

MEMORIAL
OF
INDIAN DELEGATES

REMONSTRATING

Against the passage of an act providing for the organization of a United States Territorial government over the Indian country.

FEBRUARY 16, 1880.—Referred to the Committee on Territories and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States :

GENTLEMEN: We respectfully invite your attention to bills S. No. 854, S. No. 962, H. R. No. 450, H. R. No. 943, H. R. No. 3154, and other measures pending before you, looking to the establishment of a United States Territorial government over the thirty-four Indian nations and tribes of the Indian country, and to other material and fundamental changes in the relations of said nations and tribes with the Government of the United States.

Our purpose in calling your attention to these bills is, to respectfully but firmly remonstrate, as we now do, against the passage of either one of them, or any similar measure, for the following reasons:

1. Proposing, as they do, the establishment of a United States Territorial government over our respective nations, and the other thirty-three tribes of the Indian country, they are in violation of the national faith and public policy of your government in relation to all of these nations and tribes, as set forth in the act of Congress of May 28, 1830, entitled "An act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the States or Territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi," and are also subversive of our treaties made in pursuance of this act. (See U. S. Stats., vol. 4, p. 411.)

This act sets apart or fixes in perpetuity the lands our nations and the others referred to now own and occupy, and provides that *fee simple* patents in favor of these nations shall be issued to them for these lands, which have been issued for several years, and are now of record in the General Land Office, Interior Department; and further, pledges your government to protect these nations in the full enjoyment of their autonomy, as indicated in the following extracts from the act:

* * * That it shall and may be lawful for the President of the United States to cause so much of any territory belonging to the United States, west of the river Mississippi, not included in any State or organized Territory, and to which the "Indian title" has been extinguished, as he may judge necessary, to be divided into a suitable number of districts for the reception of such tribes or nations as may choose to exchange the lands where they now reside and remove there, and to cause such of said districts to be described by natural or artificial marks so as to be easily distinguished from every other. * * * That in the making of any such exchange or ex-

changes, it shall and may be lawful for the President solemnly to assure the tribe or nation with which the exchange is made, that the United States will forever secure and guarantee to them and their heirs and successors the country so exchanged with them; and if they prefer it, the United States will cause a *patent* or *grant* to be made and executed to them for the same: *Provided*, That such lands shall revert to the United States if the Indians become extinct or abandon the same. * * * That it shall and may be lawful for the President to cause such tribe or nation to be protected at their new residence against all interruption from any other tribe or nation of Indians, or from any other person or persons whatsoever. * * *

The most obtuse cannot fail to observe that this act is fully comprehensive and protective in its relation to our nations and the 33 others now located in the Indian country, and the archives of your government will show that it was founded in wisdom, from the fact that it was the result of the successive recommendations of such statesmen as Jefferson, Van Buren, Monroe, and Jackson.

Upon this act the nations and tribes of our country and your government have negotiated a series of treaties, that are remarkable for their clear and positive provisions for the protection of these nations in their rights of soil and self-government in their present homes. Lest we weary you, we will refer to but few of the most prominent provisions of these treaties, that the bills under consideration propose to violate.

The first treaty, however, to which we invite your attention, is that of 1828 (Revision Indian Treaties, p. 61), made two years before the act of 1830, but carefully preserved by that act. It provides:

Whereas, it being the anxious desire of the Government of the United States to secure to the Cherokee Nation of Indians, as well those now living within the limits of the Territory of Arkansas as those of their friends and brothers who reside in States east of the Mississippi, and who may wish to join their brothers of the West, a *permanent home, and which shall, under the most solemn guarantee of the United States, be and remain theirs forever—a home that shall never in all future time be embarrassed by having extended around it the lines or placed over it the jurisdiction of a State or Territory, nor be pressed by the extension, in any way, of any of the limits of any existing Territory or State.* * * * The United States agree to possess the Cherokees, and to guarantee it to them forever, and that guarantee is hereby solemnly pledged of seven millions of acres of land, to be bounded as follows:

(Here follows a description of the lands now occupied by the Cherokees, including the "outlet.")

