they are preparing for an attack, waiting the turn of events, and, perhaps, expecting the aid of a small British force.

The importance which the Canadian Government attach to the co-operation of of [sic] an Indian force, and the assistance which they have heretofore rec'd from

it, is well known, and I am convinced, they will use every exertion to regain their former influence with the Indian tribes.

In this state of things, I think the course dictated by wisdom, and sound policy, is, to extend towards them the hand of friendship; to be liberal in our supplies of clothing and provisions; and to invite them, as soon as circumstances will permit, to hold a general treaty at Brownstown.

The embarrassment, occasioned by the disaffection of the inhabitants, and the discontent of the Indians, is increased, by an incident which has recently occurred. A detachment of sixty five men, under Lieut Larwell of the 2d reg: of artillery, was sent to the river Trench, about fifty miles from here, for the purpose of administering, to the inhabitants, the oath of neutrality—of preventing any communication with the enemy—of preserving the peace of the country—and of procuring such supplies of provisions as could be spared by the inhabitants.

After day break, on the morning of the 15th, a part of this detachment, consisting of three subaltern officers, & thirty six privates, was surprized and carried off, by thirty five of the disaffected inhabitants of the country. The most of this party were living within our jurisdiction, and had rec'd our protection; and all of them were inhabitants of that country & its neighborhood.

The comg officer of the detachment had rec'd notice, the preceding day of their intentions; but, instead of preparing for their approach, it appears, that his detachment was divided by the river Trench, and that he, and his officers, were separated from his men. The enemy approached them undiscovered; and three subaltern officers, and 36 men, were taken by 20 persons—and, it is

believed, without discharging a musket in their defence. A transaction, infamous and unprecedented, like this, calls for harsh and rigorous measures. I have sent a strong detachment into that quarter, under Major Langham, with orders to investigate the facts, and to set fire to, and destroy, the property of every person concerned in this business.

I feel no disposition, unnecessarily to increase the calamities of war. But, satisfied I am, that measures of the harshest complexion will, alone, teach these people our rights, and their duty. I trust, my conduct will meet your approbation.

Accompanying this letter, I forward to you an abstract of the last monthly return. I do it, under an apprehension, that return may not have reached you. By it, you will see, how weak is our force, and how inadequate to any thing but defensive measures. I have taken the responsibility, as Governor of the Territory, of ordering about 200 of its militia into service. I do this, for the reasons given in my letter of the 11th inst.; added to the new complexion given to affairs, by relinquishing operations below, by the disaffection of the people, by the evident designs of the Indians, and I may add, in compliance with the wishes, or the fears, of the inhabitants of the Territory. To the residue of the militia, I shall distribute arms and ammunition, and I shall leave instructions with Lt Colo Butler, in the event of the approach of any considerable body of the enemy, to call out the whole population of the Territory. To receive, in Albany, your approbation of these measures, will relieve me from much anxiety.

I transmit, herewith, the copy of a letter, of this date, to Gov. Meigs. I request him to take measures, to have

that number of militia ready to receive your orders—because, if it is not approved by the Government, it will subject them to neither inconvenience, nor expense: And, if approved, they will be ready to move immediately, if you think the situation of this country requires an increase of the number of troops now here.

The first surrender of this country cost the U. S. too much reputation, and its subsequent recovery has cost too much treasure, to be lost for the want of adequate preparations.

The stock of provisions, on hand, is not so great as I could wish. Of meat, we have plenty; and we have flour enough to last till the middle of February. Before that, I trust, a supply can be obtained from Ohio.

Decr 19. 1813

Since writing the above, I have rec'd, from Lt Larwell, a letter, dated after his capture. It appears, that three of the party who carried him off, were British Dragoons from Burlington heights. The others, militia of the country. He attributes his surprize, to the negligence of his sentinels, and the misconduct of his own dragoons. They have, probably, taken him to Burlington heights.

Second *Lieut. Kouns*, of the 28th reg: of infy, merits promotion. He has, this day, returned from examining the country between the Lake and the river Trench. He has executed his orders, very much to my satisfaction. I earnestly recommend him to your attention.

Very respectfully,

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Hon. John Armstrong,
Sec'y of war.

Yo: ob: Sert
LEW CASS.