

THE INDIAN JOURNAL

Muskogee, Indian Territory
Thursday, January 3, 1884
Volume...8 No...18
R. M. Roberts, Editor

MESSAGE OF SPIECHEE

To the Honorable Members
of the National Council:

Gentlemen:

I am before you in response to your wishes. In this you have conferred upon me great honor, and I am grateful to you for it. No greater honor could be placed upon the most gifted citizen of any country, than being called from the walks of an humble citizen to the executive head of his people; and such an honor it has pleased my people to bestow upon me. Consulting my own wishes, I would prefer remaining at my home as an humble citizen and permitting "the affairs of state" to be controlled by those who are ambitious for such honors; yet these private preferences will not be urged by me in opposition to my sense of

patriotic duty. In political economy every citizen, however humble he may be, is called on to perform his part, be it the observance of law in the private precinct or in office of the highest trust; and when the people speak in their sovereign power, calling one of their citizens to any position within their gift, it is a verdict from which there should not be any appeal. Entertaining these views, my entrance upon the duties of my office is attended with no ordinary sense of my ability for the task, while I cheerfully acquiesce in your wishes.

On occasions like this in olden times, when it was believed that the chief was a man without a peer among his people, his inauguration was regarded of so great importance that every man woman and child belonging to the tribe was required to be present to witness the ceremonies and shake hands with the new chief. In those times the chief exercised the authority of a king or monarch whose word was law, and in whose hands was entrusted the welfare of all his people. Later down, in the history of our people, the responsibilities of that office were regarded too great for one man, and that office was then filled by two chiefs. That policy was maintained up to the late

civil war in the states. After the war it was agreed upon that there should still be two chiefs, but one to be clothed with only secondary authority. At this time the chief has but little power. He makes no more laws for his people but becomes a subject of law himself, and is only empowered to see to the faithful execution of such laws as are made by the people in their representative capacity. And then, after an experience of many long years, our superstitious notions in ascribing supernatural powers to our chiefs have gradually passed away, and the custom observed by our forefathers, as stated, have likewise gone with them. I was reminded of those traditional customs by your cordial hand-shaking with me at my inauguration on yesterday; and I cannot forbear making mention of them -- not that I would compare myself to these ancient worthies, or would arrogate to myself the importance they enjoyed by contact we have become a different people, under different circumstances, with dissimilar wants, and living under a different form of government. It is a government by the people and for the people, and no man can now rise to power only by public favor; and whatever consideration he may enjoy after getting

into authority is only such as is merited by a faithful servant. As such a servant I shall strive to be. In marking out my course I shall always have in view the landmarks made by my predecessors, endeavoring to profit by their success in the proper administration of government, hoping to maintain harmony and good feeling among all my people and an uninterrupted reign of prosperity throughout our country. In the effort I shall expect the cooperation of the entire Muskogee people, for all good citizens are equally interested in good government.

It is my earnest desire a better state of our public affairs shall exist in the future than has in the past year, and every effort shall be employed by me to secure such an end. At this point I deem it proper to refer briefly to the position I occupied during our recent local troubles, and point to the cause that produced them. I believed then, as now, that this county and this government belongs to the Muskogee people as a common heritage; not to be used or controlled by any special class to the oppression of any; but when I became the object of the bitterest persecution and failed to obtain such a

hearing as was allowed others on similar charges, I then and there entered my protest against such proceedings as unlawful and unjust; in which conclusion I found many others ready to join me, for which I was denounced as a vile traitor to my country. All I asked then was an equal share of administrative justice at the hands of the officers of the law. They refused my request and I determined not to submit. In this I felt my cause was just, while the officers on their part made an effort to make me submit, and thus the trouble began. I am heartily sorry it was so, yet it has taught us a useful lesson, if we will only profit by it. And it is this: that every Muskogee citizen, whether his skin be red, white or black, has equal rights and privileges in this nation; and the most abject, poor and ignorant is entitled to equal consideration with the most distinguished, rich and learned at the hands of our officers; and that such rights and considerations must be mutually respected by all if it would successfully perpetuate peace, harmony and prosperity in our country. All governments have their good and bad laws. In this ours is not

an exception. You are the law-making power, therefore the task of providing good, wholesome laws for the people falls upon you. Between this and your next annual session you will have in hand the important duty of learning from your constituency those laws that need to be amended or repealed, as well as such new ones as may be demanded. In the meantime it devolves upon me to have the laws in force faithfully executed. In this work I shall congratulate myself of having the prompt but cautious cooperation of the officers of the six districts. And every officer who discharges his duties as indicated shall receive at my hand a full meed of praise; but every one that fails to do so, or otherwise proves himself unfit for his position, upon being properly reported to me, shall be promptly removed and his place supplied by one thought to be better.

In conclusion, let me admonish you, one and all, to cultivate a spirit of friendship and forbearance for one another, and prove to the world that the Muskogees are still worthy of their former reputation for virtue and manhood.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,
your obedient servant,

SPECIAL.

Principal Chief, M. K.

S. B. Callahan, Private Secretary,
pro tem.