And the same pledge is made by your government to the Cherokees in the treaty of 1833 (Revision of Indian Treaties, p. 61), and the treaty of 1835 (Revision of Indian Treaties, p. 69), and the treaty of 1846 (Revision of Indian Treaties, p. 79), made since the act of 1830.

The treaty of 1835 specifies that "the United States also agree that the lands ceded by the treaty of February 14, 1833, including the outlet, and those ceded by this treaty, shall all be included in *one patent*, executed to the Cherokee Nation of Indians by the President of the United States, according to the act of May 28, 1830." The same treaty provides:

The United States hereby covenant and agree that the lands ceded to the Cherokee Nation in the foregoing article shall, in no future time, without their consent, be included within the territorial limits or jurisdiction of any State or Territory, but they shall secure to the Cherokee Nation the right, by their national councils, to make and carry into effect all such laws as they may deem necessary for the government and protection of the persons and property within their own country, belonging to their own people or such persons as have connected themselves with them, and not inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States and the acts of Congress regulating trade and intercourse with the tribes.

In pursuance of these treaty stipulations and the act of Congress of May 28, 1830, alluded to, President Van Buren issued a *patent* to the Cherokees for the lands they now own under the date of December 31, 1838, which is now of record in the Interior Department. This patent

embraces all the lands of the Cherokees as well as the Cherokee neutral lands, now in Kansas, as the main body of their lands; and its granting condition reads as follows:

Therefore, in execution of the agreements and stipulations contained in the said several treaties, the United States have given and granted, and by these presents do give and grant unto the said Cherokee Nation, the two tracts of land (the main body now owned by the Cherokees, and the "neutral lands;" in Kansas) so surveyed and hereinbefore described, containing in the whole 13,374,135.14 acres, to have and to hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, and appurtenance thereto belonging, to the said Cherokee Nation forever; subject, however, to the right of the United States to permit other tribes of red men to get salt on the salt plain, on the western prairie, referred to in the 2d article of the treaty of the twenty-eighth of December, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-five, which salt plain has been ascertained to be within the limits prescribed for the outlet agreed to be granted by said article, and subject also to all the other rights reserved to the United States in and by the articles hereinbefore recited, to the extent and in the manner in which the said rights are so rendered, and subject, also, to the conditions provided by the act of Congress of the twenty-eighth of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty, and which condition is that the lands hereby granted shall revert to the United States if the said Cherokees become extinct or abandon the same.

The reversion of the lands to the United States referred to is but the reiteration of the old doctrine of "*escheats*," a condition that attaches to all fee-simple titles to lands, and the special provision for it in the case of the Cherokee lands is more of an admission than otherwise that the Cherokee Nation holds its lands in *fee simple*. (*Vide* decision of Supreme Court in the Cherokee case of *Holden vs. Joy*, 17 Wallace, p. 211.) The other rights named in the patents and treaties, outside of the salt plain, relate only to the establishment of "agencies, military stations, and reservations and roads." Whatever we have said, as regards the rights of soil and self-government, secured to the Cherokees through acts of Congress and treaty stipulations, is true, in fact, as before indicated with regard to Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw, and other Indian nations and tribes of the Indian country. We do not deem it necessary to quote in detail all the provisions of the treaties of these nations on the subject, as they can readily be adverted to by you in your treaty-book. But as an illustration of the terms of the treaties we will quote from some of them.

The Creek treaty of 1833 (Revision of Indian Treaties, p. 103), provides as follows:

The United States will grant a *patent in fee simple* to the Creek Nation of Indians for the lands assigned the said nation, by this treaty or convention, whenever the same shall have been ratified by the President and Senate of the United States, and the right thus guaranteed by the United States shall be continuous to said tribe of Indians, so long as they shall exist as a nation, and continue to occupy the country hereby assigned them.

The Creek and Seminole treaty of 1856 (Revision Indian Treaties, p. 105), declares:

The United States do hereby solemnly agree and bind themselves that no State or Territory shall ever pass laws for the government of the Creek or Seminole tribe of Indians, and that no portion of either of the tracts of country defined in the first and second articles of this agreement shall ever be embraced or included within, or annexed to, any Territory or State, nor shall either, or any part of either, ever be created into a Territory, without the *full and free consent of the legislative authority of the tribe owning the same*.

