

WASHINGTON, Jan. 16.—The Commissioner of Indian Affairs has received from Elaine Goodale, Supervisor of Education, a letter dated Pine Ridge, Jan. 12, giving a report of the battle at Wounded Knee. Among other things it says:

"The testimony of the survivors of Big Foot's band is unanimous on one important point—namely, that the Indians did not deliberately plan a resistance. The party was not a war party according to their statements, which I believe to be true, but a party intending to visit the agency at the invitation of Red Cloud.

"The Indians say that many of the men were unarmed. When they met the troops they anticipated no trouble. There was constant friendly intercourse between the soldiers and the Indians, even women shaking hands with the officers and men. The demand for their arms was a surprise to the Indians, but the great majority of them chose to submit quietly. The tepees had already been searched and a large number of guns, knives, and hatchets confiscated when the searching of the persons of the men was begun. The women say that they too were searched, and their knives (which they always carry for domestic purposes) taken from them. A number of the men had surrendered their rifles and cartridge belts when one young man (who is described by the Indians as a good-for-nothing young fellow) fired a single shot. This called forth a volley from the troops, and the firing and confusion became general.

I do not credit the statement, which has been made by some, that the women carried arms and participated actively in the fight. The weight of testimony is overwhelmingly against this supposition. There may have been one or two isolated cases of this kind, but there is no doubt that the great majority of the women and children, as well as many unarmed men and youth, had no thought of anything but flight. They were pursued up the ravines and shot down indiscriminately by the soldiers.

It is reported that one of the officers called out, "Don't shoot the squaws," but the men were doubtless too much excited to obey. The killing of the women and children was in part unavoidable, owing to the confusion, but I think there is no doubt that it was in many cases deliberate and intentional. The Seventh Cavalry, Custer's command, had an old grudge to repay.

The party of scouts who buried the dead report 84 bodies of men and boys, 44 of women, and 18 of young children. Some were carried off by the hostiles. A number of prisoners, chiefly women, have since died of their wounds, and more will soon follow. The party which visited the battlefield on Jan. 1 to rescue any wounded who might have been abandoned, and brought in seven, report that nearly all the bodies of the men were lying close about Big Foot's Sibley tent, while the women and children were scattered along a distance of two miles from the scene of the encounter.