The 15th article of the same treaty secures the Seminoles and Creeks "*the unrestricted right of self-government*," so far as may not be inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States, and the laws made accordingly, regulating trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes, and gives them jurisdiction over all of their citizens and members of their tribes. Also by the Choctaw treaty of 1830 (Revision of Indian Trea-

ties), the United States agreed "to cause to be conveyed to the Choctaw Nation a tract of country west of the Mississippi River, in *fee simple*, to them and their descendants, to inure to them while they shall exist as a nation, and live on it." It was also agreed that:

The Government and people of the United States are hereby obliged to secure to the said Choctaw Nation of red people the *jurisdiction* and *government* of all persons and property that may be within their limits west, so that no State or Territory shall ever have a right to pass laws for the government of the Choctaw Nation of red people and their descendants; and that no part of the land granted them shall ever be embraced in any Territory or State; but the United States shall forever secure said Choctaw Nation from and against all laws, except such as, from time to time, may be enacted in their own national councils, not inconsistent with the Constitution, treaties, and laws of the United States, and except such as may, and which have been enacted by Congress to the extent that Congress, under the Constitution, is required to exercise a legislation over Indian affairs.

The Choctaw and Chickasaw treaty of 1855 (Revision Indian Treaties, p. 277), declares:

So far as may be compatible with the Constitution of the United States, and the laws made in pursuance thereof, regulating trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes, the Choctaws and Chickasaws, shall be secured in the *unrestricted right of self-government and full jurisdiction over persons and property within their respective limits*, * * * and all persons, not being citizens or members of either the Choctaw or Chickasaw tribe, found within their limits, shall be considered intruders, and removed from and kept out of the same.

The treaties of 1866 (Revision Indian Treaties, pp. 97, 121, 301, 817), between the United States and the Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, reaffirmed all former treaty stipulations, not inconsistent with those treaties, and provide that each nation shall have full protection as a nation or tribe, and that its persons and property shall be controlled by its own laws and customs, and with the positive *prohibition* that Congress shall have no right to legislate in regard to said nations or tribes, in any manner that will "*interfere with or annul their present tribal organizations, rights, laws, privileges, and customs.*" (Revision Indian Treaties, pp. 119, 287, 815.) As before indicated, the Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws, and Chickasaws also have *patents in fee simple* to their lands, the same as that granted to the Cherokees. By the references we have made, we trust we have shown to your satisfaction, that the Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws, and Chickasaws have guaranteed and secured to them, by the most sacred pledges your government can possibly make, rights of soil and self-government, which cannot in good faith be interfered with by Congressional legislation or otherwise without the consent of said nations; and as all of the lands and Indian nations and tribes of the Indian Territory are covered with the same guarantee of title and self-government, under the act of May 28, 1830, already referred to, it follows, as a matter of course, that all of the thirty-four tribes and nations of the Territory are entitled to the same protection.

Regarding the respect, force, and sanctity to which the treaties quoted are entitled, at your hands, we could refer to many decisions of the highest judicial tribunal of your government, the Supreme Court; but for present purposes we need only refer to the case already named of *Holden vs. Joy*, 17 Wallace, p. 211, in which that tribunal announced in 1871:

Indeed, treaties have been made by the United States with the Indian tribes ever since the Union was formed, of which numerous examples are to be found in the seventh volume of the public statutes. (*Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia*, 5 Pet., 17; *Worcester vs. Georgia*, 6 Pet., 543.)

Indian tribes are states in a certain sense, though not foreign states, or States of the United States, within the meaning of the second section of the third article of the

Constitution, which extends the judicial power to controversies between two or more States, between a State and citizens of another State, between citizens of different States, and between a State or the citizens thereof and foreign states, citizens, or subjects. They are not states within the meaning of any one of these clauses of the Constitution, and yet in a certain domestic sense, and for certain municipal purposes they are states, and have been uniformly so treated since the settlement of our country, and throughout its history; and numerous treaties made with them recognize them as a people capable of maintaining the relations of peace and war, of being responsible, in their political character, for any violation of their engagements, or for any aggression committed on the citizens of the United States by any individual of their community.

Laws have been enacted by Congress in the spirit of those treaties, and the acts of our government, both in the executive and legislative departments, plainly recognize such tribes or nations as states, and the courts of the United States are bound by those acts. (*Doe vs. Braden*, 16 How., 635; *Fellows vs. Blacksmith*, 19 How., 372; *Garcia vs. Lee*, 12 Pet., 419.)

Beyond doubt the Cherokees were the owners and occupants of the territory where they resided before the first approach of civilized man to the western continent, deriving their title, as they claimed, from the Great Spirit, to whom the whole earth belongs, and they were unquestionably the sole and exclusive masters of the territory, and claimed the right to *govern themselves by their own laws, usages, and customs*.

Guided by nautical skill, enterprising navigators were conducted to the New World. They found it, says Marshall, Ch. J., in possession of a people who had made small progress in agriculture or manufactures, and whose general employment was war, hunting, and fishing. Expeditions were fitted out by all the great maritime powers of the Old World, and they visited many parts of the newly discovered continent, and each made claim to such part of the country as they visited. Disputes arose, and conflicts were in the prospect, which made it necessary to establish some principle which all would acknowledge, and which should decide their respective rights in case of conflicting pretensions. Influenced by these considerations they agreed that discovery should determine the right, that discovery should give title to the government by whose subjects or by whose authority it was made, against all other governments, and that the title so acquired might be consummated by possession. (*Johnson vs. McIntosh*, 8 Wheat., 573.)

As a necessary consequence the principle established gave to the nation making the discovery the sole right of acquiring the soil and of making settlements on it. Obviously this principle regulated the right conceded by discovery among the *discoverers*, but it *could not affect the rights of those already in possession, either as aboriginal occupants or as occupants by virtue of a more ancient discovery*. It gave the exclusive right to *purchase*, but did not found that right on a *denial* of the right of the possessor to *sell*. Colonies were planted by Great Britain; and the United States, by virtue of the Revolution and the treaty of peace, succeeded to the extent therein provided to all the claims of that government, both political and territorial.

Throughout, the Indians, as tribes or nations, have been considered as distinct, independent communities, *retaining their original, natural rights as the undisputed possessors of the soil, from time immemorial*, subject to the conditions imposed by the discoverers of the continent, which excluded them from intercourse with any other government than that of the first discoverer of the particular section claimed. They could sell to the government of the discoverer but they could not sell to any other governments or their subjects, as the government of the discoverer acquired by virtue of their discovery the exclusive pre-emption right to *purchase*, and the right to exclude the subjects of all other governments, and even their own, from acquiring title to the lands.

Enough has already been remarked to show that the lands conveyed to the United States by the treaty were held by the Cherokees under their original title, acquired by immemorial possession, commencing ages before the New World was known to civilized man. *Unmistakably their title was absolute*, subject only to the pre-emption right of purchase acquired by the United States as the successors of Great Britain, and the right also on their part as such successors of the discoverer to prohibit the sale of the lands to any other governments or their subjects, and to exclude all other governments from any interference in their affairs. (*Mitchell et al. vs. United States*, 9 Pet., 748.)

UNITED STATES COURT.

We do not object to the establishment of a United States court in our country, as this is provided for by our treaties of 1866, as a distinct proposition; but as the treaties contemplate the establishment of such a court as now exercises only criminal jurisdiction over our people for purposes indicated in our treaties and the Indian intercourse acts of

Congress, we object to conferring *civil* jurisdiction upon the court to be established. Railroad corporations, claiming grants of our lands, may demand that civil as well as criminal jurisdiction be conferred upon this court to enable them to institute suit for perfecting their so-called grants, but we most emphatically object, as such jurisdiction is not warranted by our treaties, and is, moreover, without a precedent in defining the jurisdiction of the United States courts over Indian nations and tribes exercising the right of self-government, as do ours.

DELEGATE IN CONGRESS.

The provisions of the bills in question, proposing to make our people *citizens of the United States*, and to *force* them to send a "delegate" to Congress, are nothing less, in effect, than propositions to *change our fundamental relations with your government*; and which, if successful, will set aside our treaties and, like a regularly-organized Territorial government, would open our country to an overwhelming white emigration that would soon destroy our people.

There are thirty-four Indian nations and tribes within what is called the Indian Territory, viz: Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Pawnees, Keechies, Confederated Peorias, Eastern Shawnees, Absentee Shawnees, Black Bob Shawnees, Ottawas, Modocs, Sacs and Foxes, Mexican Kickapoos, Wichitas, Ionies, Wacos, Comanches, Towoccanies, Caddoes, Anadarkoes, Delawares, Kaws, Osages, Pottawattamies, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Wyandots, Quapaws, Senecas, Poncas, and Nez Percés; and no provision is made for a delegate in Congress in any of the various treaties with those tribes, except in the treaty of 1866 with the Choctaws and Chickasaws, and the Cherokee treaty of 1835.

This treaty of the Choctaws and Chickasaws (which is binding only on them) provides that the general Indian council may elect (if it choose) a delegate to Congress (see page 291, Revision Indian Treaties). The election of this delegate, however, as stated, is contingent upon the disposition of the council, and is not mandatory; and, as stated, is provided for by a treaty that is not obligatory on any of the numerous tribes named, except the Choctaws and Chickasaws. The same rule is also correct in reference to the Cherokee treaty of 1835, referred to (Revision Indian Treaties, p. 70), which merely provides that the Cherokees, if they choose, "will be entitled to a delegate in Congress" whenever Congress provides for one. This provision is not mandatory, and only applies to one (the Cherokees) of the thirty-four tribes of our country. You will, therefore, appreciate the fact that the proposition in the bills under discussion, to force the Indian nations and tribes of our country to become citizens of the United States and to send a delegate to Congress, is not warranted by, but is in opposition to, the treaties and existing relations between our Indian nations and tribes and your government; and is, moreover, contrary to the Constitution of the United States, which allows no people a delegate in Congress except *bona fide* citizens of the United States.

ALLOTMENT OF LANDS.

The proposition, as made, for the subdivision of our lands in the bills in question, is also at variance with our treaties. To be brief, the relations of the government with all the tribes named provide that their

present land-tenure cannot be disturbed or changed *without their consent*. These bills dispose of our lands in *advance* of our consent, and in a manner contrary to our treaties and wishes. To illustrate, we will only refer to the 20th article of the Cherokee treaty of 1866 (Revision of Indian Treaties, p. 94), which provides that—

Whenever the Cherokee national council shall *request* it, the Secretary of the Interior shall cause the country reserved for the Cherokees to be surveyed and allotted among them at the expense of the United States.

RAILROAD LAND-GRANTS.

While on this subject we desire to assure you that it is our desire that you take some early steps to set aside the conditional grants to our lands claimed by certain railroad companies under certain acts of Congress of July 25, 26, and 27, 1866; but, in so saying, we maintain that it is not at all necessary, nor is it warranted by our treaties, for you to pass a Territorial bill for our country. A simple amendment to the acts referred to, setting aside or repealing those grants, will be sufficient. While such acts will protect and not disturb our present land-tenure, which being *in common*, we have no paupers, *a home is free for all*; and our people being chiefly stock-raising, our whole country is a *common* for the pasturage of all. As we are now situated no individual can sell himself out of a home (as the people of the States often do), because no individual can dispose of our lands, all being joint-owners; nor, for the same reasons, can our ignorant people be swindled out of their lands by cunning capitalists, as they would be if they had them allotted. We repeat, that all experience shows that our present tenure to our lands is, by far, the safest for weak and unenlightened Indians like the majority of our people are, and when the time comes for an "allotment" of our lands, we will ask it as our treaties provide.

2. SELF-CONSTITUTED "NECESSITY" OF INTERESTED (THIRD) PARTIES SHOULD NOT OVERRIDE POSITIVE TREATY STIPULATIONS.

The bills in question are not "necessary" for the "civilization" and "welfare" of the 34 Indian nations and tribes to be affected. This is an abstract proposition, and ought not to enter into this discussion; because, as we have shown, you have no right to establish any sort of a United States Territorial Government over our nations without their *express consent*. But as the question has been raised by those who seek to despoil our nations of their valuable lands, we propose briefly to review it. We do not "*stand in the way of civilization,*" as our opponents allege.

Although the war of the rebellion swept over our country like a terrible tornado and extinguished nearly one-half of our people and destroyed our homes or made them desolate, and deprived our people of almost every single bit of personal property, still all of the official reports of the Indian Bureau, and of the board of Indian commissioners, since the war, show that our nations are rapidly on the increase in population and national and personal wealth, and that this prosperity has increased year by year to the present time since the war.

A notable fact, to which we invite your special attention, and to which we refer with pride, is that reports from your several States, and from our Indian nations, to your Bureau of Education in this city, show, unmistakably, that during the Centennial year, our nations were doing

from three to ten times better in the matter of education than our neighboring States, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Texas; so that, if the arguments of our opponents are worth noticing, you should let our nations alone, and at once establish Territorial governments over the States named.

In our five civilized nations alone, the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw, we have not less than two hundred free common schools; six high schools; several orphan asylums and schools (free); asylums for deaf, dumb, blind, &c. (free); while we have a surplus of school funds; and the entire expense of our educational system is borne by our nations; while our other twenty-nine tribes also have many schools among them, chiefly at their own expense; and the nomadic tribes, such as the Comanches, Cheyennes, &c., are also beginning to send their children to school. We think it quite safe to say that there are now about 15,000 children going to school in the Indian Territory at no expense to your government.

As regards the matter of religion, we would state that almost every single tribe, of the 34 in the Indian Territory, have in whole or in part abandoned their original traditional religions, and have embraced the Christian faith. Almost every orthodox Christian denomination, under the present Indian policy, has a hold among all these tribes, and it is no exaggeration to say that there are to-day not less than 14,000 church members in the Indian Territory, while there are hundreds of native ministers of the gospel at work in their respective nations.

The most of the tribes referred to have written forms of government, and the five civilized nations named have printed codes of law, modelled after those of your States, with constitutions, like those of your own government, that were adopted over forty years ago, and have had laws strictly enforced for at least forty years, prohibiting the introduction of ardent spirits among our people. During the same time we have had laws inviting missionaries to come among us, and that make it a *penal* offense for any of our people to disturb religious assemblies.

We also have among us many Sunday schools, to which thousands of our children attend regularly. It is true, however, that we have some crime among us; because it is also true that, like the whites, we are given to the weakness of frail human nature; but the declarations publicly made last year by the presiding judge of the United States court of the western district of Arkansas show that we have no more crime among us, in proportion to our numbers, than do the people of our adjoining States. Moreover, if the existence of crime in a community is to warrant its destruction, not a single government on the face of the earth could stand; and why should our nations be the first victims?

In conclusion, we beg leave to call attention to the singular fact that, ever since the date (1866) of the land grants named, these Territorial measures have agitated Congress, and generally the reports from the committees to which they have been referred have reported against them.

The last report on the subject was made during the last (45th) Congress to the House of Representatives, by Hon. Henry S. Neal, from the Committee on Territories. To this report (No. 188, H. R., 45th Congress, 2d sess.) we invite your special attention, because it thoroughly reviews the Territorial question in all its bearings, from an impartial, legal, and moral standpoint. We trust that you will indorse this report as the latest and most authentic expression of Congress on the questions involved, and thus end this Territorial agitation that has so long taxed the patience of Congress, at great expense to the government, and to the

detriment of legitimate business demanding your attention—as a part of which, you will excuse us for referring to the petitions before you, from our nations and people, praying for the millions of dollars justly due them under treaty obligations.

We have the honor to be, with great respect, your obedient, humble servants,

WM. P. ADAIR,
Assistant Principal Chief.

JNO. L. ADAIR, *Chairman,*

R. M. WOLF,

R. BUNCH,

Cherokee Delegation.

P. PORTER,

D. M. HODGE,

Creek Delegation.

P. P. PITCHLYNN,

Choctaw Delegate.

J. M. BRYAN,

Old Settler, Cherokee Commissioner.

CHARLES BLUEJACKET,

CHARLES TUCKER,

Shawnee Representatives.

WASHINGTON, D. C., February 16, 1880.

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